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First name: Monte

Last name: Bruhn

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

I am writing this letter in regards to my concerns and thoughts about the potential expansion of wilderness on the Salmon-Challis National Forest. I live and work here in Salmon and am an avid outdoorsman.

I have spent over 200 days in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness (FCRNR) over the last nearly 30 years. I have horses and mules and am an experienced packer and outdoorsman for over 30 years. I have experienced the "Wilderness Experience" and have enjoyed this experience over all those years. I am dismayed at the work that is being done by the Salmon-Challis National Forest on their Wilderness Evaluation Areas (yellow areas on the Wilderness Evaluation Process map). The other area of concern is the Evaluation Focus Areas (purple on the Wilderness Evaluation Process map). I have spent many days and nights in several of these areas indicated in both yellow and purple on the Wilderness Evaluation Process map. This includes the Henry's Creek drainage and also the North Lemhi Range especially the Hayden Creek drainage.

I know that much of the FCRNRW that I have hunted and packed in has burned in the last twenty years leaving many stands of what were mature trees dead. The policies for fire control have been let it burn unless structures within the wilderness area are at risk. Tall mature Ponderosa pines are left standing dead only to fall when the root mass has rotted. This leaves more fuel to burn the next go around and makes backcountry travel either nearly impossible or impossible. Not to mention the amount of sediment that ends up in the streams and eventually the Salmon River. There are over 2.3 million acres in the FCRNR W area and it is the second largest wilderness in the lower 48 states.

In my opinion there is virtually no management in the FCRNR W as I have seen trails that in 30 years have not seen a USFS saw or axe to clear them. The trail system is a mess and much of the work that is done to clear these trails is done by the outfitters. I have packed camps into the upper end of Hayden Creek drainage for years for myself and friend's enjoyment. The trail we use starts on Ford Creek and winds up into the upper end of Hayden Creek. With all the standing dead timber one important piece of equipment I take is a chainsaw. If this becomes wilderness I would have to use an axe or hand saw. At 60 years of age I cannot and will not put that amount of effort into clearing the trail so I and my stock can venture into this area. Betting the USFS won't have a trails crew to clear the trail? I have seen over many years how the USFS has maintained many in the FCRNRW and if you cannot maintain what you already have in wilderness how will you do more trail clearing by hand?

I am in the agricultural field and work with many public lands grazing ranchers and I wonder how long they will be able to continue to use these public grazing allotments. How will a new water trough be taken into these potential wilderness grazing areas where vehicles won't be allowed in? To replace an existing water trough! How does an area that has had roads into it, water troughs, fences, two track roads and gravel roads meet the wilderness requirements under the 1964 Wilderness Act?

There will be no timber harvest and the Salmon-Challis National Forest has not sustained much timber harvesting since the mid 90's. I lived here in the early 1980's and at that time there were several small sawmills operating in Lemhi County. Today, there is just one small mill and a couple of post and pole operations that I know of.

There has been some mining activity and interest on the Salmon-Challis National Forest in the last several years. Mines bring in good jobs and children to attend the local schools. If all or some of the proposed wilderness areas that are listed on the Wilderness and Evaluation Process map are put into wilderness there will be fewer good jobs and hence fewer children to attend local schools. I am pro responsible mining and our Nation needs to have raw minerals to be extracted from our lands.

As a frequent wilderness visitor I believe we have enough land in wilderness on the Salmon-Challis National Forest. From what I have seen as to management on non wilderness areas on much of the Salmon-Challis National Forest is poor at best! Then to have no management as a wilderness is not a viable option. The idea that a 5,000 acre parcel is open to becoming wilderness is almost beyond my comprehension! An area that is slightly smaller than 2 miles wide and 4 miles deep to be put in as potential wilderness is insane. There are

ranches here in Lemhi County larger than that! From my experience in the FCRNRW most individuals either don't have the desire or ability to venture more than a few miles from an airstrip, river corridor or outside perimeter on their own.

I am against any more public land in either Custer or Lemhi County being put into wilderness at this time!

Sincerely,

Monte William Bruhn