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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a professional pilot, a recreational aviator, and an avid outdoors person, I both admire and enjoy the national forests within the Blue Mountain Forest area from the air and the ground. My husband and I backpack in these forests regularly, and our access to and from the trails is typically by air. In the forest plan revision, it is important to recognize the significance of transportation access provided by these airstrips/runways, both for serving the local community and in keeping alignment with the national USFS recognition of airstrips in the nationwide transportation system.

Aviation needs to be added as an approved backcountry and dispersed recreational activity in the text of this plan revision.

Maintaining airstrips must be added as an objective of the forest plan. Maintenance includes the runway surface itself, as well as clearing brush and trees that grow into the runway clear zone or aircraft parking areas.

Maintaining restroom, windsock, and bear-safe infrastructure is also important to the safety of the airstrip users. To keep the costs of this minimal, it is logical to replicate the Airstrip Integrated Operations and Maintenance Plans from the Wallowa-Whitman Forest, which leverages the resources of partner organizations, at the Malheur and Umatilla airstrips.

In addition to my family's use of Blue Mountain Forest airstrips as access points to hike and fish, we have observed these runways utilized by hunters, fire fighters, private in-holding landowners and medical evacuation aircraft. The value of air access to forests is significant to our community's health, well-being, and opportunity to enjoy the national forest and wilderness lands.