



FRIENDS of the BITTERROOT

P.O. Box 442
Hamilton, MT 59840

August 15, 2014

To: Rick Brazell, Forest Supervisor, Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
903 Third Street
Kamiah, Idaho 83536

From: Friends of the Bitterroot

Re: Forest Plan Revision

The proposed action for the revised Nez-Perce-Clearwater National Forests, discussed and illustrated at the Community meeting held on Monday August 4, 2014, was attended by John Grove, a Friends of the Bitter Root representative.

Friends of the Bitter Root is a grass roots conservation organization which has been active in the Bitter Root for 28 years. We have always taken an active role in the administration of our National Forests. Our activities are focused primarily on the administration of the Bitter Root, Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Salmon-Challis National Forests.

Protection of roadless areas, both inventoried and uninventoried have, and continue to be, of prime interest and concern to our membership. That includes roadless areas outside of the above mentioned forests, thus our interest in the Great Burn Roadless area.

Our representative reported that the large scale colored maps displayed throughout the room did provide some valuable insight into the proposed action for administering the two national forests. Equally helpful were discussions with attending Forest Service personnel. We support the provision of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that requires Forest Service personnel to interact with the public.

For a number of important reasons your proposal to allow snowmobile access and use into two separate portions of this roadless area is unacceptable.

We emphatically oppose allowing snowmobile user access and use into two separate portions or any portion of this roadless area for a number of reasons.

1. It is both inconceivable and unrealistic to believe there can be constant, enduring law enforcement to keep snowmobile use within the designated areas. The proposed action would in effect, allow motorized use not only on the Clearwater, but also on the Lolo NF, and throughout the entire Great Burn.

2. Obviously, opening the Great Burn to motorized off road use (snowmobiles at the start) could eliminate the Great Burn from Wilderness consideration as authorized under Public Law 88-577, Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964.

3. The continued existence of far ranging, low density, carnivores such as the grizzly bear, fisher, wolverine, lynx, and grey wolf are dependent upon national forest roadless areas and Wilderness areas . Opening this area to motorized off road users is antithetical to the protection of these species which are already at very high risk.

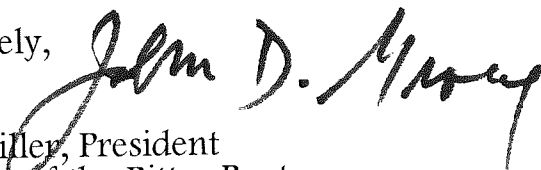
4. We know from past experience that if snowmobile use is allowed, the political pressure will increase for other types of motorized and mechanical off road use.

5. As our population increases, which it is and will, motorized off road use in this area would increase. Such trends can certainly be documented. We cannot be optimistic that the Forest Service will have the funds for administration and law enforcement in the area.

6. Finally, federal lands encompass the last remaining roadless/wilderness areas in our nation, which produce the cleanest and best source of water. (Eighteen percent of the nation's water supply originates on national forest land.) They are unaltered watersheds. Scientific information tells us they are the most productive. They are the headwaters of such rivers as the Yellowstone, Gallatin, Beaverhead, Madison, Big Hole, Flathead, Dearborn, Smith, Sun, Marias, Blackfoot, Rock Creek, Lochsa, Clearwater and the Selway. They are the very source of the Columbia and Missouri Rivers. These headwater streams facilitate the recharge of our groundwater resources. It has been well documented by the Forest Service and other land management agencies, that many human caused disturbances, such as those associated with logging, mining, and motorized off road vehicle use, cannot be accommodated without significant adverse impacts to forest streams. History has shown us such uses cannot be adequately controlled within our political system.

Please keep us fully informed as this process moves along.

Sincerely,

for 
Jim Miller, President
Friends of the Bitter Root