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First name: Anon

Last name: olga

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1:

Address2:

City:

State:

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code:

Country:

Email: olgapader@frontier.com

Phone:

Comments:

Spring 2017 material Plan Building Blocks

Once again I want to express my wish and recommend to the US Forest Service that the designation of Wilderness and Backcountry management and the protection that these designations afford be given to as many areas as possible that contain characteristics worthy of those designations. The criteria being used to determine the management designation to be given are minute, complex and beyond the ability of most people to analyze and comprehend in terms of time required and knowledge base. So many people feel incapable of providing input as they think that they cannot offer meaningful comments. Mostly, the "public" consists of small groups who have vested interests in advocating for certain business or recreational uses. The wishes of the majority are obscured by vocal and powerful minorities.

As in many human situations, we are not seeing the forest for the trees. By nitpicking and scrutinizing what humans consider to be valuable in forests, the Big Picture of forests as the ultimate, most complex, most life-giving and life-sustaining, most beautiful handiwork of Nature is being buried under piles of paper. As this phase of the Plan Revision continues, I suggest that the Forest Service distance itself from the minutiae of the process and instead reflect on the immensity, the mystery, the magic, the miracle of a virgin forest. Although I doubt our ability to do so, man may be able to manage forest land sustainably to extract its resources and to have the forest become another source of production from which we extract natural capital without accounting for its costs. But man will never be able to create or recreate a forest once he has altered or vandalized its natural state.

I urge the Forest Service to provide the maximum protection possible to the most areas now being considered for management. If this principle of preservation does not become the overarching, guiding idea for the management recommendations, what will be left of our forest treasures as extraction, development and extraneous or damaging uses continue to be allowed and to go unchecked for the next 15 to 20 years when the Forest Plan undergoes review again?

I leave you with some quotes in the hope they will inspire you to view wilderness and forests from a different perspective as you make momentous decisions that truly will change forever the blessed piece of the world in which we live.

"The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

"Advocating a conservation ethic in promoting the health, productivity, diversity and beauty of forests and associated lands." (USFS Mission statement)

"The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness." John Muir

"I am glad I will not be young in a future without wilderness." Aldo Leopold

"In Wilderness is the preservation of the world." Henry David Thoreau

Respectfully submitted, Olga F. Pader

