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Comments:

Dear Jeff,,

Enclosed please find our comments. It was a pleasure meeting with you last week. Please do not hesitate to contact me

with any questions or concerns you may have. Thank you!

Sincerely,

John Cranney

Rawhide Outfitters

(text copied and pasted from attachment)

February 26, 2019

Salmon/Challis National Forest

1206 South Challis Street

Salmon, Idaho 83467

RE: Forest Evaluation Comments

ATT: Jeff Huntzman

Tom Ford

Supervisor Chuck Mark

Dear Salmon/Challis Forest Service,

First I wish to sincerely thank you for your great concerns and diligence in this matter. We really appreciate meeting with you on February 22, 2019. The meeting was very helpful in understanding the directives you are

faced with. It really helps direct us in sharing information that will hopefully be tools to make your challenge as do able and accurate as possible.

We have been permitted and licensed in the Salmon/Challis Forest and BLM since 1989. The areas we are currently permitted in or sections of are evaluation focal areas 11, 12, 14 and 16 (purple or pink areas) and much of the surrounding yellow areas.

Area 11 West Fork Morgan Plus

This area is a big one. Our operating area starts in Squaw Creek to the south, above Clayton. It runs back North through Garden Creek, Bear Creek, White Valley, Patts, Darling, and Morgan. Over to the West into Panther, Moyer and swings up to Moyer Peak over into the Hat Creek Lakes, Hat Creek Drainages and then on North through Iron Creek and takes in the drainages on the west side of the Salmon River until it reaches the Williams Creek Road.

I believe the section of this that would be under the greatest consideration would be the area in the Morgan Creek Drainage that borders the current wilderness boundary. Sections of this area have been burned. The Darling Creek/Castle Creek Trail that runs from Patts Creek Trailhead to the Rabbit Foot Mine is a challenge to keep open. We currently conduct progressive trail rides/pack trips on this trail. Prior to these rides each summer, we ride through and clear the trail of down trees. Due to the fires and bug killed timber, it is labor intensive and expensive. Whatever happens in the new revised plan I believe it would not be good to lose the ability to use a power saw (chain saw) to clear these trails.

A word about access: The area on the south west of the Morgan Creek Road is fairly restricted now. Except for the main roads, many of the two track type roads are closed. This is good to my opinion. People still have access, but can't just drive anywhere building new roads.

Having said this, I do appreciate the current provision that handicapped people can obtain a special permit to shoot from a vehicle. In order for this to work it is good to have some area that is a little more accessible, like some of the area to the northeast of the Morgan Creek Road.

Here is a suggestion: Would it be possible to make a provision for handicap hunters to use an electric track chair to get them away from the main road to access a hunting spot, bear bait, hunting blind etc so they can participate in hunting? We have done it with great success, however using this vehicle (track chair) seems a bit of a gray area. I believe we could take the gray out of it, by making a provision in the plan.

Area 12 North Lemhi Range:

This area from the Pahsimeroi to the Lemhi has actually been improved by road closures. When I say "improved" I am referring to better game habitat and hunting opportunity. This area had too much access. The 12 Mile Meadow old 101 Trail is closed to motorbikes during hunting season. Also the North Basin /Cooper Basin Road now ends at the top of the Long Ridge in Poison Creek. This is a real plus to give areas for big game to get away from vehicles. Also some of the side roads in North Basin have been closed. This also is a great plus in regard to game habitat. Yes, access is important, but this area even now is roaded too much. In this particular area we also hunted a paraplegic young man. We were able to get a permit for him to shoot from a vehicle. He had a great time! This area has Ag fields bordering some of it. Depredation is a problem. By creating good habitat for big game up on the Forest it will be more attractive for deer and elk to choose the forest rather than the farm fields.

Area 14:

I won't say much about 14. The municipal watershed is off limits now. The rest is plenty accessible. People cut wood and hunt, fish UP lake and Wallace Lake. It seems the way it is, is working well.

Area 16:

This area is very special to our Lewis & Clark enthusiasts. This is one of the sections that we conduct Lewis & Clark Interpretive Trail rides that has virtually not changed since the famous expedition. I don't believe much could be done to improve it. There is a good trailhead on both ends. The Forest Service is battling the nape

weed and keeping it at bay. The mountain bikers and hikers are enjoying it. It seems to be working good. The Wagonhammer Springs picnic area certainly needs improvement. Other than that it is good!

There is an old saying "If it ain't broke don't fix it." There is some truth to this. However as good stewards, hopefully we can work as partners to keep from "breaking it" before it's broken.

Another consideration that is important:

The National Forest is a grid of 1 mile sections. Some of these are "School Sections." Revenue from these is intended for support of our local schools. Also money generated on Forest Service lands adds to our tax base that keep the wheels turning. Since the decrease in logging for example, it has reduced funding for schools and other important programs such as road and trail maintenance. It is good stewardship to give serious thought to this, especially when these programs are important tools and advantageous to proper Forest management, fire suppression, parasite, noxious weed programs etc.

In closing I will share some general thoughts that are only my opinion. I believe the land managers have a tremendous challenge. It takes a very special group of committed people to take on the challenge. In getting to know you better, and working in partnership for the past 30 years, I feel confident in regard to the right decisions being made for the future. As of right now, I believe we have a good balance of wilderness and multiple use. One thing for sure, we are all in it together. Whatever the outcome of our plans, we will work together to make it a success. Please let us know if we can help in any way. Thanks again!

Sincerely,

John Cranney

Rawhide Outfitters