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First name: Robert

Last name: Chesley

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am written to voice my concern about the current trail building plan. My questions are twofold.

1) As a local resident who enjoys hiking/biking the surrounding area I have questions about the prudence of building new trails, when it is apparent that maintaining the existent trails (of which there are ample) has proven too much of a chore for an apparently understaffed and underfunded department. It seems to me that a better allocation of manpower and money would be to improve what we have, in order that enjoying usable trails is not so dependent on volunteers and outfitters who pay crews large sums to clear them. When consulting maps of the area it is difficult to find a watershed or range without trails/roads that, properly maintained, would offer stellar access to the rugged beauty of our county. That being said, I fail to see how adding new trails is likely to cause any economic boom to the area. On the contrary, taming one of the last wild places may have negative consequences to tourism. There are plenty of mountain towns cut up with trails and overrun with people. The solitude and ruggedness is precisely what travelers seek out in Challis.

2) My second concern is the lack of consideration that the area for this planned trail expansion happens to be right in the heart of crucial deer/elk winter range habitat. I noticed that environmental impact studies have been skipped over and I was wondering if that included consulting with any big game biologists about the ramification of a likely increased human presence at that time of year. All winter range is not created equal and perhaps they utilize that area because it offers the best of what they need. Adding additional stressors to an already hurting deer herd at a critical time of year seems like a poorly thought-out plan. Though to be fair, when I see that the proposed area for the project is stated as being 7 miles East of Challis, when it is clearly West of Challis, I wonder how much thought was put into this plan to begin with.

Respectfully, Robert