



Frankly Speaking

Inside This Issue:

- Meet the new Wilderness, Rivers Program Manager
- Pilot Outfitter, Guides program benefits trails
- GAOA improves trails, access

Photo courtesy of Cisca Harriss

The Newsletter for the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness

Spring 2021

Recreation staff address jet boat questions

The Salmon River and North Fork ranger districts of the Nez Perce-Clearwater and Salmon-Challis national forests received a number of inquiries throughout the 2020 season regarding jet boat management along the Wild and Scenic Main Salmon River. Inquiries focused on three main topics:

- Obtaining permits,
- Increased jet boat use, and
- Use of mini-jet boats

Float boaters and powerboat users have historically used the Wild and Scenic segment of the Salmon River, which stretches 77 miles from Corn Creek to Long Tom Bar, located just upstream from Vinegar Creek. Within the Frank Church – River of No Return Management Plan, the Wild and Scenic segment of river was to be administered differently than most designated rivers. The plan



Photo courtesy of Jeremy Harris

Jet boats are a traditional use on the Wild Main Salmon River, but certain types of watercraft are prohibited from use on this segment. See page 6 for details.

recognized existing motorized jet boat use and maintained uses along the river corridor not typically allowed in wilderness. To preserve these traditional uses, Congress provided that the less restrictive management direction of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act would prevail in the Salmon River corridor, rather

than the provisions of the Wilderness Act. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act stated that the use of motorboats, including motorized jet boats, shall be permitted to continue at a level not less than the level of use which occurred in 1978.

[See Jet Boats on Page 6](#)

Wilderness, rivers manager introduces herself

Hello, Frankly Speaking! I'm Lisa Byers, the new Wilderness & Rivers Program Manager on the Salmon-Challis National Forest. Here's a little bit about who I am: I grew up in Maryland along the Appalachian Trail near Harpers Ferry National Park and went on to graduate from Salisbury University with an Outdoor Education degree.

In 2008, I adventured on a 4-month road trip around the United States, stopping at many national parks along the way.

That's when I was inspired to pursue working in public land management.

Then in 2010, I embarked on a journey to Happy Camp, Calif., to work as a Student Conservation Association river recreation intern with the Forest Service on the Klamath River. I had no idea a job such as a river ranger existed!

For the next decade I pursued a life as a river ranger, experiencing so many awesome positions along the way.



Photo Courtesy of Lisa Byers

Lisa Byers kayaking amongst icebergs in Harlequin Lake within the Russell Fjord Wilderness in Alaska.

I have worked as a river ranger on the Rogue River with the Bureau of Land Management, the Payette River with the Boise National Forest, the Situk River with the Tongass National Forest, and on the Main Salmon River with the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest.

Other places I have worked are Montezuma Castle National Monument, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Columbia River Gorge National Recreation Area, and the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest.

I was so excited to settle down in the Salmon community in June 2020, to become a part of the Salmon-Challis National Forest team, and to begin working with the Wilderness and Rivers Program. Going on multi-day river trips, fly fishing, backpacking, and seeking out hot springs, are some of my top outdoor enjoyments! I look forward to interacting with the other forests, partners, and the public that are passionate about the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.

Lisa Byers

Wilderness & Rivers Program Manager
Salmon-Challis National Forest
North Fork Ranger District



Photo Courtesy of Lisa Byers

Lisa Byers backpacking in the Eagle Cap Wilderness in Oregon.

Outfitter Corner



Photos courtesy of Dustin Ahearn

Dustin Ahearn Idaho River Adventures

Tell us about your outfitting business.

Idaho River Adventures is a river-based outfitting business offering trips on the Middle Fork of the Salmon as well as the Lower Salmon since 2012. Our Middle Fork trips are the main focus of the business at this point, as I like to be directly involved with each trip that we operate, whether I am able to be one of the guides on the trip or simply meeting guests for orientation or at take-out. The 2021 season will be the first I operate Middle Fork and Lower Salmon trips simultaneously, and, in all honesty, I am a bit nervous!

Why did you become an outfitter?

Becoming an outfitter was a natural progression for me. Like many others, I started as a guide during college and simply could not get myself to get a real job. At some point, I felt strong enough in my own business skills to comfortably pursue the purchase of an outfitting business, and, in 2011, was lucky enough to find a willing seller.

I greatly enjoy being the avenue our guests use to experience the Middle Fork of the Salmon and the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness. Without outfitters, most of the approximately 230 folks per year who use our services simply would never experience this great public resource.

How does your company impact people's lives?

Our trips, – outfitted or not – impact the users' lives in a multitude of ways. Some are wanting to experience the exhilaration of an early season, high-water trip to get the adrenaline flowing while others want a later season, low-water, relaxing experience. In any case, time away from the normal hustle and bustle is what seems to be the goal of most travelers.

What do you like most about the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness?

The Middle Fork of the Salmon and the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness are the crown jewel of both the Wild and Scenic Rivers system and the Wilderness system for very good reasons. Idaho is lucky to have had strong leadership in past generations with the foresight to fight for both Federal designations to keep this pristine land mass and waterway intact for our use, as well as for future generations' use. The outstanding qualities that made them want to go to the effort is still on display today.

What do you appreciate the most about your partnership with the Forest Service?

Having grown up in an Idaho based natural resource extraction family that operated on Forest Service land, I developed a great respect for the men and women who have devoted their careers to the management of our country's resources. I am proud to consider the Forest Service partners and always enjoy finding ways to work towards bettering the resource and bettering our impacts on them. The Salmon-Challis does a great job and is a very professional group of managers to work with.

Outfitter, guide trail pilot program deemed success

The Salmon-Challis National Forest was proud to partner with local outfitters to implement the Outfitter and Guide Trail Stewardship Credit Pilot Program during the 2020 season.

Twelve outfitting business signed up to lend their knowledge and skills to clear system trails across all districts. Overall, 299 miles of trails was cleared, with 138 miles of maintenance completed within the Frank-Church River of No Return Wilderness.

Forest Service staff coordinated with outfitters to ensure they

met management objectives.

The pilot program is part of the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act, which authorizes the Forest Service to offset commercial land-use fees for work that supports public access to trails, trailheads, and developed sites.

Approximately \$74,000 in fees will be offset for outfitters who participated in the program. In addition to opening up access and contributing to the overall maintenance of trails on the Salmon-Challis, the program highlighted the value of working to accomplish shared goals.

Program Accomplishments	
Total Reported Miles	299.4
Wilderness Miles	137.9
Non-Wilderness Miles	161.5
Salmon-Challis North Zone Miles	118.5
Salmon-Challis South Zone Miles	106
Miles of Level 1 Maintenance	257
Miles of Level 2 Maintenance	42.4
Total Credits	\$73,875
Total Credits including special projects	\$74,675



Bighorn Outfitters



Middle Fork Outfitters



Before trail maintenance.



After trail maintenance.



Before trail maintenance.



After trail maintenance.

Great American Outdoors Act

Projects will impact trails, access to wilderness

In August 2020, the Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law. The Act's Public Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund enables federal land managers to better maintain public lands for future generations.

Forests surrounding the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness submitted several projects for consideration. Projects were evaluated based on how they help:

- reduce deferred maintenance,
- improve visitors' experiences,
- contribute to economic development,
- improve visitor access,
- ensure health & safety, and
- leverage partnerships.

Of the projects submitted, the following projects impacting access to and within the Frank Church are expected to receive funding:

Bitterroot Deferred Trail Maintenance

This project addresses deferred trail maintenance on the Bitterroot National Forest, including some trails within the Frank Church. Crews will enhance the visitor experience by improving site lines along trails and increase safety by clearing logs and brush and repairing drainage structures and trail tread.

Central Idaho Complex Priority Area

This project addresses trail maintenance on approximately 900 miles of trail on the Boise, Payette and Salmon-Challis national forests that fall within the [Central Idaho Complex Trails Maintenance Priority Area](#). Partners will do the majority of the work.

Dagger Creek Bridge

This project replaces a 5-foot diameter culvert that is continually blocked by beaver dams with a 40-foot steel bridge on the sole access road for the Boundary Creek boat launch for the Middle

Fork of the Salmon River. Crews will construct an alternate route and raise the road level 3 feet above the stream before installing the bridge.

Salmon River Road

Crews will improve the condition of the Salmon River Road by: repairing, preserving, and restriping pavement from mileposts 0 to 17; repairing guard rail; and crushing and placing surface rock from Cove Creek to Corn Creek, including at the Cache Bar boat ramp and the Corn Creek campground and boat ramp.

Salmon River Road Recreation Sites

This project reduce deferred maintenance and allow for improvements at all 11 recreation sites along the Salmon River Road Corridor, a gateway to the Frank Church. Once complete, management of these sites will be offered to local operators.

SCNF Trails in Central Idaho Complex

The proposal provides for a trail crew strike team to maintain approximately 300 miles of trail within the Salmon-Challis portion of the [Central Idaho Complex Trails Maintenance Priority Area](#).

Silver Creek Road

Crews will improve the condition of Silver Creek Road by: grading and shaping the road surface; hauling and placing surface rock; maintaining the drainage system along the road; stabilizing 200' of fill slope that is failing; and stabilizing 500' of road embankment along the stream edge.

Stanley-Landmark, Boundary-Dagger Roads

Crews will improve the condition of Stanley-Landmark Road by: installing a culvert to improve drainage along 1.5 miles; reconditioning 4 miles of road; and raising nearly 2 miles of road surface to mitigate spring flooding. Crews will also perform heavy maintenance along .4 miles of Boundary-Dagger Road where it crosses Bear Valley Creek.

Jet Boats continued from Page 1

Obtaining Permits

Three types of permits are issued to jet boaters on the Main Salmon River:

- Recreational,
- Outfitting, and
- Ingress and egress.

Recreational jet boat permits are required year-round and can be obtained on [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov).

Recreational permits are subject to \$4 per person per day fee, and jet boaters must meet the same terms and conditions as float boaters.

Recreational permits are limited to a maximum of 6 jet boats per day during the control season, which runs from June 20 to Sep. 7 annually.

Outside of the control season, there are no limitations on the number of jet boat permits.

Currently, there are nine permitted outfitters who, depending on the condition of their permit, operate jet boats on the Main Salmon. Each outfitters' permit stipulates the number of jet boats and the commercial activities they are allowed to conduct in the river corridor.

Ingress and egress permits allow private landowners access to and from their private property along the Main Salmon. These permits are issued to the deed holder of the private property and do not authorize recreational activities, such as sightseeing or fishing. Currently, there are 39 active ingress and egress permit holders, all of whom are bound by direction in the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness Management Plan.

Increased jet boat use

It is not uncommon for boaters to encounter more jet boat use on the lower end of the Salmon below the South Fork Salmon confluence where the water tends to be less technical.

Year-round, boaters will likely encounter jet boats as ingress and egress permittees travel to and from private property and outfitting permittees conduct commercial activities.

Boaters will typically see more jet boat activity in June and July, when the water levels are higher. Jet boat presence also increases in the fall, when the control season ends and hunting and fishing season draws visitors to the wilderness.

Forest Service recreation staff saw a 65 percent increase in the number of recreational powerboat permits issued between Sep. 9, 2019, through June 19, 2020.

Mini-Jet boats

As the name suggests, mini-jet boats are smaller powerboats typically 10-12 feet in length. The Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness Management Plan prohibits the following types of watercraft: jet skis, airboats, motorized surfboards, wind surfboards, hovercraft, winged watercraft, amphibious craft, mini-submarines, powerboats that are under 8-feet in length and/or designed to carry a maximum of two passengers, and motorized watercraft that must be straddled when ridden by the operator and passenger.

Mini-jet boat users must adhere to the same recreational permit guidelines and are allowed within the Main Salmon river corridor provided they are over 8 feet in length and designed to carry more than 2 passengers.

Sharing a Unique Experience

Congress designated the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness area to preserve its natural conditions and wilderness character while allowing traditional uses to remain. Allowing jet boat use in a primitive setting provides boaters a unique experience on the Salmon River.

The remoteness of the Main Salmon River attracts a variety of river users. Because of this, visitors to the river corridor will likely cross paths with jet boaters, rafters, landowners, and outfitters during time on the river. All boaters on the Main Salmon are encouraged to know what to expect when they take to the water. Doing so helps create a culture of positive interactions.

Partnership Spotlight

Selway Bitterroot–Frank Church Foundation



Photos courtesy of SBFC.

Selway Bitterroot-Frank Church Foundation's Josh Page, pictured above left, led staff and volunteers on eight hitches into the Frank Church during 2020. Wilderness Stewards Justine Bright and Carly Stinson, pictured right of Page, joined him on several trips.

What did the Foundation accomplish in 2020?

Our top priority was to keep our staff, volunteers, partners, and communities safe from COVID-19 infection. To do this, we had to trim our normally robust work schedule and delay staff start dates by four weeks. We also had to reduce our normal number of volunteer projects from 6 to 2, but our Frank Church staff closed the season with good health and great attitudes.

One of our biggest 2020 accomplishments was completing the clearing and reopening of the epic [25-mile-long Marble Creek Trail](#).

What are your 2021 plans for the Frank Church?

In 2021, we are planning COVID-19 appropriate volunteer projects. We will put two staff members and two wilderness ranger fellows in the Frank Church for the season. Working with Salmon-Challis, we already have a scope of work and are in process of finalizing 8-9 hitches of work.

www.selwaybitterroot.org/jobs

What else should readers know about SBFC?

In 2021 SBFC will launch the Connie Saylor Johnson Wilderness Education Grant Program. This is a new initiative that will allow us to

provide incentive grants for teachers to educate young people about wilderness and natural ecosystems. Connie was a Forest Service Wilderness Ranger in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness for many years, and she was passionate about wilderness education. She served on our board until her passing in 2018. Check our website for updates: www.selwaybitterroot.org.

What do members of your organization like most about working in the Frank?

We love bringing young people and volunteers to the Frank to experience the remote wilderness landscapes and rich history. We are really fortunate to be able to work with our Forest Service partners to open the wilderness trails. We especially enjoy working with many dedicated, skilled Frank Church Wilderness managers.

How can someone apply to join your organization?

We are hiring seasonal positions for 2021. Check out some great job opportunities for the FCRONR and Selway-Bitterroot Wildernesses: <https://www.selwaybitterroot.org/jobs>

SBFC 2020 Accomplishments

Total Staff hours: 2046
Total volunteer hours: 584
Campsites inventoried: 1
Campsites removed/naturalized: 9
Trash Removed: 6 pounds
Trees Removed: 2,798
Trail Brushed: 1450 feet
Drains Cleaned: 231
Drains Constructed: 22
Miles of trail maintained: 122.25

Wilderness trails status map now available

The Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Trail Maintenance Status Map is now available online at <http://bit.ly/FCRONRTrailsMap>.

“The map is easy to use,” said Joshua Simpson, Krassel District Wilderness Manager and Recreation Specialist, “Just simply navigate to the area of interest, zoom in to the desired scale and click on your trail of interest.”

A pop-up box will display trail name and number, status, organization that performed maintenance, trail comments, date last maintained, and miles.

Visitors can also click on a link in this pop-up to zoom into the trail. Trails status is color coded:

- yellow is scheduled for maintenance,
- purple is not scheduled for maintenance,
- black is not maintained,
- red is closed, and
- green denotes recent maintenance.

As USFS trail crews and partner groups conduct maintenance, the staff will update the map. Visitors will know when your favorite trail has been maintained by its color.

Users can also assist with maintenance of the map by submitting comments based on what they encountered on a trail. Comments will be monitored and managed for content. Any negative, degrading, or inappropriate comments or content will be reported and removed. Please read all disclaimers before submitting comments or photos.

The map works best when opened in Google Chrome or Firefox web browsers. Glitches have been noted in Edge or Internet Explorer.

User feedback is welcomed as the forest continues map development. Feedback can be directed to Joshua Simpson at Joshua.simpson@usda.gov.

By the Numbers

Miles of trail maintained in the Frank annually



137.9
Miles of wilderness trail maintained in 2020 through the Outfitter & Guide Pilot Program

1,349
Acres in the Frank-Church inventoried and treated for weeds in 2020

1,616
Jet boat users in 2020 on the Wild Salmon River

Sites in the Frank-Church where insects were released in an effort to slow spread of noxious weeds

12

10,190
Floaters in 2020 on the Wild Main Salmon River

11,618
Floaters in 2020 on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River

If you have questions, or would like to contribute to a future edition of **Frankly Speaking**, please contact Frank Church – River of No Return Coordinator Heather DeGeest at heather.degeest@usda.gov.