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First name: karen

Last name: klitz

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1:

Address2:

City:

State: CA

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code:

Country: United States

Email: kklitz101@gmail.com

Phone:

Comments:

Dear Forest Supervisor Mark,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the wilderness designation in the Salmon-Challis National Forest.

I have hiked in the Salmon-Challis NF and found its wildness exhilarating and enchanting. I urge the protection of the maximum area to be declared a Wilderness Study Area. No extractive uses should be allowed. No motors or engines permitted.

At a time in the earth's history when humans have dominant and often degrading presence nearly everywhere, we desperately need every wild place that is left. The water and land in wild places should belong to its native residents, the plants and animals who have lived there for thousands of years. We humans are privileged to be able to experience it, a profound source of our true being and explaining why so many seek it for recreation, peace, and to balance ourselves.

If the local people who oppose it could widen their view in time and space, they might realize how very precious the remaining wild places are. Most places that are not actually paved over have lost much or all of their native community and interactive systems that had supported so much richness. I mean rural areas that have been cut over, plowed and planted. I mean the diversion and degradation of water habitats so that most native fisheries are impoverished or declining and with the original inhabitants extirpated from nearly all of their original ranges.

Machines degrade the wilderness because they focus energy on their function and create psychological distance from the values present in wilderness, including wonder and humility. Bicycle paths increase erosion, and I have seen lizards and snakes run over by bicycles in parks where bicycles are allowed. Yet nothing prevents human access on foot, which is the rate of speed that people can be observant.

In the words of Joseph Grinnell, a visionary naturalist and leader of rigorous scientific studies said:

"For the best recreative forces in nature are those which serve most quickly to call into play latent and seldom used faculties of mind and body - those faculties whose exercise tends to restore the normal balance to the human mechanism that special or artificial conditions of living have upset. Foremost among these recreative elements in the forest are the living things that move and utter sounds, exhibit color, and change in form, and by these qualities attract and fix a person's interest. To enthusiastically seek acquaintance with these primal objects of interest is, of course, to know the thrill of vigorous muscular activity; but better yet, to bring into use the generally neglected senses of far-seeing and far-hearing, to invite an esthetic appeal of the highest type, and an intellectual stimulus of infinite resource."

From "Animal Life as a Product of National Forests", a talk by Joseph Grinnell before California Section of Society of American Foresters in Hilgard Hall, UC Berkeley on April 10, 1924.

Once wild places are lost, they are lost forever.