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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Forest Plan Revision Salmon Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest

We are writing to document our support for the PROPOSED ACTION that provides for Special Management Areas THAT ALLOWS SNOWMOBILING within the Great Burn RWA. We are avid snowmobilers that ride throughout Idaho. We belong to the Donnelly Snowmobile Club & the ISSA. We strongly believe in the comments submitted by ISSA to ask for snowmobile use in the Great Burn RWA. Specifically we endorse the following.

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Snowmobiling should be allowed to continue in the Great Burn. In the Forest Plan Revision (FPR) maps, several snowmobile areas have been omitted. The historic winter motorized recreation areas that must be preserved include all of the areas identified in the ISSA map, notably Goat Lake and its surrounding geophysical bowls, Blacklead Mountain and its surrounding geophysical bowls, Doe Creek drainage and its surrounding geophysical bowls, and Deer Creek drainage and its surrounding geophysical bowls.

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The Great Burn is one of the few primitive back country snowmobile settings still accessible in the lower 48 States and certainly one of the best. There are no groomed access roads or trails and the terrain can be challenging. All of this has great appeal to a certain segment of the snowmobiler community. While some snowmobilers prefer riding on groomed and/or well defined trails, others want a more primitive experience with a combination of challenge and magnificent scenery.

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The snowmobilers who seek the primitive backcountry experience value it for the same reasons summer users want it: solitude, challenge, and appreciation of the spectacular scenery.

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Statistics produced by the FS in the ROS portion of the Clearwater Forest Plan Assessment show that snowmobiling access to the Clearwater NF has increased approximately 100 percent between 2006 and 2011, while primitive camping access has remained static (page 21). This clearly demonstrates snowmobiling is a growing recreational activity and demonstrates the need for more access to suitable riding area, not less. At the very least, future management should keep historic riding areas open.

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There are no winter user conflicts in the Great Burn. The only practical way to access the Great Burn in the winter is on a snowmobile. No one who rides the area reports seeing any non-motorized uses.

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The area is adequately protected under existing laws and the Idaho Roadless Rule that allows for OHV uses.

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The Great Burn is 'unique'. To find a comparable area in size and geography that would qualify as a true primitive access, one would have to travel to the Selkirk Mountains adjacent to Revelstoke, BC.

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Management of Recommended Wilderness Areas as Wilderness is not acceptable. There is no law or policy that requires the Forest Service to do so.

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The Great Burn has been open to snowmobiling for the last 25 years and nowhere have we seen any documentation that the use has had any negative impact on the resources.

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The 2012 Travel Plan ROD states that NO evidence of Lynx was found in the Great Burn Area.

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There is no evidence to support this contention that snowmobiling negatively affects mountain goat populations. Eliminating a legitimate use simply because someone thinks there 'may be' a negative impact is simply not good enough. The American People deserve better than that.

Thanks for considering these comments,

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