

Date submitted (UTC-11): 1/29/2019 3:10:48 AM

First name: Will

Last name: Wicherski

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 2705 Elm Ave

Address2:

City: Boulder

State:

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code: 80305

Country: United States

Email: will.wicherski@gmail.com

Phone: 2088697034

Comments:

In the planning process for future wilderness protections, I strongly advocate for inclusion of at least the Borah Peak, North Slope Pioneers, and North Lemhi areas be recommended for formal wilderness protections. I grew up in Boise and the Pioneers, Lemhis, and Lost River ranges have given me innumerable sublime wilderness experiences.

One story in particular demonstrates both the need for protection as wilderness and the potential pitfalls of not providing protections immediately. Two winters ago I was backcountry skiing on Hyndman Peak, which is an extremely long hike in the winter. I woke up early in the morning and made the slog out and had an exquisite experience in the mountains, seeing mountain goats and enjoying the area immensely. Then, as I was about to exit the area, I heard the distinctive whine of a snowmobile buzzing up into the basin. Then and there the pristine character of my experience was shattered. My earlier sighting of a mountain goat made me think of the potential impacts of continued motorized recreation on the species, which is already under stress due to warming temperatures and habitat encroachment.

The Lost Rivers, home to many of Idaho's highest peaks, also desperately need protection. They have been managed as wilderness for 40 years-it's high time to recommend them for formal protection! With the rise in mountain climbing as a recreational activity, the potential impacts on Borah Peak and the surrounding mountains could be devastating if user days keep rising. During peak climbing season the area is already heavily trafficked and as Idaho's population grows use will only increase.

My personal memories of all of these areas and the memories of many of my friends and family all attest to the need to designate at least Borah Peak, the North Slope Pioneers, and the North Lemhi zones as wilderness. If these three zones are designated as wilderness, all of Idaho's peaks higher than 12,000 feet will be protected for posterity. The wilderness character of these high peaks is critical for sustaining wildlife habitat, clean water, and non-motorized recreation for our children and grandchildren.

The essential dilemma with pristine wilderness is that it can only shrink! Our descendants will judge us harshly for if we don't act to preserve our most beautiful and untouched lands while we still could.