State of Idaho
Department of Parks and Recreation

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February 23, 2024

Attention: Cheryl Probert, Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce Clearwater National Forests
1008 Highway 64
Kamiah, Idaho 83536
Via Project Portal

RE: Dixie-Comstock Community Protection Project
https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52079

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) is the duly-established executive department under State of Idaho Code, with the stated mission of improving the quality of life in Idaho through outdoor recreation and resource stewardship. Acting under the supervision of the Idaho Park and Recreation Board, IDPR carries out recreational policies and programs of the State. Consistent with its statutory authorities, the Department participates in federal land management planning and project planning to further the public interest in recreational, scenic, and historical/archeological values.

IDPR staff is responsible for managing off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation throughout Idaho through the Motorized Trail Program. IDPR's Trail Ranger and Trail Cat Programs provide maintenance and construction, and its OHV Education Program provides OHV training and environmental education. Through IDPR's Off Road Motor Vehicle and Motorbike Recreation Funds, grants are awarded to fund trail building and maintenance, and law enforcement activities. The Trail Program's partnerships with the Forest Service results in the maintenance and improvement of hundreds of miles of National Forest System Trails each year for the use and enjoyment of a diverse public.

Regarding the subject Project, we were disappointed to learn that scoping for recreation and trails actions were not included in the final draft EA. We understand this may be due to the need to break off vegetation management activities to be expeditiously pursued under emergency authority given USFS under the BIL. For the benefits that accrue recreationists by managing the landscape, IDPR is supportive of the objectives to address the Wildfire Crisis being pursued in this EA.

However, it has become an all-too-familiar pattern throughout Idaho's portion of USFS Region 1, that scoped actions benefitting recreation are either not included up front or are stripped out of project proposals along the NEPA timeline. IDPR strongly encourages and will enthusiastically support the Forest in finding ways to include recreation and trails improvements within the scopes of any other potential NEPA projects in the pipeline. NPC will have IDPR's sincere support and pledge of Program assistance in any way it can find to address the interests of stakeholders and the recreational goals of the Forest Plan. Please consult IDPR Trail Program staff and consider the requests of stakeholders and recommendations of the CBC collaborative regarding recreational access.

The Department's basic goal remains serving recreationists' interests by being a reliable partner with the Forest in maintaining, improving, and finding new opportunities for increased recreational access to the public's lands.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment during this abbreviated process.

Regards,

Alex Ernst

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Land Access Coordinator
IDPR – Recreation Bureau