

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #1

Objectors Name: Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club.
Address: P.O. Box 404 Eureka, Montana 59917.
Phone # or E-mail address: tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com.
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President.

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.

Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the proposal to manage the northern portion of the Whitefish Divide area as MA 1B – Recommended Wilderness.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

The reasons for this objection are this:

1. The process of evaluating the Thompson-Seton Inventoried Roadless Area was flawed as the portion of this area proposed as Recommended Wilderness does not meet the definition of Wilderness as described in section 2c of the The Wilderness Act of 1964.

This area DOES NOT “generally appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable”. The Blue Sky Creek road (USFS road #7020 and spurs #7020C & #7020D), and well as numerous spur roads, (#7045, #7045A & #7045B), which were built, (and still exist), to access timber harvest units, (which also still exist), are present in throughout the very middle of this area. **This area DOES NOT “have outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation”.** This area simply does not possess the characteristics to offer the opportunities as defined. (Reference – The Wilderness Act of 1964)

FS Handbook 1909.12 Land Management Handbook Chapter 70.

2. The process of evaluating and designating the Thompson-Seton area as an “Inventoried Roadless Area” was flawed. When you evaluate historic aerial photographs you can clearly see both roads and past management activities (including numerous timber harvest units) throughout this area. USFS Roads #7020, #7020C, #7020D #7045, #7045A, #7045B are located in the very heart of this area. FSH 1909.12 – 71.1 Inventory Criteria, clearly states: “Areas qualify for placement on the potential wilderness inventory if they meet the statutory definition of wilderness. Include areas that meet either criteria 1 and 3, or criteria 2 and 3 below.” Item #3. as referred to in the above paragraph states: **“Areas do not contain forest roads (36 CFR 212.1) or other permanently authorized roads, except as permitted in areas east of the 100th meridian (sec. 71.12).”** (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 70)

3. The “Area Capability Assessment” performed by the KNF on the Thomson-Seton IRA #483 was incorrect. If you possess a thorough understanding of the on the ground

features and characteristics of the area, and objectively evaluate and rate the criteria provided in the Capability Assessment, the following items should be corrected:

- #9 Terrain – should be Med not High.
- #10 Ability/Knowledge/Skill – should be Med not High.
- #11 Non-hunting Outfitting – should be Med not High
- #13 Surrounding Area – should be Med not High
- #14 Location – should be Med not High
- #16 Value Uniqueness – should be LOW not High.**
- #17 Terrain Features – should be Med not High
- #18 Water Features – should be Med not High
- #31 Big Game Populations – should be Low not Med.**
- #36 Area Access – should be Low, not Med.
- #37 Terrain should be Med not Low.
- #38 Use Restrictions should be Med not Low.
- #41 Area Access – should be Low, not Med.
- #43 Natural Process – should be Med not High.

Proof that these evaluating criteria should be altered can be provided with a thorough examination of the on the ground features and characteristics of the area. Once the Area Capability Assessment for this area is revised, the area would have a LOW capability for Wilderness Recommendation. A correct revision of the Capability Assessment criteria rating, would significantly reduce the capable of this area for Wilderness designation.

4. The Need Rating with resulted from the Area Needs Assessment for KNF Wilderness Evaluations for the Thompson-Seton IRA #483 has incorrect conclusions. The overall need rating was Moderate, despite the fact that the Thompson Seton IRA had 4 Low ratings, 1 Moderate Rating, and 1 High Rating, in the assessment. Part of this rating assessed the population center in which the Whitefish Divide Recommended Wilderness Area is contained as, according to the USFS Northern Region Wilderness Needs Assessment having a LOW NEED for more wildness acres. The Whitefish Divide Recommended Wilderness is within the area which has Kalispell Montana as it's population center. Within 100 air miles of that population center there are currently 1,704,141 acres of Congressionally designated wilderness (Bob Marshall – 1 million acres, Great Bear – 286,700 acres, Scapegoat – 239,936 acres, Mission Mountains – 73,877, Cabinet Mountains – 94,272 acres). According to the Wilderness Needs Assessment as defined by Region 1 of the Forest Service any population center with 1 million or more acres of Congressionally designated wilderness has a LOW NEED for more wilderness. In addition, the dominant vegetation cover type which is represented in the Whitefish Divide area, is also currently OVER REPRESENTED in Congressionally designated wilderness areas within this population center.

Table 58.	Thompson	Trout Creek	Tuchuck #482	West Fork
Area Needs	Seton #483	#664		Elk #692
Assessment				
for the KNF				
Wilderness				

**Evaluation –
Need**

1. Areas having the presence of Westslope cutthroat, Yellowstone cutthroat, or bull trout	Low	Mod	Low	Low
2. Presence of sensitive plant species.	Low	Low	Low	Mod / High
3a. Areas adjacent to existing wilderness.	-	-	-	-
3b. IRAs could be combined to form large habitat patches.	High	Low	High	High – East Fork
4. Ecological Sections represented in Wilderness.	Mod	Mod	Mod	Mod
5. Number of wilderness acres within 100 miles of Kalispell.	Low	Low	Low	Low
6. Under-represented plant communities.	Low (riparian)	M (pine, cedar, hemlock, riparian)	Low	H (pine, cedar, hemlock, riparian)
Need Rating	Mod	Mod	Mod	High
# of Highs	1	0	1	2
# of Moderates	1	3	1	2
# of Lows	4	3	4	2

Note: Area Needs Assessment for the Thompson Seton IRA was altered in the FINAL EIS appendices. The alternation in this assessment was that the rating for the Presence of sensitive plant species was changed from Low to High. This rating was changed based on “updated 2012 Natural Heritage Program list of plant species that are rare at the global or state level”.

- A. We would like an explanation of exactly which plant species was found to exist in this area that is on the updated 2012 Natural Heritage Program list?
- B. An explanation of exactly how the identification of a single plant species can change a wilderness Need rating from Low to High.

This appears to be nothing more than the KNF again manipulating the wilderness evaluation process in order to come to a pre-determined conclusion.

5. Catastrophic wildfires in the Whitefish Divide area would negatively impact municipal water supplies. A local expert (USFS Fire Ecologist Steve Barrett), has stated that the portion of the Whitefish Range contained within the Whitefish Divide area is “overdue for a large scale and high intensity fire event”. Considering that the Whitefish Divide Recommended Wilderness Area is within the town of Eureka Montana’s and Glen Lake Irrigation District’s municipal watershed, management of this watershed with the “let it burn” fire management policy that is applied to Wilderness Areas is un-acceptable in this watershed which is classified as a B-1 watershed by the State of Montana.

Recommended Wilderness management policies for this area would not only decrease the available options to fight wildfire, but also eliminate options to manage vegetation in a way that could mitigate the potential impacts of wildfire on water resources. (Reference – Steve Barrett, USFS Fire Ecologist, Presentation on the Whitefish Range Fire History)

6. Catastrophic wildfires within the Whitefish Divide area would negatively impact Bull Trout, which are currently listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The portion of Grave Creek, which forms the western boundary of the proposed Recommended Wilderness Area, classified as core Bull Trout habitat, and is considered critical spawning habitat for Bull Trout. Runoff of ash, sediment, and other contaminants that would likely occur after a catastrophic fire event in the area has a high potential to have negative impacts on the overall habitat conditions, and spawning habitat success of Bull Trout in Grave Creek, Blue Sky Creek, and Williams Creek. When this fire event occurs, (See Steve Barrett reference), the Kootenai National Forest would be in violation of the Endangered Species Act, as well as numerous policies related to the conservation of threatened and endangered species.

7. The Draft Record of Decision for the 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision stated that the one of the main reasons that Roderick Area was being proposal for Recommended Wilderness management was that this management strategy had the support of a local stakeholder group. The Galton Stakeholder Collaborative is a diverse local stakeholder group which has been collaborating on travel management strategies for the Galton Area on the Fortine Ranger District of the Kootenai National Forest. The Whitefish Divide Recommended Wilderness is contained within the Galton Area. The Galton Stakeholders Collaborative has 100% consensus on opposition to Recommended Wilderness management for this area, for many of the reasons previously discussed in this objection.

8. Recommended Wilderness management for the Whitefish Divide Area would be detrimental to local economies. The rural economies of this area benefit from the diversity of both summer and winter recreational opportunities currently offered in the Whitefish Divide Area. Managing this area under Recommended Wilderness

management policies would significantly decrease the diversity of both summer and winter recreational opportunities available in this area, thereby negatively impacting local economies.

9. The Area Availability Assessment for the Thompson Seton IRA #483 was inadequate and incorrect. Many of the issues described in other reasons listed in this objection were not adequately considered in this assessment. The inadequacy of this assessment has led to an Availability Assessment rating for this area which does not coincide with the conditions that actually exist on the ground.

10. Page 445 of the FEIS States “Changes in recommended wilderness for the Whitefish Divide area were made in response to public comment. These changes included removing areas above the town of Eureka and Williams Creek from recommended wilderness from DEIS to FEIS in Alternative B Modified due to concerns with management needs in the WUI and public water supply areas.”

The “changes” in recommended wilderness for the Whitefish Divide area stated above refer to the fact that the southern portion of the Whitefish Divide area was removed from proposed Recommended Wilderness management. We agree that these changes were needed, and that they were made in response to public comment, and concerns of public water supply areas. However, that portion of the Whitefish Divide area that has remained as recommended wilderness management in the Final Plan is still located within the town of Eureka’s municipal watershed. Therefore, all of the “concerns with management needs in the WUI and public water supply areas”, should still exist in the portion of the Whitefish Divide area that remains recommended wilderness. In fact, the concerns relative to this issue in the northern portion should be even greater than they were for the southern portion, considering that roughly three times as many acres contained in the northern portion of the area, (vs. the southern portion), are within the town of Eureka’s municipal watershed.

11. Page 453 of the FEIS paragraphs 5 and 6 state; “Changes in recommended wilderness for Whitefish Divide were made between draft and final in response to public comment.”

“In Alternative B Modified areas above the town of Rexford and Williams Creek were moved from recommended wilderness MA1b to backcountry MA5a due to concerns from the community. These concerns included potential management needs within areas that provide public water for the town of Rexford and areas of past logging in Williams Creek.”

Considering the fact that there has been an equal amount of public comment opposing the remaining portion of the Whitefish Divide recommended wilderness area, and that all of the “concerns regarding potential management needs within areas that provide water for the towns of both Rexford and Eureka” (the KNF somehow forgot to include Eureka’s water supply in this statement), still exist, (and are likely more substantial in the portion of the Whitefish Divide which is still proposed for recommended wilderness

management), we do not see how the KNF can possibly justify this management proposal.

12. paragraph 2 on page 454 of the FEIS states; “The revised Forest Plan Whitefish Divide recommended wilderness area on the KNF includes areas which are outside of an IRA (cherry stem of closed road systems and associated harvest in Blue Sky and Williams Creek) for manageability. Areas outside of the IRA account for approximately 13 percent of the total acres of recommended wilderness in Alternative B Modified”

This paragraph basically states that through some creative mapping around closed road systems and associated harvest units in the Blue Sky Creek and Williams Creek drainages, the KNF has “manufactured” an inventoried roadless area, which the KNF is now proposing as recommended wilderness. We believe that these “creative mapping techniques” are a violation of the regulations defined for creating inventoried roadless areas, and the regulations provided for evaluating these areas for wilderness characteristics.

The paragraph also states that 13 percent of the total acres of recommended wilderness are contained outside of the IRA. So, not only is the Whitefish Divide recommended wilderness contained within an IRA which has been manufactured with creative mapping techniques, but 13% of the area proposed as recommended wilderness are not even present in the IRA, and therefore likely do not meet any semblance of the definition of wilderness.

13. Paragraph 5 on page 449 of the FEIS states; “For example, Northwest Peaks IRA rated high in all suitability categories, but was determined not to be suitable based on comments from the public and elected officials.”

The same can be said for the Whitefish Divide area. The KNF appears to be using a double standard here. Was there some political horse trading done relative to the Northwest Peaks IRA that the public was not made aware of?

Proposed Solution

The plan should be altered to manage the portion of the Whitefish Divide Area currently proposed for Recommended Wilderness, in such a manner that would allow a maximum of both summer and winter recreation opportunities within the area, and allow for a wide range of options for both fire suppression, and vegetation management strategies that would prevent and/or mitigate the impacts of wildfire on municipal watersheds, and critical spawning habitat for endangered species.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal comments: Our comments on the Draft Kootenai National Forest Plan specifically addressed the proposed management policy for this area. In addition, our comments were recognized several times in the Response to Public Comments (Appendix G of the FEIS Appendices), under the subject of MA1b.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #2

Objectors Name: Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club
Address: P.O. Box 404 Eureka, Montana 59917
Phone # or E-mail address: tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.

Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the proposal to manage Big Creek, Little North Fork Big Creek, Good Creek, North Fork Big Creek, Copeland Creek, Drop Creek, South Fork Big Creek, East Branch of South Fork Big Creek, West Branch of South Fork Big Creek, Yaak River, West Fork Yaak River, Vinal Creek, Bull River, North Fork Bull River, Middle Fork Bull River, Bighorn Creek, East Fork Bull River, and Vermillion River as Management Area 2 – Eligible Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers. We also object to KNF personnel using the boundaries of the KNF in the eligibility portion of the analysis process.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

The reasons for this objection are this:

1. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 states that streams proposed for designation under the W&S rivers act must **“possess an outstandingly remarkable river related value that is a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale”**. We do not believe that the KNF has adequately demonstrated that the streams listed above “possess an outstandingly remarkable river related value that is a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale”.

2. The KNF has not given priority to the rivers evaluated for Wild and Scenic River designation in the manner that was specified for in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Page 4 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 states:

“Such studies shall be completed and such reports shall be made to

the Congress with respect to all rivers named in subparagraphs 5(a) (1) through (27) of this Act no later than October 2, 1978. In conducting these studies the Secretary of the Interior and **the Secretary of Agriculture shall give priority to those rivers**

(i) with respect to which there is the greatest likelihood of developments which, if undertaken, would render the rivers unsuitable for inclusion in the national wild and scenic rivers system, and

(ii) which possess the greatest proportion of private lands within their areas. Every such study and plan shall be coordinated with any water resources planning involving the same river which is being conducted pursuant to the Water Resources Planning Act (79 Stat. 244; 42 U.S.C. 1962 et seq.). Each report, including maps and illustrations, shall show among other things the area included within the report; the characteristics which do or

do not make the area a worthy addition to the system; the current status of land ownership and use in the area; the reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and water which would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed if the area were included in the national wild and scenic rivers system; the Federal agency (which in the case of a river which is wholly or substantially within a national forest, shall be the Department of Agriculture) by which it is proposed the area, should it be added to the system, be administered; the extent to which it is proposed that such administration, including the costs thereof, be shared by State and local agencies; and the estimated cost to the United States of acquiring necessary lands and interests in land and of administering the area, should it be added to the system. Each such report shall be printed as a Senate or House document.”

3. The majority of the water bodies being proposed for Wild and Scenic RIVER designation in the KNF Forest Plan are not RIVERS, and therefore should not be considered as eligible for Wild, Scenic or Recreational RIVER designation.

The following RIVERS are the original eight rivers that were designated as Wild, Scenic, or Recreational under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968.

Clearwater River, Middle Fork, Idaho.
Eleven Point River, Missouri,
Feather River, Middle Fork, California
Rio Grande River, New Mexico
Rogue River, Oregon
St. Croix River, Minnesota and Wisconsin
Salmon River, Middle Fork Idaho
Wolf River Wisconsin

Since these original eight RIVERS were designated as Wild, Scenic or Recreational under the Wild and Scenic RIVERS Act, numerous other RIVERS have been added to this list. The vast majority of water bodies being proposed for Wild, Scenic and Recreational RIVER designation within the KNF Forest Plan are small streams and creeks. When you evaluate the streams and creeks being proposed by the Kootenai National Forest relative to those RIVERS currently designated as Wild, Scenic, or Recreational under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, it is clear that the KNF evaluation process for Wild, Scenic and Recreational river eligibility DOES NOT conform with the original intent and spirit of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Given this FACT, these streams and creeks should not be eligible for Wild, Scenic, or Recreational River designation.

4. The evaluation process utilized by the KNF to determine eligibility for inclusion of a water body into the Wild and Scenic River system is conflicting and fundamentally flawed. In addition, it appears that the evaluation conclusions have been manipulated in order to substantiate a predetermined outcome.

Pages 323 & 324 of the KNF Draft EIS, Table 71, shows the Big Creek System segments 1 thru 7 as having “**Scenery & Recreation**” as the “**outstandingly remarkable**” value.

In direct conflict to this, the KNF Wild and Scenic Rivers - Initial Assessment for Eligibility (3/9/2005), states:

- * Big Creek South Fork as a **NO** for Recreation Value.
- * Big Creek South Fork East Branch and West Branch, as a **NO** for Scenery Value.
- * Copeland Creek as a **NO** for both Scenery & Recreation Values.
- * East Fork Lookout Creek as a **NO** for Recreation Values, and does not evaluate the Unnamed tributary to Lookout Creek.

In direct conflict with previous statements, the KNF Final EIS, page 476, Table 122, shows the Big Creek System segments 1 thru 7 as having “Recreation” as the “outstandingly remarkable” value.

Pg 477 of the KNF Final EIS, Table 123, shows the North Fork of the East Fork Bull River segments 1&2, as having “**Scenery**” as the “**outstandingly remarkable**” value.

In direct conflict to this the KNF Wild and Scenic Rivers - Initial Assessment for Eligibility (3/9/2005), shows the Bull River NFEF as a **NO** for both Scenery & Recreation Values.

Pg 325 of the KNF Draft EIS, Table 72, shows the Quartz Creek System segments 1 thru 3, as having “**Scenery**” as the “**outstandingly remarkable**” value.

In direct conflict to this The KNF Wild and Scenic Rivers - Initial Assessment for Eligibility (3/9/2005), shows the Quartz Creek and the West Fork Quartz Creek (Quartz Creek Segments 2 & 3 in the evaluation), as a **NO** for Scenery Value.

In direct conflict with previous statements, the KNF Final EIS, page 477, Table 123, states that “Fisheries and Botany” are the “outstandingly remarkable” values found in all segments of Quartz Creek.

Pg 325 of the KNF Draft EIS, Table 72, shows the West Fork Yaak River, segments 1 & 2, as having “**Scenery & Recreation**” as the “**outstandingly remarkable**” values.

In direct conflict to this, The KNF Wild and Scenic Rivers - Initial Assessment for Eligibility (3/9/2005), shows the West Fork of the Yaak River as a **NO** for both Scenery & Recreation Values.

In direct conflict with previous statements, the KNF Final EIS, Page 478, Table 123 states that “Scenery and History” are the “outstandingly remarkable values found in all segments of the West Fork Yaak River

Pg 324 of the Draft EIS, Table 72, shows the Grave Creek System segments 1 thru 4 (including Stahl Creek, Clarence Creek & Blue Sky Creek), as having “**Scenery and History**” as the “**outstandingly remarkable**” values.

In direct conflict to this the KNF Wild and Scenic Rivers - Initial Assessment for Eligibility (3/9/2005), states that:

- * Grave Creek as a **NO** for both Scenery & History Values.
- * Stahl Creek as a **NO** for both Scenery & History Values.
- * Clarence Creek as a **NO** for both Scenery & History Values.

* Blue Sky Creek as a **NO** for both Scenery & History Values.

In direct conflict previous statements, the KNF Final EIS, Page 477, Table 123 states that “Fisheries” are the “outstandingly remarkable” values found in all segments of Grave Creek.

Questions:

How is it possible that the “outstandingly remarkable” values of so many stream segments could have changed so drastically in the short period of time between the Initial Assessment for Eligibility and the writing of the KNF Draft EIS?

How is it possible that the “outstandingly remarkable” values of so many stream segments could have changed so drastically in the short period of time between the KNF Draft EIS and KNF Final EIS?

The FACT that the “outstandingly remarkable” values of so many stream segments have been manipulated by KNF personnel during these time periods illustrates the FACT that the KNF has not conducted assessments on these stream segments according to the original spirit and intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Therefore, the KNF must remove these stream segments from Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River consideration until such time as they can adequately evaluate the values of those stream segments according to the original spirit and intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

5. The public was not given the opportunity to properly review the KNF study reports as is required by section 4(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Taken From “National Wild and Scenic River, Final Revised Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification, and Management of River Areas. Federal Register, Tuesday September 7, 1982.

Pg 4 – The Study Process

“The purpose of a wild and scenic river study is to provide information upon which the President can base his recommendations and Congress can make a decision.

The Study Report

“Each river study report will be a concise presentation of the information required in sections 4(a) and 5(c) of the Act.”

“Study reports will be reviewed by other Federal agencies, states, **and the public as required by section 4(b) of the W&SRA.**”

6. Page 473 & 474 of the FEIS, under Eligibility states:

“To be eligible for designation, a river must be free-flowing and possess one or more outstandingly remarkable value.”

“In order to be assessed as outstandingly remarkable, a river-related value must be a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale.”

“The comparative scale used for this assessment is the individual forest. That is, the rivers and streams on the KNF were compared one to another.”

We believe that using the boundaries of the KNF as the comparative scale for this assessment is a gross misinterpretation of both the language and the intent of the Wild

and Scenic Rivers Act. Considering the fact that the KNF is part of Region 1 of the Forest Service, using all of the rivers present on the forests contained within region 1 would have been an acceptable regional comparative scale for this assessment. The KNF could be classified as being in either the Rocky Mountain or Pacific Northwest Region of the United States. Using all the contained within the states which comprise those regions would have been an acceptable regional comparative scale for this assessment. Using an individual forest is not an acceptable regional comparative scale for this assessment.

7. Page 472 of the FEIS under Law and Executive Orders states;

Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of June 12, 1960 (P.L. 86-517, 74 Stat.215): This act provides direction to the NFS lands to provide access and recreation opportunities. The act states, **“The policy of Congress is that national forests are established and administered for outdoor recreation...”**

Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (P.L. 94-579, 90 Stat. 2742, as amended): This act declares (per Sec. 102) that **“...the public lands be managed in a manner that...will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use.”**

Executive Order #13575 created a rural economic council which is chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture. The mission and function of that council are stated below.

Sec. 4. Mission and Function of the Council. The Council shall work across executive departments, agencies, and offices to **coordinate development of policy recommendations to promote economic prosperity and quality of life in rural America**, and shall coordinate my Administration's engagement with rural communities. The Council shall:

(d) identify and facilitate rural economic opportunities associated with energy development, outdoor recreation, and other conservation related activities.

Page 480 of the FEIS under Effects from Recreation Management states;
In order to provide an essentially primitive character, **eligible segments classified as wild would not likely have any recreation development occur. In segments classified as scenic or recreational, recreation development would be allowed but only when it would preserve the identified river values.**

This statement is in direct violation of the language and intent of MYSYA, FLPMA and Executive Order #13575 as outlined above.

Proposed Solution:

The final KNF plan should be altered to remove all streams listed above for Wild, Scenic and Recreational river consideration until such time as the KNF can provide and adequate explanation of the conflicts and questions identified above, and can provide a precise description of each stream segment's “outstandingly remarkable” value, as well the evaluation process that determined such value, and definitive evidence of why that value

is “a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale”. We also believe that the KNF plan should re-evaluate stream values based on a true “regional” comparison, which extend outside the boundaries of the KNF.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal

comments: Our comments on the Draft Kootenai National Forest Plan specifically addressed Wild, Scenic and Recreational river management proposals for these stream segments. In addition, our comments were recognized in the Response to Public Comments, on two occasions under categories discussing MA2. Our comments are also recognized under category #1700 Eligibility of Wild and Scenic Rivers, in the response to public comments.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club.

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #3

Objectors Name: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC) .
Address: P.O. Box 404, Eureka, MT 59917 .
Phone # or E-mail address: (406) 889-5074 or (406) 297-3377 .
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President .

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.
Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to all portions of the Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 revision which are related to questions posed to KNF officials by TLSC members during the DLMP comment period which were never answered. Furthermore, We believe that the failure of KNF officials to answer these questions is a blatant violation of the National Environmental Policy Act. officials failed to provide written answers to questions posed to them regarding the science used to support the forest management policies proposed in the KNF Draft Land Management Plan (DLMP) and KNF Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the DLMP. Failure by KNF officials to provide answers to these questions undermined our ability to thoroughly and accurately comment on the KNF DLMP and DEIS

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

The reasons for this objection are this:

On March 20, 2012 TLSC members send written questions to the KNF regarding the contents of the KNF DLMP, and Draft EIS for the DLMP. In addition a copy of the written questions was hand delivered to Fortine and Rexford District Ranger Betty Holder on March 18, 2012.

On April 10, 2012, TLSC members sent a follow-up letter to, KNF Forest Planner Ellen Frament, requesting written answers to the questions posed in the document sent to the KNF on March 20, 2012. Below is a copy of that letter.

Date: April 10, 2012

To: Ellen Frament, Kootenai National Forest - Forest Plan Revision.

From: Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC), P.O. Box 404 Eureka, Montana 59917.
tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com

Subject: Request for written answers to questions posed by TLSC members.

Ellen,

The TLSC appreciates the fact that KNF personnel took the time to meet with some of our members on April 3, 2012, and discuss the KNF Draft Forest Management Plan, and other documents. TLSC members feel that the meeting was a productive step in the right

direction, and look forward to future discussions with the KNF regarding forest management policies.

The TLSC also appreciates the attempts made by the KNF to supply information requested by the TLSC. TLSC members are currently in the process of reviewing the information that has been provided since that meeting, and will utilize this information to more accurately comment on the DFMP, and other documents. Although, we appreciate the meeting, the exchange of verbal information that occurred, and the fact that the KNF has made efforts to supply TLSC with additional information, TLSC members do not believe that providing this information excuses the KNF from providing written answers to the questions previously posed by TLSC members regarding specific statements found in the DFMP, Draft EIS, Draft Appendices, The Wild and Scenic River Act, and other documents.

At this time, the TLSC would like to request written answers to the questions posed in the document that was sent to the KNF on March 20, 2012. (A copy of the document, which contains the aforementioned questions, is attached to this letter.) Please provide specific answers to the questions posed. You will notice that many of the questions ask “Where is the science that supports a certain forest management policy?” When answering these questions, please provide specific references to the published scientific data that supports the policy in question. TLSC members would view references to data published in respected scientific journals, documented scientific research conducted by qualified Montana FWP, Idaho F&G, USGS, USFWS, USFS, and qualified University biologists, or published USFS Research Center General Technical Reports, as “acceptable science”, provided that the data and resulting scientific conclusions are applicable to the specific KNF management policy that is being questioned. TLSC recognizes that there are a number of duplicate questions in this request. When a duplicate question is encountered, KNF personnel should feel free to reference the location (i.e. page number, etc.), where the question was previously answered.

The TLSC members look forward to participating in the process of commenting on the DFMP and other documents, and working with the Forest Service to formulate a Kootenai National Forest Plan that is acceptable to members of the TLSC, and the communities of Sanders and Lincoln counties. Thank you for your assistance with this matter.

Respectfully - Members of the TLSC

Provided below is a copy of the document submitted to the KNF on March 20, 2012.
March 16, 2012.

TO: Betty Holder, Rexford and Fortine District Ranger, Kootenai National Forest

FROM: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club.

SUBJECT: Comments/Questions on the Kootenai National Forest Draft Land Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement that supports the plan.

Mrs. Holder,

The Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC), would like to thank you for the information the Forest Service has provided our group. We would also like to thank you for the invitation to ask questions and provide comments on the plan.

At this time, we would take you up on that invitation. Attached to this letter are several pages showing some requests for information, and some questions that have been formulated by members of the TLSC. We realized that some of the questions are duplicated, so if the forest service feels that they have adequately answered a particular question with the answer provided to a previous question, please feel free to simply refer to the previously answered question in response to the duplicate question. If specific answers to questions can be found within the DFMP, DraftEIS, or Appendices documents, please refer to the location of those answers within those documents. Also, many questions ask “Where is the science that supports this statement?” When answering these questions please provide references including; author, publication name, and publication date, for the scientific data, used to support those statements.

We understand that the requested information does not reside at your fingertips, and will take some time to provide. However, the requested information is critical to our ability to accurately comment on the proposed alternatives provided in the DFMP, prior to the comment closing date on April 5, 2012. With this in mind, we would request that the additional information and answers to the attached questions, be provided to the TLSC as soon as possible. Please notify the TLSC if an official Freedom of Information Act request is required to obtain any of the requested information.

In closing we would like to re-iterate our thanks for being included in this process. The members of the TLSC realize that you, and the members of your staff working on the DFMP, do not have the easiest job in this community. We would simply like to know that our comments and concerns are being incorporated into the final Kootenai National Forest Plan document.

Thank you for your assistance in providing our group with the requested information, and answers to the attached questions.

Sincerely, - Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club.

Information Requested

List of Items to Request from KNF

1. A Map of Alternative A that is comparable to Alternatives B-D. This map should show all acres outside of MA's 1a,1b,1c, 3,4, and 5a, and 5b as MA6- General Forest.
2. A copy of the USDA study report that was completed in the selection/screening process for the rivers proposed for Wild, Scenic, and Recreational designations.
3. Pg 10 of the draft EIS refers to an “Analysis of Public Comment Report”. We would like to request a copy of that report.

4. 1970's Aerial Photos of all existing or proposed Management Areas 1b & 1c in the Ten Lakes Area, and all other proposed additions to Management Area 1b on the KNF, proposed in Alternative B. Please include the flight pattern log for the aerial photographs, that identifies the location of the photos.

List of questions formulated from the Draft Forest Management Plan, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Appendices, and documents associated with the Wild and Scenic River Act.

Questions taken from the KNF Draft Forest Management Plan:

Pg 9, under Goals: "Manage large areas of the forest that accommodate opportunities for solitude and self-reliance?"

Statement: The vast majority of the KNF accommodates those opportunities whether or not the land is inside a congressionally designated wilderness area. Designating acreage as MA1b - recommended wilderness, is not going to change this.

Question: Why does the FS feel that more designations of MA1b are necessary to accomplish this goal?

Table 1, shows desired distribution of forest wide ROS.

Question: Why is 67% summer non-motorized desired? Desired by whom?

Pg 11, states that there are currently 10-20 miles of motorized trails on the forest.

Question: Where are these motorized trails located?

Pg26 – Table 6. Shows list of species where management needs to minimize disturbance.

Question: If GB population numbers are at all time highs and increasing, where is the science that proves how present management is having negative impacts during emergence periods, justifying more restrictive management in order to "minimize disturbance"?

Pg 49, near bottom, under MA1c-DC-AR-01, discussing MA1c Wilderness Study Areas: "This area offers opportunities for primitive recreation although uses established and allowed prior to the legislation are retained IF THEY MAINTAIN THE WILDERNESS CHARACTER AND THE POTENTIAL FOR INCLUSION IN THE National Wilderness Preservation System that existed in 1977."

Question: If motorized uses like snowmobiling were allowed prior to 1977, and yet it was determined that the TL Area had sufficient wilderness characteristics to be declared a Wilderness Study Area, then how would snowmobiling in 2012, alter those characteristics any more than snowmobiling in 1977 did?

Pg 51, under MA2 Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers, 1st paragraph: "Outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish, wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations".

Question: What are the **OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE** values that each segment of the 249 miles of eligible river possess, that makes them eligible for this designation?

Pg56-58, Table 13 shows recommended additions to MA3 – Special Areas.

Pg 56, Table 13 shows 6,542 acres of existing MA3 in Ten Lakes Scenic Area, and 8,403 acres of Recommended MA3 in TLSA.

Question(s): Are the existing and recommended MA3 acres inside the Wilderness Study Area boundary? If the Ten Lakes Area is already being managed as a Scenic Area, and/or a Wilderness study area, what is the purpose of designating acres within the TLA as MA3? Could designation of these areas as MA3 potentially result in more restrictive future management? We would ask these same questions about the Northwest Peaks Scenic Area? What is the current MA? Proposed MA? If overlapping MA's, why?

Pg 58 in table 13, shows an existing 16,835 acres in this MA, and 32,459 acres recommended for inclusion into this MA.

Question: How will management in those 32,459 acres change if they are included into this MA? More restrictive? Fewer long-term management options? If FS thinks they need to protect these areas by including them in these MAs, what exactly do they need to protection them from?

Pg60, Table 14 – Research Natural Areas: Table shows 5,210 existing acres, and 3,226 recommended acres.

Question: Same questions as for MA3.

Pg70, Table 16 – Table shows all the management restrictions for each MA.

MA1b - Recommended Wilderness: No motorized use, including no snowmobiling, and no chainsaws.

Question: Where is the science that shows that ANY motorized use currently allowed in these areas, including snowmobiles or chainsaws, are negatively impacting any species currently listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, or any other resource?

MA2 – Scenic and Recreational Rivers – No firewood cutting.

Question: What is the OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE value that makes each river segment eligible for this MA designation? How would firewood cutting diminish that value?

Pg 123 – Appendix A – Possible Actions – Access & Recreation: “Complete and implement the Recreation Master Plan Assessment and identify unsustainable recreation programs to be eliminated”.

Question: What would constitute an un-sustainable recreation program? Motorized use?

Pg 125 Wildlife: “Site-specific improvement of motorized access densities and secure core habitat parameters within Bear Management subunits”.

Also see - Travel Management.

Questions: What constitutes “improvement” of motorized access densities? Less open roads? .

What constitutes “travel management”? More road closures?

Pg125 Watersheds: “Removal, reconstruction, or improved maintenance of stream-side roads to increase water infiltration and reduce chronic sediment delivery to streams”. “Erosion control by decommissioning and re-constructing streamside roads”.

Questions: Are there currently stream-side roads out of compliance with Montana BMP’s? If not, why do we need remove, decommission, or re-construct them? If they are out of compliance, why? What actions/repairs are needed to bring those roads into compliance?

What constitutes “chronic sediment delivery” to the stream (I need a number tons/acre)? How was the sediment delivery to streams from roads calculated (what methodology was used)? Who did this? What were their qualifications? What mitigation measures can be taken to reduce sediment delivery without removing, decommissioning, or re-constructing the road.

Questions taken from the KNF Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

Pg iv – Special Areas (MA3) and Research Natural Areas (MA4) “Allocation of these MA’s will remain constant for all action alternatives.

Question: How can FS say this when it is obvious that alternatives B-D allocate more lands to these MA’s than alternative A. See Table 1 on page v.

Pg 5 under Needs for Change: “The 1987 Plan does not provide adequate direction to address changes in recreation demands”

Question: What Changes? More demand for motorized use, or more demand for non-motorized use? Who is demanding?

Pg 8 under Need for Change: “The first is to establish management direction that recognizes and emphasizes watershed restoration activities”

Question: What watershed restoration activities? Road obliteration?

Under Key Indicators: See Trend in watershed condition rating, and Trend in native aquatic species status.

Question: Where is the trend going? How is the trend direction determined? By Who?

Under Recommended Wilderness – Need for Change: “Evaluation of existing wilderness areas for wilderness potential is a requirement of Forest Plan revision”

Question: Since when does “evaluation” mean that the “Recommended Wilderness” MA needs to increase in acreage?

Pg 16 under The Preferred Alternative states “The regional forester for the Northern Region, has identified Alternative B as the preferred alternative for this draft EIS”.

Question: How can the regional forester identify a preferred alternative until the public, has commented on the draft FMP, and draft EIS and, and through these comments, have indicated which alternative is preferred by the majority of the public?

Pg 17 – Provides MA definitions.

1b Recommended Wilderness: “The wilderness character and potential for the each area recommended to be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System is to remain intact until Congressional action is taken”.

Question: So, if congressional action is never taken are these areas just managed as wilderness without actually ever being designated as wilderness by congress? This makes no sense. Why the FS want to do this, it just decreases management options? Who decided these areas met the definition of wilderness? How was that done?

Page 18, page 27, and the table on page 35, refer to Alternative A.

Question: Where is the map for Alternative A, that is comparable to Alts B-D? Under Special Areas & RNAs, this page again states “Allocation of these MA’s will remain constant for all action alternatives”.

Question: How can the FS make this statement, when proposed alternatives B, C & D, all show increases in the acreage of MA’s 3 & 4.

Pg 21 under Alternative B, it states: “This alternative emphasizes moving towards desired future conditions and contributing to ecological, social, and economic stability”

Question: What are desired future conditions? How were they determined? By whom?

Pg 33 under proposed standards: “Maximum road density of 1.5 miles per section”.

Question: Where is the science that proves that road densities affect Grizzly Bear population #'s?

Question: Where is the science that GB habitat quality is improved by restricting access?

Page 35 – Table shows MA allocations in various alternatives.

General Questions: Alternatives B, C, & D. Table 5 on Page 35

Table5, Page 35 of Draft EIS - MA1b Wilderness Recommended (Alternative A – 76,500 acres). Alternatives B (110,200) & C (214,800) both increase the acres in this MA designation.

Questions: What is the justification for these increases? What will be the benefits to the public? How will these designations change management from current management? Is this just more restrictive management? Fewer long-term management options for those acres?

MA2 Wild and Scenic Rivers (Alternative A – 0 acres). Alternatives B (47,300), C (45,100), and D (50,200), all increase the acres in this MA.

Questions: Why are these designations being proposed? More protection? Protection from what? How will these designations benefit the general public? How will these designations change management from current management? More restrictive management? Fewer long-term management options?

MA3 Special Areas (Alternative A 15,900 acres in MA3& 4 combined). Alternatives B (31,600), C (30,500), and D(31,700), all increase the acres in this MA.

Questions: What constitutes a “Special Area” (What is the definition)? We want to know what are the specific characteristics of each an every “special area” that is being added to this MA, and what were the criteria used to justify an individual area’s inclusion into this MA? Who recommended the inclusions of these new areas to this MA? On what basis? Were they qualified?

MA4 – Research Natural Areas (Alternative A 15,900 acres MA 3&4 combined). Alt B, C, & D - all (8,400), all increase the acres in this MA.

Question(s): What constitutes a “Research Natural Area” (What is the definition)? We want to know what are the specific characteristics of each an every “special area” that is being added to this MA, and what were the criteria used to justify an individual area’s inclusion into this MA? Who recommended the inclusions of these new areas to this MA? On what basis? Were they qualified?

MA6-General Forest. Alternative A (1,655,300 acres). Alternatives B-D, all decrease the acres in the MA. This MA is easily the most flexible MA from a management prospective, and provides the widest range of both short and long term forest management options.

Questions: Why would the forest service want to decrease the acres in this MA, and by doing so decrease both short and long term management options on the KNF? Are more options not better?

Pg 195 – Table 31: Shows, threatened & endangered spp., T&E candidate spp., Management indicator spp., and Forest Service sensitive spp.

Questions: What constitutes designation as a Forest Service sensitive species?

What constitutes designation as a management indicator species?

How do these designations affect management?

Why should management be more restrictive if there is no science that current management is negatively impacting these species?

LYNX Questions

Pg 196 under Affected Environment – Canada Lynx

Paragraph 1 “There are inadequate methods available to develop lynx population estimates”.

Paragraph 2 “Exact lynx population numbers are unknown to the Forest, although relative density is fairly high”.

Paragraph 4 “Controlling and/or managing access improves Canada lynx use by reducing the risk of displacement and poaching.

Questions: If we don’t know how many lynx are out there, how do we know they are threatened?

Why are we spending time/money recovering a species that might not need recovering?

Is there any population trends data for this area?

If relative density is high on the KNF, why do we need more restrictive management?

How do we know habitat carrying capacity is not being achieved under present management?

Where is the science/data that proves the paragraph 4 statement about poaching/displacement?

Pg 197 under Alternatives B, C, and D: “The difference between the alternatives is primarily how much vegetation treatment is predicted”

Question: Where is the science/data that proves how different vegetative treatments, or lack thereof affect lynx population numbers?

Pg198, under Effects of Management Area Direction: “Although lynx are generally tolerant of human disturbance, large areas with limitations on motorized use can aid in connectivity of lynx populations”.

Question: Where is the science that supports this statement?

Discussing MA1a “Wilderness” and 1b “Recommended Wilderness”: “which means these areas would provide lynx habitat without compacted snow due to motorized use”.

Questions: Where is the science that proves whether compacted snow helps/hurts lynx population numbers?

If motorized use was allowed in these MA’s, what percentage of the MA would be compacted snow? Less than 1%?

Pg 199, second paragraph: “The increased use of fire, both wildfire, and prescribed fire, would maintain or improve the pattern of lynx habitat across the forest”?

Questions: Where is the science that supports this statement?

If the science does exist, would timber harvest or thinning produce similar results?

Last paragraph: “The ecosystems in which lynx live are adapted to stand replacing fires. That is how lynx habitat is rejuvenated over time”.

Questions: Where is the science that supports this statement?

If we suppress fires, why would timber harvest or stand thinning, not accomplish the same thing?

Pg 202, 4th paragraph: “Although lynx are tolerant of human presence, disturbance may be great enough to cause displacement of individual cats in some circumstances”.

Question: Where is the science that supports this statement? Why would the FS implement more restrictive management, and reduce management options, because lynx displacement “MAY OCCUR IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES”?

Statement: Our biologically advisors tell us that Lynx population numbers are variable and/or cyclic in relation to the availability of their primary food source, snowshoe hares.

Question: If this is true, where is the science that proves that forest management, through vegetative treatment, and access management, can positively or negatively impact lynx and/or snowshoe hare population numbers?

GRIZZLY BEAR Questions

Pg 204, paragraph 3, 1st line: “Grizzly bears are habitat generalists”

Statement: We are quite sure that there is adequate science available to prove this statement.

Paragraph 4 – There are several statements that there is science indicating both increasing and decreasing bear population numbers in the Cabinet Yaak Recovery Area.

Question: Where is the science that proves that these increases or decreases in GB population numbers in the CYRA have anything to do with KNF forest management policies?

Pg 206, paragraph 2: “Legal hunting of GB no longer occurs, but GBs are taken by poachers and occasionally are mistakenly killed during BB hunting season”

Question: Where is the science proving GB’s are taken by poachers? How many?

Paragraph 4: “As the GB population increased over the last 29 years, the average number of known GB mortalities per year and time period, has increased from .66 during 1982-1986, to 3.25 bears per year during 1999 to 2010. Mortalities resulting from human causes increased from .6 to 2.25 per year during the same time periods”.

Question: Where is the science supporting this statement?

Statement: It seems logical that mortality would increase as total population increased. This data tells us there is a lot more bears out there, and likely more people as well.

Question: Is it assumed by the FS that these mortalities can be reduced by decreasing motorized access?

Question: If the GB population has increased over the last 29 years under current management policies, why would more restrictive forest management be justified for GB conservation?

Paragraph 5: “There is an apparently decreasing trend in mortalities occurring on NFS lands within and around the CYRZ over time. **As the overall population has increased over the last two decades,** the average number of bears that died due to human causes has remained about the same, but the % of human caused mortality occurring on NFS lands has dramatically **decreased** within each time period”.

Question: If these statements are true, and population numbers are increasing, why would FS need to implement more restrictive management in these areas in the name of GB protection?

Pg 209, 3rd paragraph: “Other direction in the plan would improve GB habitat by protecting den sites”.

Questions: Where is science that shows GB habitat is improved by protecting den sites? Where is science that shows GB population #'s are being negatively impacted by current management policies relative to den sites?

How will den sites be identified/protected? By restrict accessing to large areas?

Pg 210, under Road Impacts, 2nd paragraph: “Additionally habitat loss due to roads is lessened”. **Question:** How is habitat lost? What %?

Pg 211, under Motorized Over-snow Vehicles: “This is primarily a concern during spring emergence”

“Winter travel planning would occur in the future and would determine where over-snow vehicles are allowed in accordance with the above direction”

Question: Where is science proving negative impacts of over-snow vehicles?

Pg 313, paragraph 5, “The difference in use from 1977 to present is with the new snowmobiling technology, snowmobiles are now capable of travel in powder snow conditions, whereas earlier snowmobiles required harder and more crusted snow.

Question(s): Where is the science that supports this statement? While we do not disagree that newer snowmobile models travel better in powder snow conditions, 1977 model snowmobiles were very capable of travel in powder snow conditions when being operated by experienced riders, and although travel time necessary to access certain areas may be reduced with newer model snowmobiles, 1977 snowmobiles were more than capable of accessing every area of the Ten Lakes Scenic Area that are being accessed by snowmobiles today.

Pg 319, paragraph 2, “The Wild and Scenic River Act also directs building partnerships among landowners, river users, tribal nations, and all levels of government.”

Question(s): In order to build these partnerships logic would dictate that these various partners be contacted in the process of proposing eligible streams on the KNF. What partners were contacted in this process? Specifically: Which river users, which landowners, which tribal nations, and which levels of government? State government – Montana DNRC? Lincoln county government? Glen Lake Irrigation District?

Pg 321, under Eligibility: “In order to be assessed as outstandingly remarkable, a river-related value must be unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional national scale”. “Only one such value is needed for eligibility”.

Question: What are the outstandingly remarkable values of each river segment being proposed as wild, scenic or recreational? How was this determined? By whom?

Pg 331, Table 75 – shows recommended additions (3,226 acres), to research natural areas.

Questions: This table conflicts with previous statements that the acreage in this MA would remain unchanged through all alternatives. Why?

How would designation into this MA change management of these areas? More restrictive? Fewer long term management options?

Special Areas – MA4.

Pg 336, under Alternative A: “The 1987 ROD designated approx. 10,420 acres as Special Areas. Some of these Special Areas have had the boundaries modified since they were first designated, and now total approx. 16,800 acres”.

Question: How were the boundaries modified to increase acreage by > 6,000 acres? Was there a public comment/NEPA process done to increase these acreages?

Table 77, shows recommended additions to this MA (32,109 acres).

Question: Again, this conflicts with previous statements that this acreage would remain un-changed across all alternatives. Why?

Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River Designations Questions:

Questions taken from “National Wild and Scenic River, Final Revised Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification, and Management of River Areas. Federal Register, Tuesday September 7, 1982.

Pg. 3 - Additions of Rivers to the System

“The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides two methods for adding a river to the NW&SR system. 1. The first method is by an act of Congress. This happens upon completion of a study conducted by the USDI or USDA. The report is prepared and transmitted to the president.

Questions: Where is the USDA study report for the KNF? Who did the study? What were their qualifications? How was the study done?

Pg 4 – The Study Process

“The purpose of a wild and scenic river study is to provide information upon which the President can base his recommendations and Congress can make a decision.

The Study Report

“Each river study report will be a concise presentation of the information required in sections 4(a) and 5(c) of the Act.”

“Study reports will be reviewed by other Federal agencies, states, and the public as required by section 4(b) of the W&SRA.”

Question: When was the public review of the study reports completed for the KNF?

Pg 4 - Description of the River Area

“The study area will cover as a minimum, an area extending the length of the river segment authorized for study, and extending in width ¼ mile from each bank of the river.

Questions: ¼ as the crow flies? Will this also be the width of the area managed under W&SR designation?

Pg 6 – Section III Management

“Wild and scenic rivers shall be managed with plans prepared in accordance with the requirements of the act”

Question: Has the KNF Forest Plan been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the act? If not, what plan is in place to manage the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers proposed for designation on the KNF?

General Management Principles – Section 10(a) states:

“Each component of the national wild and scenic river system shall be administered in such a manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system”

“In such administration primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its esthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features”

“This section is interpreted as stating a nondegradation and enhancement policy for all designated river areas, regardless of classification. Each component will be managed to protect and enhance the values for which the river was designated, while providing for

public recreation and resource uses which do not adversely impact or degrade those values.

Question: Who determines adverse impacts or degradation?

Pg 7 – 1st paragraph: “New land uses must be evaluated for their compatibility with the purposes of the act”

Question(s): Knowing that “evaluating new land uses for their compatibility with the purpose of the act” is likely to cost the FS considerable time and money in the future, why would the FS propose to these designations?

Knowing that some groups will likely use this statement as a basis for litigation over future management in areas that are designated in the MA, why would FS propose these designations?

3rd Paragraph – Carrying Capacity: “Studies will be made during preparation of the management plan and periodically thereafter to determine the quantity and mixture of recreation and other public use which can be permitted without adverse impact on the resource values of the river areas.”

Question(s): So later studies can implement further restrictions on designated areas if these studies indicate “adverse impacts” are occurring? What use(s) could be determined as “adverse”? Could driving or maintaining a forest road within a wild and scenic river corridor be considered an adverse impact? What is the threshold or level of a particular use that would classify that “use” as adverse?

4th Paragraph – Public Use: “Public use will be regulated and distributed where necessary to protect and enhance the resource values of the river area. Public uses may be controlled by limiting access to the river”.

Question: So, these designations could potentially be used to regulate the public’s use of these areas? More restrictively?

Motorized Travel: “Will be restricted or prohibited where necessary to protect the values for which the river areas was designated”

Question: So, a group could file a lawsuit against the FS to close a road (say Grave Creek), because they believe the road needs to be closed in order to protect the values for which the river area was designated?

Other Resource Management Practices – “Resource management practices will be limited to those which are necessary for protection, conservation, rehabilitation, and enhancement of the river area resources.”

Question: So designation as W&S not only affects management of the river segment/corridor, but also other land management practices that might somehow impact the river?

Last Paragraph: “Where conflicts exist between provisions of the W&SR Act and other acts applicable to lands within the system, the more restrictive provisions providing for protection of the river values shall apply.

Question: So, once more restrictive management is in place, the most restrictive management policy applies?

Kootenai Draft EIS pg 321

Under Methodology and Analysis Process, paragraph 2: “The inventory of named rivers and streams on the KNF was accomplished by using the current GIS databases for rivers and streams on the Forest

Question: The GIS database could be used to determine free flowing status & eligibility, but how were the outstandingly remarkable values assessed? By Whom? What were their qualifications to perform this task?

Under Eligibility, paragraph 2: “In order to be assessed as outstandingly remarkable, a river related value must be unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale”.

Question: What are these “outstandingly remarkable” values for each eligible stream segment, and how were they determined?

Taken from “Wild and Scenic Rivers Act”, October 1968.

Pg 240, paragraph 1 states: “Secretary of Agriculture shall give priority to those rivers (i) with respect to which there is the greatest likelihood of developments which, if undertaken, would render the rivers unsuitable for inclusion in the national wild and scenic rivers system, and (ii) which possess the greatest proportion of private lands within their areas. Every such study and plan shall be coordinated with any water resource planning involving the same river which is being conducted pursuant to the Water Resources Planning Act.”

Question: After reviewing a description of the streams identified as eligible rivers on the KNF, it does not appear that priority was given accordingly considering the above statement. Why were these specifications for priority ignored during the process of determining eligibility for streams on the KNF?

Question from Draft Forest Plan & Draft EIS Appendices.

Pg 90, under Need: “To best analyze the need for additional wilderness in the Northern Region, the regional forester decided a needs assessment would be completed at the regional level. Two to six program managers then incorporate the assessment to rate the areas for need and assign a rating of high, moderate or low to each area.”

Question(s): How were “areas” defined? By forest?

What was the criteria utilized to rate each area’s need?

How did the Kootenai National Forest rate? What was the basis for the Kootenai area rating? Was there a report generated from this regional “needs rating”?

If so, we would like to request a copy of that document.

Pg 133, #1 “Boundaries must be identifiable on the ground”.

Question: What are the features that allow people to identify on the ground, the eastern, western, and southern boundaries of the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area?

Pg134, #5. “Old harvest units and access roads could be included within the recommended wilderness provided the evaluation process indicated wilderness management was the highest resource value for the area. In these cases access would be controlled and adequate mitigation measures taken to reduce erosion”

Question: What was involved the evaluation process to determine the highest resource value for the Ten Lakes Area?

Statement: All the spur roads contained in the Ten Lakes Area were originally built to access timber harvest units. So, historically these roaded areas have been managed for timber production.

Question(s): How can areas which have been roaded and managed for timber production possibly meet the definition of wilderness, necessary to include these areas in MA1b – Recommended Wilderness? What mitigation measures would be taken to reduce erosion? Road obliteration? Where is the science that supports the assertion that obliterating a fully compacted and vegetated road bed reduces erosion?

Members of the TLSC believe the failure of the KNF to provide the requested written answers to these questions undermined our ability to comment on the KNF DLMP and Draft EIS supporting the DLMP. We believe that this failure was a blatant violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Members of the TLSC believe that all the proposed management policies which were questioned in the document provided above, should remain status quo until such time as the KNF has provided answers to the questions posed and documentation of the science that was used to support the proposed changes in those management policies.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal

comments: We believe that the information provided in this objection adequately demonstrates the link between our objection and previous comments. In addition, our comments were recognized no fewer than 35 times in the Response to Public Comments under many of the same subjects discussed in this objection.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #4

Objectors Name: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC) .

Address: P.O. Box 404, Eureka MT, 59917 .

Phone # or E-mail address: (406) 889-5074 or (406) 297-3377 .

Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President .

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.

Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the KNF’s proposal to manage portions of the town of Eureka’s municipal watershed as MA1b – Recommended Wilderness. We also believe that this proposed management policy is a violation of the Clean Water Act.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

The Whitefish Divide recommended wilderness management proposal in the current KNF forest plan lies within the town of Eureka’s municipal watershed. When considering the potential impacts on the water quality within that watershed in the event of a catastrophic fire event, this proposed management policy is simply unacceptable for this area. As documentation of those potential impacts, we have attached to this objection excerpts from numerous scientific studies which discuss in detail the effects of fire on water quality. Please note that many of these studies were conducted by experts employed by the USDA Forest Service. Considering that a local fire ecology expert employed by the Forest Service has publicly stated that “this portion of the Whitefish Range is overdue for a large scale and severe fire event”, the KNF needs to realize that a catastrophic fire event in this areas is not just a possibility, but a probability, and manage those lands which supply drinking water to the citizens who live near the KNF in a manner which best protects the long-term quality and quantity of that water.

In addition:

Page 15 paragraph 4 of the Draft ROD states; **“Forest Service Handbook direction includes the requirement to protect water quality and abate or mitigate adverse water quality impacts while meeting other resource goals and objectives (FSH 2509.22).”**

Considering the significant risk that a large scale and severe fire event poses to the water quality within the Whitefish Divide area, we do not believe that the forest management proposals for the town of Eureka’s municipal watershed adhere to the “requirement” stated above.

Page 24, paragraph 1 of the Draft ROD under Environmentally Preferable Alternative states; “National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Forest Service policy (FSH 1909.15) defines

environmentally preferable as: “An alternative that best meets the goals of Section 101 of NEPA. ... Ordinarily this is **the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources.**”

It is common knowledge that, generally speaking, the USDA Forest Service has a “let it burn” policy for wildfire in congressionally designated wilderness areas. It is stated in the FEIS that the northern region of the Forest Service management policies for recommended wilderness areas, are the same as they are for congressionally designated wilderness. Given these management policies, we do not believe that managing any municipal watersheds on the KNF with a “let it burn” fire management policy is the management alternative which “**causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources.**”

Page 29 of the Draft ROD under Clean Water Act states;

“The intent of the Act is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation’s waters.”

and

“Implementation of the revised Plan is expected to contribute to protecting or restoring the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of waters of the United States in accordance with the Clean Water Act. Therefore, the revised Plan is fully compliant with this act.”

Considering the above statements relative to the Clean Water Act, we do not understand how the KNF’s proposal to manage portions of the town of Eureka’s municipal watershed with a “let it burn” fire management policy, is the best way to “protect or restore the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of these waters”. Therefore we do not believe that the revised Plan is fully compliant with this act.

Proposed Solution

The Whitefish Divide area, and all other drainages on the KNF which supply drinking water to the citizens of Lincoln and Sanders counties, need to be managed in such a way that the KNF retains a maximum number of options for managing those lands in such a way that can mitigate the impacts of large scale and severe fire events on both the water quality and quantity in those drainages.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal comments:

The town of Eureka’s municipal watershed was not discussed in either the Draft Land Management Plan, or Draft EIS. However, this issue was discussed in the Response to Public Comments, under two separate categories (#215 & #550) where our comments were recognized.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club

The influence of wildfire extent and severity on streamwater chemistry, sediment and temperature following the Hayman Fire, ColoradoA
(International Journal of Wildland Fire 2011, 20, 430-442)

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Abstract. The 2002 Hayman Fire was the largest fire in recent Colorado history (558 km²). The extent of high severity combustion and possible effects on Denver's water supply focused public attention on the effects of wildfire on water quality. We monitored stream chemistry, temperature and sediment before the fire and at monthly intervals for 5 years after the fire. The proportional extent of a basin that was burned or that burned at high severity was closely related to post-fire streamwater nitrate and turbidity. **Basins that burned at high severity on >45% of their area had twice the streamwater nitrate and four times the turbidity as basins burned to a lower extent;** these analytes remained elevated through 5 years post-fire. In those basins, the highest post-fire streamwater nitrate concentrations (23% of USA drinking water standards) were measured during spring, the peak discharge period. **Summer streamwater was 4.0C higher in burned streams on average compared with unburned streams; these persistent post-fire stream temperature increases are probably sufficient to alter aquatic habitat suitability.** Owing to the slow pace of tree colonization and forest regrowth, recovery of the watersheds burned by the Hayman Fire will continue for decades.

Introduction

The effects of wildfire on aquatic conditions span from hours to centuries (Minshall *et al.* 1989). **Temperatures reached during active burning can kill aquatic vertebrates and invertebrates (Dunham *et al.* 2003; Minshall 2003). Smoke and ash deposited into streams during combustion immediately change stream chemistry (Earl and Blinn 2003; Cerda' and Doerr 2008); the effects typically subside within months as precipitation transports ash from upland areas into surface or subsurface water.** Sustained effects of wildfire on watershed conditions result from the loss of aboveground structure and subsequent alterations in soil and hydrological processes. **Return of stream conditions (i.e. discharge, temperature, chemical composition, sediment concentration) to within their pre-fire range follows overstory vegetation recovery, typically occurring within a few years or decades (Benavides-Solorio and MacDonald 2001; Moody and Martin 2001; Prepas *et al.* 2003; Lane *et al.* 2008),** though relatively few studies have compared post-fire changes to pre-fire stream water conditions (Minshall *et al.* 2004; Burke *et al.* 2005). The extent and severity of

combustion determines the magnitude of wildfire effects on watershed processes. In North American forests, high-severity burning kills most overstory and understory plants, roots and rhizomes and consumes most of the surface organic matter (Keeley 2009). This type of combustion generally results in widespread change in forest structure and soil conditions that dramatically alter the watershed processes that control streamflow, peak discharge, soil erosion, channel stability and streamwater nutrient export (Spencer and Hauer 1991; Prepas *et al.* 2003; Robichaud *et al.* 2003; Lane *et al.* 2008; Blake *et al.* 2010). In contrast, low severity fire kills few overstorey trees and has minimal effect on below ground plant structures, litter layers and watershed conditions. The vegetation and O horizon (Pannkuk and Robichaud 2003; Cerda´ and Doerr 2008) remaining after moderate- and low-intensity fire both buffer against post-fire changes and facilitate watershed recovery (Wagenbrenner *et al.* 2006). The influences of fire severity on vegetation combine with the spatial variability of soil and geomorphic features to determine basin scale consequences of wildfire (Ice *et al.* 2004; Rodrı´guez *et al.*)

Public awareness, raised both by the Hayman Fire and other large North American wildfires of 2002 and recent years, has prompted widespread implementation of hazardous fuels reduction projects on national forest lands (USDA/USDOJ 2005). These efforts include timber harvesting, prescribed burning and fuels reduction treatments conducted in the wildland–urban interface.

(Note: The type of active, preventative management strategies discussed here is what we would like to see implemented in the Municipal Watershed. KNF personnel may refer to the Bozeman Municipal Watershed Project as an example of this.)

During the past two decades, the incidence of large, severe forest fires in the western USA (Westerling *et al.* 2006) and elsewhere globally has increased in response to warmer spring temperatures and longer fire seasons (Williams *et al.* 2001; Scholze *et al.* 2006; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007; Flannigan *et al.* 2009) and fuel accumulation.

Water quality implications

For example, in basins burned extensively by the Hayman Fire peak nitrate concentrations remained more than 100-fold above nitrate concentrations typically found in minimally disturbed Western Forested Mountain streams throughout the study and they were occasionally more than 10-fold higher than proposed total N criteria (e.g. 0.12mgNL₋₁; US EPA 2000). Temperature increases associated with climate change projections (i.e. 1–3C increase in air temperature) are predicted to reduce fish habitat by 15–40% in the Rocky Mountain region (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007). Based on findings from a study of the temperature sensitivity of salmonid populations in southern Wyoming (Rahel *et al.* 1996), the 4C increase in summer streamwater temperature measured after the Hayman fire could be expected to reduce fish habitat by 45–63%.

The highest measured post-fire nitrate concentration was 23% of the USA EPA's drinking water standard, though rainstorms occurring between monthly sample dates may have increased discharge and nitrate above drinking water thresholds in extensively burned basins. Summer convective storms generate high-intensity rainfall (i.e. 410mmh⁻¹) capable of producing runoff in burned Rocky Mountain watersheds (Moody and Martin 2001; Wagenbrenner *et al.* 2006; Moody *et al.* 2008).

For example, based on the relationship between seasonal maximum discharge and nitrate concentration in extensively burned basins (Fig. 7b), stream discharge above 100 L s⁻¹ km⁻² (e.g. 0.1m³ s⁻¹ km⁻²) would exceed 10 mgNO₃-NL⁻¹. In the 5 years following the Hayman Fire 29 summer storms occurred in the burn area; 13 produced more than 25.4mm of rain over a 24-h period and six produced more than 40mm of rain (Western Regional Climate Center 2006); these storms created rainfall intensities sufficient to generate surface runoff and sediment movement (Fig. 8), and likely resulted in stream nitrate peaks between our monthly sample collections.

Disturbance extent and severity

The post-fire water quality of these Hayman Fire study areas was well related to the extent of a basin burned at high severity (Figs 3, 4). Basins within the Hayman Fire perimeter that sustained high severity wildfire on >45% of their area had stream water nitrate and turbidity roughly 3-fold the levels measured in basins with <10% burned under such conditions (Fig. 3). High-severity fire released seven times more nitrate from two southern California chaparral watersheds at the US Forest Service San Dimas Experimental Forest compared with two basins burned at lower severity (Riggan *et al.* 1994). The high post-fire nitrate losses at San Dimas were attributed to increased soil nitrification combined with sediment movement from surface erosion and debris flows and chronically high atmospheric N deposition in southern California.

Post-fire streamwater conditions were related to both proportional extent burned and basin size in the Hayman, the 1988 Yellowstone and the 2003 Glacier National Park fires (Minshall *et al.* 1989; Mast and Clow 2008). Changes in streamwater chemistry and stream habitat increased with the extent burned (0–90%) across 21 basins burned by the Yellowstone fires (Robinson and Minshall 1996). **Similarly, the 2003 Robert and Trapper fires burned 73% and 26% respectively of two Glacier National Park drainages and increased stream nitrate concentrations 2.5-fold in the extensively burned basin but had no effect in the other (Mast and Clow 2008).** The extensively burned basin was only 15% the size of the less-responsive basin that burned to a lesser extent. Relative size also influenced the post-fire response of the Hayman study basins. For example, as basin size decreased there was an increase in the proportion of a basin that burned or that burned at high severity (extent burned: $R^2=0.83$, $P=0.004$; high-severity burned: $R^2=0.62$, $P=0.036$). The two smallest burned basins (Brush and Fourmile) had the highest mean streamwater nitrate concentrations and they released 4-fold more N per area than larger burned basins.

(Please note the proximity of the fires referenced near Glacier National Park to the Whitefish Divide Area).

Use of mechanical treatments and prescribed fire to reduce hazardous fuel loads, such as those that contributed to the Hayman Fire, are being widely implemented on US Forest Service lands under the auspices of the *Healthy Forest Restoration Act* (USDA/USDOJ 2005). **Compared with wildfire, these management activities typically create minor changes in water quality (Richter *et al.* 1982; Stephens *et al.* 2004).** In spite of current public support for hazardous fuel treatments, active management of national forestlands remains controversial (Beschta *et al.* 2004; Steelman and DuMond 2009). **The large extent of forest area designated for fuel-reduction treatments, projections for longer fire seasons, increasing frequency of large, severe fires (Westerling *et al.* 2006), and the slow pace of watershed recovery from high-severity wildfire all underscore the need for comprehensive, long-term monitoring of the watershed and aquatic conditions (Stone *et al.* 2010).**

(Note: This is another example of how lands in the Whitefish Divide Area, and other KNF lands containing municipal watersheds, can be proactively managed to mitigate against the impacts of wildfire on water quality within the area)

WILDAND FIRE IN ECOSYSTEMS: EFFECTS OF FIRE ON SOIL AND WATER.
USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, General Technical Report
RMRS-GTR-42-Volume 4. September 2005

Daniel G. Neary
Kevin C. Ryan
Leonard F. DeBano

Chapter 12: Summary and Research Needs

Fire and Streamflow Regimes Summary

Fires affect water cycle processes to a greater or lesser extent depending on severity. **Fires can produce some substantial effects on the streamflow regime of both small streams and rivers**, affecting annual and seasonal water yield, peakflows and floods, baseflows, and timing of flows. Adequate baseflows are necessary to support the continued existence of many wildlife populations. Water yields are important because many forest, scrubland, and grassland watersheds function as municipal water supplies. **Peakflows and floods are of great concern because of their potential impacts on human safety and property.** Next to the physical destruction of a fire itself, postfire floods are the most damaging aspect of fire in the wildland environment. It is important that resource specialists and managers become aware of the potential of fires to increase peakflows.

Following wildfires, flood peakflows can increase dramatically, severely affecting stream physical conditions, aquatic habitat, aquatic biota, cultural resources, and human health and safety. Often, increased flood peakflows of up to 100 times those previously recorded, well beyond observed ranges of variability in managed watersheds, have been measured after wildfires. Potentials exist for peak flood flows to jump to 2,300 times prewildfire levels. Managers must be aware of these potential

watershed responses in order to adequately and safely manage their lands and other resources in the postwildfire environment.

Water Quality Summary

When a wildland fire occurs, the principal concerns for change in water quality are: (1) the introduction of sediment; (2) the potential for increasing nitrates, especially if the foliage being burned is in an area of chronic atmospheric deposition; (3) the possible introduction of heavy metals from soils and geologic sources within the burned area; and (4) the introduction of fire retardant chemicals into streams that can reach levels toxic to aquatic organisms.

The magnitude of the effects of fire on water quality is primarily driven by fire severity, and not necessarily by fire intensity. Fire severity is a qualitative term describing the amount of fuel consumed, while fire intensity is a quantitative measure of the rate of heat release (see chapter 1). In other words, the more severe the fire the greater the amount of fuel consumed and nutrients released and the more susceptible the site is to erosion of soil and nutrients into the stream where it could potentially affect water quality. **Wildfires usually are more severe than prescribed fires. As a result, they are more likely to produce significant effects on water quality.** On the other hand, prescribed fires are designed to be less severe and would be expected to produce less effect on water quality. Use of prescribed fire allows the manager the opportunity to control the severity of the fire and to avoid creating large areas burned at high severity.

The degree of fire severity is also related to the vegetation type. For example, in grasslands the differences between prescribed fire and wildfire are probably small. In forested environments, the magnitude of the effects of fire on water quality will probably be much lower after a prescribed fire than after a wildfire because of the larger amount of fuel consumed in a wildfire. **Canopy-consuming wildfires would be expected to be of the most concern to managers because of the loss of canopy coupled with the destruction of soil aggregates. These losses present the worst-case scenario in terms of water quality.** The differences between wild and prescribed fire in shrublands are probably intermediate between those seen in grass and forest environments.

Another important determinant of the magnitude of the effects of fire on water quality is slope. Steepness of the slope has a significant influence on movement of soil and nutrients into stream channels where it can affect water quality. Wright and others (1976) found that as slope increased in a prescribed fire, erosion from slopes is accelerated. If at all possible, the vegetative canopy on steep, erodible slopes needs to be maintained, particularly if adequate streamside buffer strips do not exist to trap the large amounts of sediment and nutrients that can be transported quickly into the stream channel. It is important to maintain streamside buffer strips whenever possible, especially when developing prescribed fire plans. These buffer strips will capture much of the sediment and nutrients from burned upslope areas.

Nitrogen is of concern to water quality. If soils on a particular site are close to N saturation, it is possible to exceed maximum contamination levels of NO₃-N (10 ppm or 10 mg/L) after a severe fire. Such areas should not have N-containing fertilizer applied after the fire. Chapter 3 contains more discussion of N. Fire retardants typically

contain large amounts of N, and they can cause water quality problems where drops are made close to streams.

The propensity for a site to develop water repellency after fire must be considered (see chapter 2). Water-repellent soils do not allow precipitation to penetrate down into the soil and therefore are conducive to erosion. Severe fires on such sites can put large amounts of sediment and nutrients into surface water.

Finally, heavy rain on recently burned land can seriously degrade water quality. Severe erosion and runoff are not limited to wildfire sites alone. But if postfire storms deliver large amounts of precipitation or short-duration, high-intensity rainfalls, accelerated erosion and runoff can occur even after a carefully planned prescribed fire. Conversely, if below-average precipitation occurs after a wildfire, there may not be a substantial increase in erosion and runoff and no effect on water quality.

Fire managers can influence the effects of fire on water quality by careful planning before prescribed burning. Limiting fire severity, avoiding burning on steep slopes, and limiting burning on potentially water-repellent soils will reduce the magnitude of the effects of fire on water quality.

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #5

Objectors Name: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC).
Address: P.O. Box 404, Eureka MT, 59917.
Phone # or E-mail address: (406) 889-5074 or tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com.
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the fact that Kootenai National Forest, under direction from Region 1 of the USDA Forest Service, has adopted a policy to manage Recommended Wilderness management areas as if they were congressionally designated wilderness, despite the fact that the public has not had sufficient opportunity to comment on this policy, and this policy has not been approved by the Congress of the United States, the only official body legally designate wilderness.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

The reasons for this objection are this:

Page 371 of the Appendices for the KNF FEIS, for the Revised Land Management Plan states: **“A white paper provides consistency for management of Recommended Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas across the Region 1”.**

In direct contrast to this, we are in possession of a letter addressed to Citizens for Balanced Use president Kerry White, from Region 1 Regional Forester Abigail Kimbell, dated January 24, 2006, which clarifies points discussed in a previous meeting:

The first point requesting clarification states: “1. Restrictions on motorized and mechanized use in Recommended Wilderness Areas are applied at the discretion of individual Forest Supervisors.”

Mrs Kimbell states: **“This statement is true. We have no Regional policy or direction that requires Forest or Grassland Supervisors to prohibit or allow motorized use in areas they recommend for wilderness designation in Forest Plans. Supervisors may use their discretion when determining the management direction for Recommended Wilderness Areas in their Forest Plans. However, they must weigh these decisions very carefully to protect the values that qualify these areas for wilderness consideration”**

Reason #1:

We object to the changing and implementation of forest management policies based a “white paper” that the public was NEVER allowed to comment on, and that the Congress of the United States has NEVER approved.

Reason #2:

In addition to not being subject to any public comment or congressional approval, the “white paper” referenced above was neither referenced or not supplied in the KNF Draft

Land Management Plan, Draft EIS, or Appendices. The fact that the document, which provides the basis for land management policies for certain management areas proposed in the KNF Plan, was neither referenced and supplied in any of the draft documents, is a clear violation of Forest Service policy.

Reason #3

Paragraph 4 on page 462 of the FEIS states; “The KNF manages areas recommended as additions to the national wilderness preservation system. Once the decision is made to recommend an area as wilderness, management actions and decisions affecting these areas should be consistent in protecting and preserving the wilderness character (R1 Consistency Paper).”

This is the first reference to this “Consistency Paper” that we are aware of. In addition, we could not find a copy of this paper in the FEIS, FEIS appendices, or any of the draft documents. If the Region is basing management policies for recommended wilderness areas on an “R1 Consistency Paper”, then the public should have the opportunity to comment on the management policies outlined in the paper.

Proposed Solution

Region 1 of the USDA Forest Service needs to suspend the management policies for Recommended Wilderness Management Areas and Wilderness Study Areas, which are based on the management policy recommendations stated in the “white paper” and/or “consistency paper” referenced in the response, until such time as the public has had the sufficient opportunity to comment on the management policies outlined in the above referenced “white paper”. In addition, a “programmatic impact analysis” should be completed on this white paper before non-motorized designations and actions are done by guidance of this “white paper”. Finally, wilderness management policies should not be proposed for any lands which have not been officially incorporated into the wilderness preservation system by the Congress of the United States.

As part of this objection, we would like to formally request at this time, under the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the “white paper” which is referenced in the response on page 371 of the FEIS Appendices quoted above.” I would also like to request a copy of the USDA or Forest Service directive which authorizes the implementation of the management policies outlined in the aforementioned “white paper”.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal

comments: This is a new issue that has emerged between the release of the KNF DLMP and KNF Final Plan revision. Therefore, no previous comments on this issue should be necessary. However, our comments were recognized several times in the Response to Public Comments under the category of MA1b, as well as numerous other categories which could be related to this objection.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #6

Objectors Name: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC).
Address: P.O. Box 404, Eureka MT, 59917.
Phone # or E-mail address: (406) 889-5074 or tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com.
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President.

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.

Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the process and protocol which were utilized to designate Inventory Roadless Areas (IRA's) in Region 1 of the Forest Service, and on the KNF. We also object to the evaluation process for wilderness characteristics applied to the IRA's currently designated on the KNF.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

The reasons for this objection are this:

Reason #1

Page 443 of the FEIS States: 36 CFR 219.27(b): Special Designations - (b) Wilderness Area Reviews states: 'Unless federal statute directs otherwise, **all undeveloped areas** that are of sufficient size as to make practicable their preservation and use **in an unimpaired condition** must be evaluated for recommended wilderness designation during the Plan revision process.

Examination of historic aerial photographs for many of the Inventoried Roadless Areas currently present on the KNF will clearly show the existence of forest roads, and in many cases, timber harvest units. Forest roads and timber harvest units should be considered both development and impairment for these areas.

Reason #2

2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B): The 2001 Roadless Rule establishes prohibitions on road construction, **road reconstruction**, and timber harvesting on inventoried roadless areas on NFS lands.

It should be physically impossible to have considerations made for road reconstruction in a true roadless area.

Reason #3

Inventory of Roadless Areas for Forest Plan Revision

When revising forest plans, national forests are required to evaluate **roadless** areas, consider their wilderness characteristics, and to make recommendations to Congress regarding areas suitable for inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Note the emphasis shown on the word “roadless”. Many of the areas currently designated as Inventoried Roadless Areas on the KNF are not “roadless”. (See explanation provided in reason #1).

Reason #4

The first step in the evaluation of potential wilderness is to identify and inventory all **roadless** areas within NFS lands that satisfy the definition of wilderness found in section 2(c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Criteria for determining whether an area of NFS land qualifies as an IRA are provided in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 (71.1), which states: “Areas qualify for placement on the potential wilderness inventory if they meet the statutory definition of wilderness.

Include areas that meet either criteria 1 and 3, or criteria 2 and 3 below.

Evaluation Criteria #3 states:

3. Areas **do not contain forest roads** (36 CFR 212.1) or other permanently authorized roads, except as permitted in areas east of the 100th meridian.”

Note the emphasis shown on the word “roadless” in the first paragraph, and the “do not contain forest roads” requirement for evaluation criteria #3. Areas which contain forest roads, and timber harvest units clearly do not meet the definition of wilderness found in section 2(c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Reason #5

Paragraph 1 on page 447 of the FEIS states; “The 1987 Plan identified 32 IRAs with a total of 403,300 acres. A review of the 32 IRAs and other unroaded areas was updated as part of the initial Forest Plan revision efforts in 1999. The purpose of the 1999 update was to review unroaded areas for updated criteria, correct mapping errors through application of GIS mapping and adjust the inventory for areas where harvest had occurred, or where planned and did not occur. The criteria for delineation of roadless and other unroaded areas were based on the Regional Roadless Area Inventory protocol (Regional Office, 1996). The updated inventory identified 11 additional areas and 235,870 additional acres for a total of 43 IRAs and 639,100 acres of NFS land (see figure 36). This inventory was included in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.”

We are having a hard time understanding how the 32 IRAs totaling 403,300 acres, magically turned into 43 IRAs totaling 639,100 acres with a simple “review of unroaded areas with updated criteria” and “correction of mapping errors through application of GIS mapping”, in only 12 short years. We believe that the Regional Roadless Area Inventory protocol utilized to perform this update violates the regulations for evaluating “roadless” areas as they are defined above. Again, an examination of historic aerial photographs show the existence of forest roads and/or timber harvest units, in many of the “Inventoried Roadless Areas” identified by the KNF. The fact that the KNF may have removed the roads present in these areas from the KNF’s official travel map and/or road data base does not erase the physical existence of these roads on the ground.

Reason #6

Paragraph 2 on page 447 of the FEIS states; “For the purposes of this evaluation, the IRAs shown in figure 36 have been determined to qualify as the potential wilderness inventory. They are all areas within NFS lands and satisfy the definition of wilderness found in section 2(c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act, and subsequent policy or direction.”

This is simply not true. Many of the acres contained within several of the areas currently classified as “Inventoried Roadless” by the KNF clearly do not meet the definition of wilderness as found in section 2© of the 1964 Wilderness Act. **These areas DO NOT “generally appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable”**. Again, just because the KNF may have removed the roads present in these areas from the KNF’s official travel map and/or road data base does not erase the physical existence of these roads on the ground.

Reason #7

Paragraph 2 on page 454 of the FEIS states; “The revised Forest Plan Whitefish Divide recommended wilderness area on the KNF includes areas which are outside of an IRA (cherry stem of closed road systems and associated harvest in Blue Sky and Williams Creek) for manageability. Areas outside of the IRA account for approximately 13 percent of the total acres of recommended wilderness in Alternative B Modified”

This paragraph basically states that through some creative mapping around closed road systems and associated harvest units in the Blue Sky Creek and Williams Creek drainages, the KNF has “manufactured” an inventoried roadless area, which the KNF is now proposing as recommended wilderness. We believe that these “creative mapping techniques” are a violation of the regulations defined for creating inventoried roadless areas, and the regulations provided for evaluating these areas for wilderness characteristics.

The paragraph also states that 13 percent of the total acres of recommended wilderness are contained outside of the IRA. So, not only is the Whitefish Divide recommended wilderness contained within an IRA which has been manufactured with creative mapping techniques, but 13% of the area proposed as recommended wilderness are not even present in the IRA, and therefore likely do not meet any semblance of the definition of wilderness.

Proposed Solution

The KNF and Region 1 of the USFS need re-evaluate all areas on the KNF currently classified as Inventoried Roadless, and remove all acres within these areas which have forest roads in them. Once this process has been completed, new boundaries and acreage figures need to be defined for all the true “roadless” areas which have been identified. A Wilderness suitability assessment can then be completed on those re-defined Inventoried Roadless areas, which are truly roadless.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal comments: Our comments on the DLMP addressed this issue, and we were recognized as commentors on public comment Category #550, IRAs Evaluation for Wilderness Potential.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #7

Objectors Name: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC).
Address: P.O. Box 404, Eureka MT, 59917.
Phone # or E-mail address: (406) 889-5074 or tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com.
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President.

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.

Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the proposal to manage the area within the Whitefish Divide area from Williams Creek south to the KNF forest boundary and east to the KNF forest boundary as MA 5a - Backcountry non-motorized year round.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

The reasons for this objection are this:

1. Management of this area under the management policies defined for Management Area 5a, would essentially manage this area as a defacto wilderness. These policies do not allow for sufficient vegetation management strategies to be employed to mitigate the potential effects of large scale wildfires. Catastrophic wildfires in this area would negatively impact municipal water supplies. A local expert (USFS Fire Ecologist Steve Barrett), in fire ecology has stated that the portion of the Whitefish Range contained within this area is “overdue for a large scale and high intensity fire event”. Considering that this area is within the town of Eureka Montana’s, the town of Fortine Montana’s, and Glen Lake Irrigation District’s municipal watershed, management of this watershed with the “let it burn” fire management policy that is applied to Wilderness Areas is unacceptable in this watershed which is classified as a B-1 watershed by the State of Montana. 5a management policies for this area would not only decrease the available options to fight wildfire, but also eliminate options to manage vegetation in a way that could mitigate the potential impacts of wildfire on water resources. (Reference – Steve Barrett, USFS Fire Ecologist, Presentation on the Whitefish Range Fire History) (Reference – USDA Forest Service GTR-42-Volume 4, September 2005)

2. Catastrophic wildfires within this area would negatively impact Bull Trout, which are currently listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The portion of Williams Creek, which forms the northern boundary of this area is classified as core Bull Trout habitat. Deep Creek, which runs through the middle of this area, is also has the potential to provide critical Bull Trout rearing habitat. Runoff of ash, sediment, and other contaminants that would likely occur after a catastrophic fire event in the area has a high potential to have negative impacts on the overall habitat conditions, and spawning habitat success of Bull Trout in Williams Creek, Deep Creek, and Grave Creek below the mouth of Williams Creek. When this fire event occurs, (See Steve Barrett reference), the

Kootenai National Forest would be in violation of the Endangered Species Act, as well as numerous policies related to the conservation of threatened and endangered species.

3. The Record of Decision for the 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision stated that the one of the main reasons that the Roderick area of the KNF was being proposed for Recommended Wilderness management was that this management strategy had the support of a local stakeholder group. The Galton Stakeholder Collaborative is a diverse local stakeholder group which has been collaborating on travel management strategies for the Galton Area on the Fortine Ranger District of the Kootenai National Forest. The area under discussion is contained within the Galton Area. The Galton Stakeholders Collaborative has 100% consensus on opposition to 5a management for this area, for many of the reasons previously discussed in this objection.

4. 5a management for this area would be detrimental to local economies. The rural economies of this area benefit from the diversity of both summer and winter recreational opportunities currently offered in this area. Managing this area under 5a management policies would significantly decrease the diversity of both summer and winter recreational opportunities available in this area, thereby negatively impacting local economies.

5. There is currently no credible science which documents that the management policies currently in place for this area, which allow for winter motorized use, are in any way detrimental to any of the resources contained within this area, including but not limited to any threatened or endangered species. In the absence of this science, there is absolutely no reason that the current recreational uses for this area, should not be allowed to continue.

Proposed Solution

The plan should be altered to manage this area in such a manner that would allow a maximum of both summer and winter recreation opportunities within the area, and allow for a wide range of options for both fire suppression, and vegetation management strategies that would prevent and/or mitigate the impacts of wildfire on municipal watersheds, and critical habitat for endangered species. The KNF needs to re-classify this area as either MA5c – Backcountry winter motorized, and/or MA6 - General Forest, in order to accomplish these goals.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal

comments: The MA classification for this area has been changed from MA1b – Recommended Wilderness, to MA5a, in the time period between the Draft and Final Plans. There fore this is a new issue that we were not capable of commenting on in the Draft stage of the plan. However, our comments on the Draft Plan did address proposed management policies for this area.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club_____.

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #8

Objectors Name: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC) .
Address: P.O. Box 404, Eureka MT, 59917 .
Phone # or E-mail address: (406) 889-5074 or tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com .
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President .

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.
Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the KNF’s proposal to designate 36 additional special areas (MA 3), totaling 30,635 acres, and three additional research natural areas (MA 4), totaling 3,226 acres. We also object to the proposal to increase the size of the Northwest Peaks, and Ten Lakes, scenic areas.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

Research Natural Areas

Page 482 of the FEIS states; “Research natural areas (RNAs) are permanently established to maintain areas of natural ecosystems and areas of special ecological significance. These **protective** designations attempt to maintain natural ecosystem components and processes”

What exactly is the KNF protecting these areas from?

Are current forest management policies damaging resources in these areas?

These designations will severely limit future forest management options in these areas. Is it not possible, even probably, that future management could be utilized to protect and/or enhance the unique resource values currently present in these areas?

If so, why would the KNF want to limit future management options?

Please provide the science that supports these designations?

Special Areas

Page 7 of the draft ROD, under Special Areas states; **“These additional special areas will be protected and managed for public use and enjoyment.”**

And

“I am increasing the size of the Northwest Peak (8,533 acres) and Ten Lakes (8,403) scenic areas to incorporate the adjacent unique scenic values and improve manageability of the areas.

Page 487 of the FEIS states; “Special Areas are **protected and managed for public use and enjoyment**. These areas are identified due to their **unique or special characteristics**.”

Again, what exactly are these areas being protected from?

Are these areas not being managed for “public use and enjoyment” under current management policies?

Are current management policies somehow detrimental to the “unique or special characteristics” found in these areas? If so, how?

These designations will severely limit future forest management options in these areas. Is it not possible, even probably, that future management could be utilized to protect and/or enhance the “unique or special characteristics” currently present in these areas?

If so, why would the KNF want to limit future management options?

Page 7 of the draft ROD states; “I am increasing the size of the Northwest Peak (8,533 acres) and Ten Lakes (8,403) scenic areas to incorporate the adjacent unique scenic values and improve manageability of the areas.”

What exactly are the additional acres being added to these areas being protected from?

How are current management policies detrimental to the “unique or special characteristics” present in these areas?

Exactly how will increasing the size of these areas improve manageability?

Given the fact that future management could be utilized to preserve the “unique or special characteristics present in these areas, why would the KNF want to limit future management options in these areas?

Proposed Solution

The KNF needs to re-evaluate the proposals for new designations of both Special Areas (MA3) and Research Natural Areas (MA4). No new Special Areas or Research Natural Areas should be designated unless it can be definitely proven that current forest management policies are detrimental to the special characteristics present in these areas. The proposed new designations for all RNA and Special Areas, as well as the additional acreage proposed for both the Northwest Peaks, and Ten Lakes areas, should remain under general forest management.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal comments:

Our comments clearly addressed these management policies, and were recognized under categories #743, #751, #753, and #1300.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #9

Objectors Name: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC)
Address: P.O. Box 404, Eureka MT, 59917
Phone # or E-mail address: (406) 889-5074 or tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.
Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the assertion that the KNF utilized the “Best Available Science” throughout the plan revision process.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

Page 26 of the draft ROD states; “The development of the Final EIS and the revised Plan has been based on consideration of the **best available science** throughout the planning process. This has occurred by comprehensively reviewing available scientific research and other information relevant to the resource areas addressed.”

Reason #1

If the best available science was utilized in this process, why is the KNF proposing Recommended Wilderness management in the northern portion of the Whitefish Divide area, and the “let it burn” fire management policy that goes with that management area, in the town of Eureka’s municipal watershed. There is currently no shortage of credible science (see attached documents), which accurately document the potential impacts of wildfire on water quality. Despite the fact that this science was readily available to the KNF in this process, (much of the research was done by USFS personnel), the KNF simply chose to ignore this science in the plan revision process.

Reason #2

Page 251 of the FEIS, under Road Impacts states; “Current management of roads within grizzly bear habitat is guided by the Access Amendment. This is also true under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D. Under the action alternatives , FW-DC-WL-02, FW-DC-WL-04 and 05, FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, MA5abc-DC-WL-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-03, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03, GA-DC-WL-TOB-01, and GA-DC-WL-TOB-03 reduce the possibility of road related impacts by creating security habitat with lower human presence due to lack of motorized access. This security habitat provides areas on the Forest where bears can escape the disturbance associated with roads.

The Access Amendment, as well as the action alternatives listed, are largely based on the research conducted by Wakkinen and Kasworm. The is not the “best available science”. More recent research conducted by John Waller in 2005, dispels many of the conclusions of the Wakkinen & Kasworm research.

To our knowledge there is currently NO existing science which definitively proves that motorized use on national forest lands is in any way harmful to grizzly bears or grizzly bear habitat. In fact, the “best available science”, would indicate that much habitat quality and food availability are far more influential to grizzly bear movements and habitat usage than roads are. Despite this lack of science the KNF has implemented motorized restrictions on thousands of acres of KNF lands in the name of Grizzly Bear habitat security. Grizzly Bear-hiker conflicts are well documented. However, when reviewing the available science it is difficult to find many grizzly bear-motorized use conflicts on forest roads and trails, (most of the mortalities related to motor vehicles occur as a result of collisions with trains and on vehicles on highways). Despite this readily available data, the KNF justifies thousands of acres of motorized closures as grizzly bear and grizzly bear habitat protection. The “best available science” was clearly not used to develop travel management policies on the KNF.

Reason #3

To our knowledge there is currently NO existing science which definitively proves that motorized use on national forest lands, or vegetation management in acres over 4000 feet in elevation, is in any way harmful to Canada Lynx. Despite this lack of science, the KNF has restricted motorized use to “protect lynx habitat”, and has suspended vegetation management activities in timber stands above 4000 feet elevation in the name of Canada Lynx habitat improvement. Again, the “best available science” was clearly not used to develop these aforementioned forest management policies on the KNF.

Proposed Solution

The KNF needs to re-examine the “best available science” related to each of the subjects discussed in this objection, and alter proposed management policies accordingly. This would include; 1. The removal of the proposal for Recommended Wilderness management in the that portion of the Whitefish Divide area which is contained within the town of Eureka’s municipal watershed. 2. The revision of motorized restrictions related to grizzly bears and grizzly bear habitat protection., and 3. The revision of motorized restrictions and vegetation management policies, related to Canada Lynx, and Canada Lynx habitat protection.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal

comments: Our comments clearly addressed this subject, and were acknowledged in the Response to Public comments, category #280 – Best Available Science.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #10

Objectors Name: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC)
Address: P.O. Box 404, Eureka MT, 59917
Phone # or E-mail address: (406) 889-5074 or tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.
Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the management policies proposed in the name of species currently listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act including; Grizzly Bears and Canada Lynx.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

Reason #1

Page 29 of the draft ROD, paragraph 1 under Endangered Species Act and Sensitive Species (Forest Manual 2670) states; “Section 7(a)(1) of the Act requires federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of listed species. In addition, ESA requires federal agencies to insure that any agency action does not jeopardize the continued existence of the species (ESA Section 7(a)(2)).”

Exactly how are current KNF forest management policies not in compliance with the requirements stated in the above paragraph?

If current management policies are in compliance, why would the KNF propose to implement more restrictive forest management policies in the name of any species currently listed as threatened or endangered?”

Reason #2 – Forest management and motorized access proposals related to Grizzly Bear.

Page 246 of the Final EIS states; “Negative impacts on grizzly bears are primarily limited to the den emergence period (basically the month of April), particularly for female bears with cubs of that year. There is the **potential** of separating a mother and cub, which could result in cub mortality, **although such effects have never been documented and there are no known scientific papers supporting this potential impact.**”

Given the small population size of grizzly bears, the overlap of less than 10 percent of modeled denning habitat in the CYRZ, and the seasonally-declining numbers of snowmobilers by April of each year, **the probability of a snowmobile encountering a female with cubs using a particular patch of denning habitat is low** (page A-43 in USFWS 2011c – information cited in USFWS 2011c is from the 2009 draft supplemental EIS for the Access Amendment).

“Our best information suggests that **current levels of snowmobile use are not appreciably reducing the survival or recovery of grizzly bears.**” The NCDE population has been increasing and is likely headed towards delisting, so current levels of over-snow motorized use does not appear to be preventing the population from recovering. Also in the 5-year review, USFWS stated, “**We found no studies in the literature specifically addressing the effects of snowmobile use on any denning bear species and the information that is available is anecdotal in nature [FWS 2002]**” (page 36 in USFWS 2011b).

Page 252 paragraph 3, under Motorized Over snow vehicle use states; “Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-WL-01 states that dens for threatened and endangered species are relatively free of human disturbance when they are in use. FW-DC-WL-01 is supported by **FW-GDL-WL-01 which restricts activities during spring emergence (4/1-5/1) where predicted denning habitat occurs.**

And

FW-STD-WL-05 states that no grooming of snowmobile routes in grizzly core habitat will occur in the spring after April 1 of each year. This will reduce the chance that disturbance could occur during spring emergence due to snowmobile use. Combined, this direction results in the lowering of the likelihood that over-snow vehicle use will disturb grizzly bears during spring emergence.

Page 257 of the Draft EIS states; “**The acreage available to designate routes/areas for motor vehicle use and over-snow motorized use would decrease under Alternatives B Modified and C compared to existing conditions;** “

So, despite the fact that: The **potential** of for snowmobiles to separate a mother and cub, **has never been documented**, and there are **no known scientific papers supporting the potential impact**, and even if the potential event did occur, **it may or may not result in cub mortality**, and **the probability of a snowmobile even encountering a female with cubs using a particular patch of denning habitat is low**, and your best information suggests that **current levels of snowmobile use are not appreciably reducing the survival or recovery of grizzly bears**, and the KNF **found no studies in the literature specifically addressing the effects of snowmobile use on any denning bear species**, the KNF is proposing more restrictive management policies on both snowmobiling, and trail grooming. We object to the total lack of science used to support this management proposal.

Page 256, of the FEIS under Effect Determination states; “Each of the action alternatives **may affect, and is likely to adversely affect** the grizzly bear. The effects determination is based in part on:”

and

“As this revised Forest Plan incorporates the Access Amendment, the revised Forest Plan would also have adverse effects for grizzly bears.”

How exactly is the plan “likely to adversely affect the grizzly bear”?

What science was used to support this conclusion?

How will the incorporation of the Access Amendment, contribute to adverse affects for grizzly bears?

Reason #3 forest management and motorized access proposals related to Canada Lynx.

Page 217 of the FEIS paragraph 2 states; “Stands with abundant horizontal cover are common **in the area of the KNF where lynx and snowshoe hare are most abundant (north of Libby but west of Koocanusa and east of Pete Creek in the Yaak)**. Lynx rarely use, or are absent in, the Cabinets and West Cabinets.”

And paragraph 2 states; “Summer foraging habitat (also good summer hare habitat) consists of early successional stages of dense, young (approximately 15 to 30-year old) forests. **This short time-frame (about 15 years) does not last long on the landscape before growing into a structure that does not provide good foraging for lynx.** A regular influx of early successional vegetation is important to maintain a level of summer foraging habitat through time. **This can be created by** any disturbance process, such as fire, windthrow, or **vegetation management activities.**”

Considering the fact that what the KNF is saying is that the area where lynx are most abundant is an area within the KNF which has had extensive vegetation management in the past, that mid successional timber stands greater than 30 years old are not good foraging habitat for lynx, and lynx foraging habitat can be improved through vegetation management activities, we do not understand why the KNF is not actively managing those stands over 4000 feet in elevation, that are greater than 30 years old. Would pre-commercial and commercial thinning of these stands not function to improve foraging habitat for lynx habitat, and future lynx habitat in those stands, while simultaneously improving overall forest health?

Page 224 of the FEIS states; With the advancement in snowmobiles and increase in winter recreation on the Forest there has been an increase in snowmobile use throughout lynx habitat. Motorized vehicle access management strategies for grizzly bear were analyzed (USDA 2011). **There will be lower levels of motorized vehicle access and an increase in the amount of core (secure) habitat which in turn would potentially provide higher levels of security for lynx.**

Given the total lack of science to support the proposed “lower levels of motorized vehicle access”, we do not believe that the KNF can adequately justify these restrictions.

Page 234 of the FEIS under Recreation Use states; “Although **lynx are generally tolerant of human presence** (pages 1-12 and 2-6 in Ruediger et al. 2000), disturbance **may** be great enough to cause displacement of individual cats in **some circumstances**. FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, and MA5abc-DC-WL-01 create and maintain large, remote security habitats that are likely to have a lower amount of recreational use due to the difficulties of access.

So, despite the stated fact that “**lynx are generally tolerant of human presence**”, the KNF is proposing forest management policies that will restrict recreational access in critical lynx habitat because a disturbance from a motorized recreator **MAY** be great enough to cause displacement of individual cats in **SOME CIRCUMSTANCES**.

Is there any credible science that documents lynx displacement as a result of motorized recreation? If there is not, how does the KNF justify these management proposals.

Proposed Solution

The KNF needs to re-evaluate all of the management proposals discussed in this objection, and remove all proposals which are not currently based on known facts or accepted science. It unacceptable for the KNF to base management proposals which restrict recreational access to national forest lands on events that have a low potential for even occurring, and if they do occur, may or may not result in any adverse impacts on threatened or endangered species.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal comments: Our comments clearly addressed this subject, and were acknowledged in the Response to Public comments, categories #117, #1111, #1606, and #1611.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club_____.

Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club - 2013 Kootenai Forest Plan Revision Objection #11

Objectors Name: Members of the Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club (TLSC)
Address: P.O. Box 404, Eureka MT, 59917
Phone # or E-mail address: (406) 889-5074 or tenlakessnowmobileclub@gmail.com
Name of lead objector (if more than one): Jim Voyles - President

Name of the plan revision being objected to and the responsible official:

Kootenai National Forest Land Management Plan 2013 Revision.
Responsible Official: Faye L. Krueger – Regional Forester, Northern Region.

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision which the objection applies:

We object to the reductions in motorized forest access and recreation opportunities on the KNF that will result from the implementation of Alternative B modified.

Statement explaining the objection and how the proposed plan should be altered:

Reason #1

Page 18 of the Draft ROD states; “As shown by the 2011 Forest Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report, the Forest has increased the number of miles of roads with prohibition from 1,669 miles in 1987 to 5,041 miles in 2011. This reflects a change from 27 percent of the roads in 1987 having some form of prohibition to 64 percent of roads in 2011”.

and

“The reasons for the unanticipated prohibitions include additional wildlife habitat security measures, to decrease potential sedimentation, and to improve hydrologic condition.”

Although we understand how seasonal road closures can be utilized to “improve wildlife habitat security” (many road closures during big game hunting season make perfect sense), and to decrease potential sedimentation and improve hydrologic condition (there is no doubt that certain roads should not be open when the road bed is saturated with water), we do not believe that the KNF can justify many of the existing or proposed seasonal or year long road closures based on these resource issues. There is absolutely NO science which supports many of the currently existing and proposed seasonal or year long road closures. In the vast majority of cases, allowing citizens access to roads during the months of June, July, and August, will have absolutely no negative implications for wildlife security, sedimentation, or hydrologic condition. In addition, we do not believe that the KNF has conducted a proper NEPA analysis for many of the current and proposed road closures.

Reason #2

Page 19 of the Draft ROD paragraph 4 states; “Alternative, B Modified, provides a balance to accommodate reasonable assurances of motorized and nonmotorized recreation choices, while protecting forest resources. Alternative B Modified does the following:

Allows over-snow vehicle use on 86 percent of the Forest. This is a change from 88 percent under the 1987 Forest Plan

We respectfully disagree that “Alternative, B Modified, provides a balance to accommodate reasonable assurances of motorized and nonmotorized recreation choices, while protecting forest resources”

What the KNF fails to understand is that 86% of the KNF is not “quality snowmobile habitat”. To the contrary 10% or less of the KNF would be considered by snowmobilers as “quality riding areas”. So, although it appears to KNF officials, and others who do not understand the concepts discussed above, that snowmobilers are only losing 2% of the available riding area in the Alternative B modified proposal, in actual fact they are losing closer to 20% of the quality riding area available on the KNF. Given the fact that there is no science which definitively that snowmobiling is detrimental to any of the aforementioned “forest resources” present on the KNF, including threatened and endangered wildlife species, these management proposals are simply unacceptable.

Reason #3

Page 246 of the Final EIS states; “Negative impacts on grizzly bears are primarily limited to the den emergence period (basically the month of April), particularly for female bears with cubs of that year. There is the **potential** of separating a mother and cub, which could result in cub mortality, **although such effects have never been documented and there are no known scientific papers supporting this potential impact.**”

Given the small population size of grizzly bears, the overlap of less than 10 percent of modeled denning habitat in the CYRZ, and the seasonally-declining numbers of snowmobilers by April of each year, **the probability of a snowmobile encountering a female with cubs using a particular patch of denning habitat is low** (page A-43 in USFWS 2011c – information cited in USFWS 2011c is from the 2009 draft supplemental EIS for the Access Amendment).

“Our best information suggests that **current levels of snowmobile use are not appreciably reducing the survival or recovery of grizzly bears.**” The NCDE population has been increasing and is likely headed towards delisting, so current levels of over-snow motorized use does not appear to be preventing the population from recovering. Also in the 5-year review, USFWS stated, “**We found no studies in the literature specifically addressing the effects of snowmobile use on any denning bear species and the information that is available is anecdotal in nature [FWS 2002]**” (page 36 in USFWS 2011b).

Page 252 paragraph 3, under Motorized Over snow vehicle use states; “Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-WL-01 states that dens for threatened and endangered species are relatively free of human disturbance when they are in use. FW-DC-WL-01 is supported by **FW-GDL-WL-01 which restricts activities during spring emergence (4/1-5/1) where predicted denning habitat occurs.**

And **FW-STD-WL-05 states that no grooming of snowmobile routes in grizzly core habitat will occur in the spring after April 1 of each year. This will reduce the chance that disturbance could occur during spring emergence due to snowmobile**

use. Combined, this direction results in the lowering of the likelihood that over-snow vehicle use will disturb grizzly bears during spring emergence.

Page 257 of the Draft EIS states; “**The acreage available to designate routes/areas for motor vehicle use and over-snow motorized use would decrease under Alternatives B Modified and C compared to existing conditions;** “

So, despite the fact that: The **potential** of for snowmobiles to separate a mother and cub, **has never been documented**, and there are **no known scientific papers supporting the potential impact**, and even if the potential event did occur, **it may or may not result in cub mortality, and the probability of a snowmobile even encountering a female with cubs using a particular patch of denning habitat is low**, and your best information suggests that **current levels of snowmobile use are not appreciably reducing the survival or recovery of grizzly bears**, and the KNF found **no studies in the literature specifically addressing the effects of snowmobile use on any denning bear species**, the KNF is proposing more restrictive management policies on both snowmobiling, and trail grooming. We object to the total lack of science used to support this management proposal.

Reason #4

Page 224 of the FEIS states; With the advancement in snowmobiles and increase in winter recreation on the Forest there has been an increase in snowmobile use throughout lynx habitat. Motorized vehicle access management strategies for grizzly bear were analyzed (USDA 2011). **There will be lower levels of motorized vehicle access and an increase in the amount of core (secure) habitat which in turn would potentially provide higher levels of security for lynx.**

So, we should restrict over the snow vehicle use in certain areas because “lower levels of motorized vehicle access could **potentially** provide higher levels of lynx security” This is a joke! Given the total lack of science to support these proposed management policies we do not believe that the KNF can adequately justify these restrictions.

Proposed Solution

The KNF needs to re-evaluate all existing and proposed year long and seasonal road closures. Unless the KNF can provide definitive scientific evidence that resource damage in the form of damage to wildlife, sedimentation, or damage to hydrologic condition, roads should be re-opened either year long, or for the months of June, July, and August. The KNF also needs to re-evaluate any proposals which reduce recreational access to snowmobiles, and recind all proposals which would further restrict snowmobile access to KNF lands.

Statement demonstrating the link between the objection and prior formal comments:

Our comments specifically addressed this issue. In addition, our comments were recognized in the Response to Public Comments in category #117.

Signature: Jim Voyles – President, Ten Lakes Snowmobile Club

Send written objections to: USDA Forest Service, Objection Reviewing Officer, EMC
RPC-6th Floor, Attn: Judicial and Administrative Reviews, 1601 N. Kent Street,
Arlington, VA 22209.

Send electronic objections to: objections-chief@fs.fed.us