

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/29/2026 7:00:00 AM

First name: Bill

Last name: Ables

Organization: Recreational Aviation Foundation & Idaho Aviation Association

Title: Oregon Liaison/ District II Director

Comments: To the Three Forest Revision Planning Team Members,

I'm respectively submitting my comments and suggestions to you today regarding your Preliminary Draft Forest Revision Plan for the Malhuer, Umatilla and Wallowa Whitman National Forests.

I hope you will give my comments, suggestions, and thoughts some sincere thought and remember that this plan will be here for a long time (yep, the last one has been in place for 36-years) and will provide guidance to many of you and future USFS employees over the life of this plan. Including aviation in the suggested items will maintain sustainable and safe aviation access within the USFS Transportation System for many years in the Malhuer, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests.

I've been an active pilot since 1975 and have flown to airstrips located in Southern Arizona to Central Alaska with most of my flying time spent here in the Pacific Northwest. As a private pilot I have flown into most of the airstrips located in this three Forest area hundreds of times.

I'm an Oregon State Liasson for the Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF) and an Idaho Aviation Association (IAA) Director with a combined total membership of approximately 13,000 aviation enthusiasts.

During my 30-year career with the Oregon State Police (OSP) as a Fish & Wildlife Officer, I conducted many horseback patrols in the Wenaha, Eagle Cap and Hells Canyon Wilderness areas as well as running the OSP jet boat on the Snake River in Hells Canyon for 25-years. I've also spent many hours in an OSP aircraft in the skies over NE Oregon. While conducting these enforcement patrols in aircraft, jet boat and on horseback, we've used many of the airstrips included in this plan area for enforcement purposes, medical evacuations and search and rescue efforts.

I feel that you all have made a concerted effort to put aviation and its components into this Plan, as airstrips are a recognized component of the USFS National Transportation System that benefits forest users, local economics and local community well-being.

My sincere thanks for your efforts.

Cheers,

Bill Ables

## Blue Mountains Forest Plan [ndash] Draft Environmental Statement for the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests Land Management Plans Comments:

Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests Pub. # 64157 July 2026

Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

### Purpose and Need: Why is Action Needed?

Since these plans were developed, forest conditions have changed significantly due to wildfires, insects, disease, and public use (see the 2024 Final Assessment). Numerous amendments to the current plans have been made over time indicating the need for comprehensive revision. In addition, Forest Service policies, laws, and societal values have evolved, including new regulations in 2012 that guide forest planning ([ldquo]2012 Planning Rule,[rdquo] 36 CFR 219). Under the 2012 Planning Rule, land management plan revisions need to replace outdated plan direction with new, integrated plan components informed by best available science that provide for ecosystem sustainability and contribute to social and economic sustainability. (Page 1)

Comment:The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: We agree that there is a need to revise the 36-year-old 1990 Land Management Plans for the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. The new plans should provide integrated social and economic viability for our users and local communities into the future as well as providing continuity throughout the entire document. We appreciate this Three Forest Revision Plan recognizing aviation and its attributes and puts it into the text in appropriate places. There were several omissions of aviation verbiage, and I have pointed these out in my comments and hope you all will add them to this Plan.

### Proposed Action: What are we proposing to do?

We will analyze the proposed action as alternative 2. The proposed action would revise the 1990 forest plans for the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. The revised plan for the Malheur National Forest would include management direction for the portion of the Ochoco National Forest administered by the Malheur National Forest. The new plans would provide integrated direction for social, economic, and ecological sustainability and allow for multiple uses of forest lands and resources. They fully comply with the 2012 Planning Rule, address the need for change identified in recent 2024 to 2025 assessments, and align with the 2025 Forest Service National Active Forest Management Strategy (FS-1268a) emphasis on active management. (Page 2)

### Minimal Level of Management Alternative

Under this alternative, the agency would accomplish only the minimum level of management needed to maintain and protect the forests as a part of the National Forest System. No acres would be classified as suitable for

timber production or grazing, no trees would be harvested, and no timber would be produced. Management would be solely focused on preventing resource damage or addressing the safety of forest visitors, and limited to management of the recreation facilities, roads, trails, and airstrips. Treatments in wildland-urban interface areas would continue to address safety concerns. (Page 3)

Planning at the regional scale integrates forest management across national forest boundaries and improves service for those who use and visit the Blue Mountains national forests. We are developing individual forest plans for the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests to integrate similar plan components where appropriate to improve management, administration, and implementation consistency across the Blue Mountains region. (Page 4)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: As this Plan states, airstrips are part of the USFS National Transportation Plan. Could you please add [ldquo]and airstrips[rdquo] in the above paragraph to maintain consistency throughout this Plan.

#### Substantive Issues Considered for Analysis

##### Issue 1: Contribution to Economic and Social Sustainability

The scoped proposed action explains how national forests provide products and services that support local economies. Commentors emphasized that a strong local workforce and infrastructure are essential for these activities. Many commenters asked for a faster pace and larger scale, with more fuel reduction and greater emphasis on timber harvest and wood products to support local jobs. Other commenters asked for a greater focus on the economic and social values placed on a variety of recreational activities.

To analyze these concerns, we identified the following indicators and measures:

- [bull] Jobs and labor income impacts by county.

- [bull] Projected timber sale quantity for first and second decade - millions of board feet

(MMBF) and millions of cubic feet (MMCF).

- [bull] Projected wood sale quantity for first and second decade - MMBF and MMCF.

- [bull] Recreation opportunities, recreation settings, and sustainable recreation. (Page 6)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: There are people located in surrounding counties that make a living in various aviation related jobs that are positively affected by both commercial and private use of the airstrips in this Three Forest Plan area.

Comment: Aviation provides income to local communities.

#### Recreation

We compare recreation related plan direction (developed, dispersed, and backcountry) among alternatives in [ldquo]Substantive Issue 1: Contribution to Economic and Social Sustainability.[rdquo] Potential effects of recreation to species diversity and water resources along with mitigating plan components in alternatives are discussed in analysis sections for Substantive Issues 2 and 3. Finally, potential effects to recreation from recommended wilderness and inventoried roadless rule designations are discussed in Substantive Issue 4 and 5, respectively.

All three alternatives would continue to provide a wide range of developed, dispersed, and backcountry recreation opportunities throughout the Blue Mountains. The forest plan revision does not prescribe a change in recreation visitation levels, and none of the alternatives would authorize projects or make site specific decisions. Instead, the plan provides a programmatic framework that guides how the forests would maintain and improve recreation settings and opportunities.

Recreation demand, visitor preferences, and evolving use patterns would continue to change over time regardless, and the forest plan provides the strategic direction needed to respond to those trends at the project level. For these reasons, and because site specific travel management and operational decisions occur outside of forest plan development, a more detailed or quantitative analysis is not necessary in this DEIS. (Page 11)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

#### Substantive Issue 1: Contribution to Economic and Social Sustainability

What are the reasonably foreseeable short- and long-term and beneficial or adverse effects of implementing the alternatives on the environment, public health and safety, economics, and quality of life?

The forest plan creates a framework for the Blue Mountain National Forests to sustain the range of uses, products, and services that contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of local communities. The forest plan also recognizes that these local community members support stewardship of national forest resources, as they are users of the same lands. Therefore, Forest Service managers depend on developing strong relationships with local residents and institutions to help sustain forest processes, while recognizing that changes in forest management can affect the lives of those same residents. In this way, community economic and social wellbeing and successful forest management are interrelated. (Page 17)

#### Recreation Opportunities, Recreation Settings, and Sustainable Recreation

Sustainable recreation opportunities management contributes to economic and social sustainability within the plan area. (Page 20)

Across both alternatives 2 and 3, plan components that minimize recreation impacts (RECDEV-GDL-02; RECDIS-GDL-01; REBCA-GDL-01) would protect natural and cultural resources and high-quality recreation settings. Partnership-focused direction (FW-REC-DC-07; FW-REC-GDL-02) strengthens community connections. These contributions reinforce long-term economic and social sustainability across the Blue Mountains region. (Page 21)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: Airstrips within the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest are currently being maintained by pilot groups in collaboration with the USFS and are driven by an Airstrip Integrated Operations & Maintenance Plan for each airstrip.

#### Plan Components

Desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and suitability of lands are the plan components required by the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.7(e)). The following narratives Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision

DEIS 107 of 356 define and describe the plan components used in this plan. Additional guidance about plan components is found in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12. (Pages 106-107)

## Desired Conditions

A desired condition (DC) describes specific social, economic, or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, towards which management of the land and resources should be directed. Desired conditions must be described in terms that are specific enough to allow progress towards their achievement to be determined but not include completion dates. (Page 107)

## Scale

Each desired condition includes a scale, or a range of appropriate scales, to identify the relevant portion of the plan area applicable to the resource desired condition. Projects and management activities are designed to maintain, move toward, or achieve the full range of desired characteristics within the stated scale. (Page 107)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: The 2012 Planning Rule recognizes the importance of the interrelationship with forest management and local communities. The area that this Forest Revision Plan encompasses has many small rural communities that have been connected to these forest lands for generations for social, economic and recreational stability. As part of the USFS National Transportation System, airstrips assist users to enjoy our National Forests.

## Objectives

An objective (OBJ) is a concise, measurable, and time-specific statement of a desired rate of progress towards a desired condition or conditions. Objectives should be based on reasonably foreseeable budgets. Objectives describe the focus of management on the national forest within the plan period. Objectives will occur over the life of the plan, considered to be over the first 15 years of plan implementation, unless otherwise specified. Objectives were developed considering previous and expected budget allocations, as well as professional experience with implementing various resource programs and activities. It is possible that objectives could either exceed or not meet a target based upon several factors, such as budget and staffing increases or decreases, increased or decreased planning efficiencies, or unanticipated resource constraints. A single project may meet multiple forest plan objectives.

## Standards

A standard (STD) is a mandatory constraint on project and activity decision making. They help to achieve or maintain the desired conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, and to meet applicable legal requirements. A standard differs from a guideline in that a standard is a strict constraint, allowing no variation, whereas a guideline allows variation if the result is equally effective. The intent should be clear and unambiguous so that consistency of a project or activity with a standard is easily determined.

## Guidelines

A guideline (GDL) is also a constraint on project and activity decision-making, but unlike a standard, it allows for departure from its terms so long as the purpose of the guideline is met. They help to achieve or maintain the desired conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, and to meet applicable legal requirements. As with a standard, the intent of a guideline should be Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision DEIS 108 of 356 clear. A guideline should describe the circumstances and way it applies so that other options may be considered if they still meet the intent. (Pages 107-108)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: The 2012 Planning Rule recognizes the importance of the interrelationship with forest management and local communities. The area that this Forest Revision Plan encompasses has many small rural communities that have been connected to these forest lands for generations for social, economic and recreational stability. This DEIS recognizes that Airstrips are and have been an integral part of the USFS National Transportation System.

## Distinctive Roles and Contributions within the Broader Landscape

The Blue Mountains National Forests play a distinctive role both locally and at a broader scale by uniquely contributing ecological diversity, cultural and heritage values, diverse outdoor recreation opportunities, and social and economic sustainability. Identifying ecosystem services and benefits such as clean air and water, nutrient cycling, providing for plant and animal biodiversity, and carbon sequestration provides the foundation for realistic and achievable desired conditions. (Page 110)

## Social and Economic Characteristics

Residents and visitors alike seek out the national forests year-round for recreational opportunities. Activities range from seeking solitude in the backcountry to staying in developed campgrounds along travel corridors. Additional recreational activities include hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, rock climbing, hiking, off-highway vehicle use, whitewater rafting, aviating and horseback riding. Hunters travel to the national forests in search of elk, deer, and antelope during the appropriate seasons, which also contributes to local economies. The national forests also provide winter sports opportunities such as snowmobiling, cross-country, and downhill skiing. (Page 111)

## Rights and Interests

The land management plan provides a strategic framework that guides future management decisions and actions, subject to valid existing or statutory rights. As such, the plan does not create, authorize, or execute any ground-disturbing activity. The plan does not subject anyone to civil or criminal liability and does not create legal rights. The plan does not change existing permits and authorized uses. (Page 116)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: This is a very long-term document that will guide future management decisions and actions. Could you please add [ldquo]aviating[rdquo] to this list of recreation activities, as most people reading this DEIS do not associate [ldquo]aviating[rdquo] with [ldquo]off road vehicle[rdquo] use.

## Chapter 2. Forest-wide Plan Components

### Introduction

Forest-wide direction includes desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines for future project and activity decision making. Where appropriate, management approaches are also included as optional plan content by topic. (Page 117)

Other plan components (objectives, standards, and guidelines) and management approaches provide guidance on achieving this vision. They guide development of projects and activities that move the Forests towards the desired conditions and should not foreclose the opportunity to maintain or achieve the desired conditions over the long term. (Page 117)

Desired conditions describe the vision for the Blue Mountains National Forests, and projects implemented under this plan are intended to move towards these forest-wide desired conditions. This is planned over the next 15 or more years, although some of the desired conditions may be very difficult to achieve and may not be reached for many decades. (Page 117)

Other plan components (objectives, standards, and guidelines) and management approaches provide guidance on achieving this vision. They guide development of projects and activities that move the Forests towards the desired conditions and should not foreclose the opportunity to maintain or achieve the desired conditions over the long term. (Page 117)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: Aviating has been one of the many diverse recreation opportunities occurring in this Plan's area since the early 1940's and airstrips are part of the USFS National Transportation System. By using the proper Plan Components in this Plan, we can ensure that Aviation and its benefits to the public and local communities are properly addressed going forward with this new Plan.

## Social and Economic Sustainability

### Local Communities (LOCCOM)

#### Introduction

The Blue Mountains National Forests are important to the resilience of local communities and Tribes because residents benefit from jobs and income produced from management activities, such as timber harvesting and livestock grazing. Mining, which is a statutory right, also contributes to local economies. The national forest also provides resources such as clean water and air, culturally significant foods relating to treaty-reserved rights, wildlife, recreation opportunities, berry gathering, and landscape settings that contribute to residents' quality of life and the character of local communities and Tribes. (Page 158)

#### Desired Conditions (FW-LOCCOM-DC)

01. The National Forest System lands have sustainable ecosystems that provide resources to Tribes, local communities, and visitors. These lands contribute to clean water, clean air, jobs and income, traditional foods and medicines, recreation, carbon storage, native species habitat, and forest products. See also FW-WTR-DC, FW-AQ-DC, FW-TRI-DC, FW-FOR-DC, FW-VEGNF-DC, and FW-FORPROD-DC. (Page 158)

02. Sustainable levels of forest resources such as timber, livestock grazing, fish and wildlife, recreation and wilderness experiences, contribute to the social, cultural, and economic sustainability of local communities. See also FW-FORPROD, FW-RNG, FW-SPDIV, FW-REC, and MA1A-DWA DCs. (Page 158)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

## Scale

### Forest-wide

## Management Approach (FW-LOCCOM-MAPR):

1. The Blue Mountains National Forests engage with county and local governments, partner organizations, and the public in a learning and collaborative environment. Consider communities with social and economic conditions that are more highly influenced by changes in forest policy and management decisions. (Page 158)

## Transportation Infrastructure (TRNSPT)

### Introduction

Transportation infrastructure includes the system of roads, trails and airstrips located on National Forest System lands that provide access throughout the national forests. Facilities infrastructure is addressed in the Forest-wide REC and Management Area MA5 sections. The road system supports land management activities, wildfire operations, recreational and hunting use, mineral exploration and development, access to private land in-holdings and commercial ventures, and Forest Service administrative needs. Roads include the roadway, any constructed feature such as vegetation clearing, bridges, ditches, culverts, signs, and retaining walls that support the user and minimize the effects to other values. The road system is comprised of National Forest System roads and are part of the national forest's Transportation Atlas. (Page 158)

The summer and winter trail system is managed for a variety of recreational uses, including hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, running, skiing and snowshoeing, snowmobiling, motorcycle and all-terrain vehicle riding, and off-highway vehicle riding. In addition to recreation uses, the trail system also supports commercial ventures such as outfitter and guide services. Trails include the trail-way, any constructed feature such as bridges, ditches, culverts, signs, retaining walls, and other features that support the user and minimize the effects to other resources. The trail system is comprised of National Forest System trails and are part of the national forest's Transportation Atlas. (Page 158-159)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Airfields are part of the Forest's Transportation Atlas. Airstrips support land management activities, wildfire operations, recreational and hunting use, management and administrative needs. In addition to recreation uses, these airstrips support commercial ventures such as guiding and outfitting services. Airstrips include the runway and any constructed feature such as vegetation clearing, ditches, signs, and other features that support the user and minimize the effects to other resources. (Page 159)

Comment: Please add the above [red verbiage] here. Airstrips, like roads and trails, are one of three parts to the USFS National Transportation System as recognized in this DEIS and needs, like roads & trails, its function described in this DEIS document.

## Desired Conditions (FW-TRSP-DC)

1. The forest transportation system of roads, trails, and airfields provides safe and efficient public, private inholding, Tribal, and administrative access for recreation, special uses, forest resource management, fire management, and treaty related activities. The transportation system and its use support ecological sustainability

and contributes to social and economic sustainability. Transportation infrastructure and its use are managed to avoid or mitigate undesired effects to ecological integrity and on resources including threatened and endangered species, heritage and cultural sites, watersheds, water quality and aquatic species. (Page 159)

2. The transportation system is connected to state, county, local public, and other federal Roads, trails, and airports. The transportation system provides reasonable access to facilities, private in-holdings, and infrastructure (such as buildings, recreation facilities, municipal water systems, dams, reservoirs, range improvements, electronic and

communication sites, and utility lines). (Page 159)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: Please add [ldquo]and airports[rdquo] here as airstrips located in this plan area are connected to federal, state, municipal and private airports alike.

Scale

Forest-wide

Objectives (FW-TRSPT-OBJ)

01. Maintain forest roads.

Malheur NF: Approximately 400-600 miles of road annually

Umatilla NF: Approximately 150-300 miles of road annually

Wallowa-Whitman NF: Approximately 200-600 miles of road annually

02. Maintain trails.

Malheur NF: 100 miles per decade

Umatilla NF: 500 miles per decade

Wallowa-Whitman NF: 650 miles per decade (Page 160)

03. Maintain airfields.

Malheur NF: 1 per decade

Umatilla NF: 2 per decade

Wallowa-Whitman NF: 4 per decade

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: Please add a section [ldquo]03. Maintain airstrips[rdquo] to these two sections to continue the DEIS continuity to that of roads and trails, as airfields are an integral part of the USFS National Transportation System as indicated in (FW-TRSPT-DC).

#### Management Approaches (FW-TRSPT-MAPR)

1. The forest transportation system is part of a broader public system of roads, trails, and airstrips that is under the jurisdiction of multiple road agencies. Counties and adjacent national forests work together routinely to reduce conflicts, facilitate operations such as wildfire response, encourage cost effective partnering, and provide a seamless transportation system and user experience to the public which includes recreational opportunities such as hunting and camping. (Page 160)

#### Recreation (REC)

##### Introduction

Sustainable recreation is defined as the set of recreation settings and opportunities that are ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable for present and future generations. The Forest Service manages three types of general recreational settings: developed recreation, dispersed recreation, and backcountry recreation. Recreational activities are also offered through special use permits with partners such as outfitter and guides, volunteer and non-profit organizations, and commercial ski area operators. (Page 161)

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is the Forest Service's management tool to define, classify, allocate and manage desired recreation settings and opportunities. See Appendix B-4.

Desired conditions and other plan components under the recreation (REC) heading apply to forest-wide recreation. The plan also describes other general recreation settings (developed recreation, dispersed recreation and backcountry recreation) and provides management direction for specific opportunities and activities within those settings. See also plan components for RECDEV, RECDIS, and RECBCA. (Page 161)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comments: Please add [ldquo]and airstrips[rdquo] here as airstrips located in this plan area are part of a broader public system of airports and airstrips.

#### Desired Conditions (FW-REC-DC)

01. Recreation opportunities promote the long-term physical and mental health of the public by encouraging opportunities to connect with nature while pursuing adventure and accepting appropriate challenge and risk, and by instilling a culture of stewardship and appreciation.

02. Recreation in all forms does not degrade the sustainability of ecological, social and cultural resources.

03. The Forest provides a range of year-round developed and dispersed recreation settings that offer a variety of motorized and non-motorized opportunities and recreation experiences. The distribution of desired recreation opportunity spectrum classes is summarized in Appendix B-4.

04. Opportunities for hunting and fishing are available in a variety of motorized and non-motorized settings. The national forest provides a mix of opportunities that foster hunting, fishing, and related visitor activities, including astronomy, night sky photography and dark sky tourism. (Page 161)

07. Recreation special uses contribute to jobs and income in the local economy, community stability or growth, and quality of life while remaining compatible with ecological and social capacity thresholds.

08. The number of recreation special use authorizations issued, including outfitters and guides, balances public demand with desired conditions for ecological resources, and expands the variety of suitable outdoor recreation experiences. (Page 162)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: The above Desired Conditions hits home to all forms of recreation but speaks to how both private and commercial aviation contributes to a community's economy and stability, as well as personal health.

#### Scale

##### Forest-wide

#### Guidelines (FW-REC-GDL)

01. To ensure recreational settings are consistent with desired conditions and to maintain an array of recreation,

opportunities and access including motorized, non-motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation on land, water, and in the air, project-level planning, decisions and activities should be consistent with mapped desired ROS classes and setting descriptions in Appendix B-4. (Page 162)

#### Management Approach (FW-REC-MAPR)

1. Develop and sustain relationships with local communities, private providers of recreational services, partners, local, state and federal agencies, Tribes and other stakeholders to provide and support specialty services, such as backcountry skiing, jet boat and raft trips, night sky photography and dark sky tourism, aerial recreation opportunities, outfitting, and guiding services and events that encourage hunting and fishing on National Forest System land. (Page 162-163)

#### Dispersed Recreation (RECDIS)

##### Introduction

Dispersed recreation settings offer a broad array of opportunities to users who require few developed site amenities. National forest camps, rental cabins, lookouts, off-highway vehicle trailheads, airstrips, and wayside interpretive sites are examples of minimally developed facilities that are rustic in nature yet appeal to those wanting to be more self-sufficient. The sites lack plumbing, paved surfaces, or potable water sources found in the developed recreation setting. Dispersed recreation settings tend to occur throughout the primitive to roaded natural recreation opportunity spectrum classes. (Page 165)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: The above guidelines ensure that opportunities and access exist by land, water and in the air. The Forest Wide Management Approach supports aerial recreation opportunities in a positive manner.

#### Desired Conditions (FW-RECDIS-DC)

01. Dispersed recreation allows national forest visitors opportunities to recreate independent of developed recreation facilities. Encounters with other visitors are common along travel routes; however, activities away from developed facilities provide for fewer encounters.

02. Recreation activities and access are readily available in this setting. Areas and facilities accommodate a variety of motorized and non-motorized uses and are primarily used by visitors to begin and end recreational experiences with most of the time spent away from developed facilities. The rustic amenities provided are well maintained and fully functional. Rustic facilities are provided for site protection and sanitary purposes and fit in with the surrounding area. (Page 165)

#### Backcountry Recreation (RECBCA)

##### Introduction

Backcountry recreation includes use of roaded and unroaded backcountry, designated wilderness areas, and wild and scenic rivers.

This type of recreation occurs in the least developed setting and provides the greatest opportunity for solitude, risk, and challenge in environments of rugged, undeveloped landscapes. There are minimal facilities, creating

more self-reliance and challenge for visitors. Existing facilities are generally rustic or primitive in nature. Trails for motor vehicle use, airstrips and trails where motor vehicle use is prohibited are available in some areas but are not always open or maintained. Activities available in these areas often require self-reliance and higher levels of outdoor skills.

Backcountry recreation settings tend to occur in primitive through semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunity spectrum classes. (Page 166)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: Pilots know in advance of an airstrip's condition by utilizing references, like the FAA's Airport Guide. They are also aware that the settings of our airstrips and its amenities are very rustic and primitive and maybe closed due to weather conditions.

Could you please add "airstrips and" to the above paragraph to ensure that airstrips are a part of our backcountry recreation settings.

Desired Conditions (FW-REBCA-DC)

01. Backcountry recreation allows national forest visitors opportunities to recreate independent of developed recreation sites except for trailheads, airstrips, staging areas, and other developed sites that facilitate backcountry access. Amenities are functional and are provided primarily for visitor safety, site protection, information, vehicle parking, and sanitary purposes. Materials used are rustic and minimal.

02. Encounters with other people are infrequent except near main portals.

03. Recreation activities that require minimal amenities are available. The setting presents visitors with opportunities to experience solitude where backcountry skills and abilities are required. (Page 166)

Scale

Recreational setting

Guidelines (FW-REBCA-GDL):

1. To provide high degrees of solitude and plentiful opportunities for risk and challenge, backcountry recreation settings should incorporate minimal recreation facilities generally at lower development scales when present at all and should typically employ managerial controls only when necessary for resource protection. (Page 166)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Could you please add [ldquo]airstrips[rdquo] to the above paragraph to ensure that these airstrips or internal trailheads are accessible and safe to use.

Comment: Pilots are aware that the airstrips in this Plan area are in a rustic condition and have an opportunity to know in advance of an airstrip condition by utilizing references, like the RAF[rsquo]s Airfield Guide. They are also aware that the settings of our airstrips are very rustic and primitive and are not developed and will experience a high degree of solitude.

#### MA 4 General Forest (GENFOR)

##### Introduction

General forest areas are managed to meet a variety of ecological, economic, and human needs. All the lands identified as suitable for timber production are contained within MA 4. A wide variety of vegetative structure and composition is present, with some showing the effects of past management activities and others showing the effects of predominantly natural forces, such as wildfire, insects, and disease. These lands often display high levels of management activity and associated roads and airstrips. Visitors expect to see other people and evidence of human activities. (Page 208)

##### Desired Conditions (MA4-GENFOR-DC)

01. General forest contributes to the variety of native plant communities and the composition, structure, and patterns defined in the forest-wide desired conditions. While the landscape is predominantly natural in appearance, there are some locations where the vegetation composition, structure, density or pattern is altered to meet short- or long-term management objectives that move the landscape towards the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision DEIS forest-wide desired conditions. The area is maintained through ecological processes, as well as management activities that provide important economic benefits to communities. This management area contributes important habitat for aquatic, plant and wildlife species that benefit from functional habitat.

02. The management area supplies a variety of dispersed or developed summer and winter recreational activities. Recreational use in MA4 is generally dispersed or located at minimally developed recreation sites (See FW-RECDIS introduction). Facilities (whether Forest Service or permitted) are those necessary to provide public or resource benefit or provide for safety and are typically at lower development scales.

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Could you please add [ldquo]and airstrips[rdquo] to the above paragraph to ensure people are knowledgeable that airstrips occur on our National Forest Lands.

Comment: Airstrips located in our (MA4-GENFOR) areas are a component of the National Transportation System and provide economic benefits to its communities and provide public safety benefits to its users.

#### MA 5 Developed Site and Administrative Area (DEVSITE)

## Introduction

Developed site and administrative area include, but are not limited to, ski areas, developed campgrounds, airstrips, recreation residences, conifer seed orchards, administrative sites, communication sites, and utility corridors. The intent of this management area is to manage developed sites and administrative areas for a specific purpose that may differ from Forest-wide plan direction. (Page 209)

## Guidelines (MA5-DEVSITE-GDL)

02. To provide a safe environment for employees and forest visitors, hazard trees, snags, and down wood that pose a safety threat should be removed. In these instances, desired vegetation conditions in this management area provide safe, efficient, and continued use consistent with the purpose of the developed site. (Page 210)

## Management Approach (MA5-DEVSITE-MAPR)

01. Consider partnerships, agreements, or other arrangements for occupation and use of buildings and facilities when the Forest Service no longer has a need to occupy them. (Page 210)

04. When developing projects to modify, create, or protect sites including but not limited to ski areas, developed campgrounds, airstrips, recreation residences, conifer seed orchards, administrative sites, communication sites, and utility corridors, consider reducing risks as appropriate in surrounding landscapes. (Page 211)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: We have one airstrip and one heliport located at (MA5) sites in this Plan's area. All existing airstrips in this Plan area are maintained by pilot groups through an agreement with the USFS and an Airstrip Integrated Operations & Maintenance Plan for each airstrip that was developed by pilot user groups and the USFS.

## Social and Economic Sustainability

The public expects a diversity of uses from National Forest System lands. Social wellbeing contributes to resilience in national forests by fostering public use patterns and restoration strategies that help support human communities, livelihoods, cultures, and social values. Actions within the national forest contribute to outputs and opportunities that support community infrastructure and may include:

[bull] Contributing to and supporting local jobs and labor income within the counties surrounding the national forest through anticipated outputs associated with management activities such as forest products and grazing (Page 278)

## Recreation

Actions to support developed, dispersed, and backcountry recreation provide for a variety of recreational opportunities on the national forest. Possible recreation Actions may include the following:

[bull] Using volunteers and partners for trail and airstrip maintenance (Page 279)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: All existing airstrips in this Plan area are maintained by pilot groups through an agreement with the USFS and an Airstrip Integrated Operations & Maintenance Plan for each airstrip that was developed by pilot user groups and the USFS.

## Appendix F: Consistency with Other Planning Efforts

### Interrelated Impacts

Interrelated impacts occur across national forest boundaries regardless of the revised land management plans. Some potential impacts may occur naturally, such as those due to wildfires, insects, diseases, or movement of wildlife.

The Forest Service transportation system of roads, trails, and airstrips provides agency and public access to manage natural resources and enjoy recreation experiences. The Forest Service transportation system is tied directly to State and County transportation systems to provide access to Federal resources including, but not limited to active forest management, sightseeing, hunting, camping, grazing, firewood gathering etc.

Many cross-boundary impacts, although addressed by the revised land management plans, cannot be resolved by the revised land management plans alone. For example, although the revised land management plans analyze an increase in forest thinning to reduce the risks of uncharacteristic wildfires (that is, to reduce wildfire size and severity) it is widely understood that wildfires are a natural part of the landscape and will cross jurisdictional boundaries in the future. This situation and other similar examples will be addressed by continued

coordination or shared agreements between affected private landowners and relevant Tribes, other federal agencies, and State and Counties governments. (Page 327)

Comment: The bold and underlined Plan content above is my emphasis.

Comment: Could you please add "and airstrips" to the above paragraph to better serve Appendix F, which speaks to Consistency.