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PAYETTE NF  
SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

January 21, 2015

Keith Lannom  
Forest Supervisor  
Payette National Forest  
500 N. Mission Street  
Building 2  
McCall, ID 83638  
[Comments-intermtn-payette@fs.fed.us](mailto:Comments-intermtn-payette@fs.fed.us)

RE: Middle Fork Weiser River Landscape Restoration Project

Dear Supervisor Lannom:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Middle Fork Weiser River Landscape Restoration Project.

I support this project. I hope that thinning will occur at a level that reduces the area's susceptibility to large, uncharacteristic wildfires. I also hope that timber production will be sustainable in the project area over time. This is part of the most productive area of the Payette National Forest and in the Forest Plan was meant to produce a sustainable yield of timber. Will the combination of thinning and burning reduce long term timber production in the project area? Will thinning be adequate to reduce the risk of large, uncharacteristic wildfire? Will stands that are most susceptible to high intensity fire be adequately treated?

Since the science behind the Wildlife Conservation Strategy will be used during this NEPA process, when might we expect to see an updated Wildlife Conservation Strategy EIS?

While elk security has been an area of much discussion, elk numbers in this area have exceeded Idaho Department of Fish and Game targets annually with the existing road system. Anything that increases the elk population in the area increases the burden on adjacent private property owners where the elk winter and feed competing with livestock.

While stewardship projects have allowed the Forest Service to do more needed work, I believe the lack of passage of Secure Rural Schools funding will cause counties to reconsider their support of stewardship projects. The Payette National Forest needs to take a hard look at the potential funds the project will generate that will go to Adams County. The economic impact of raising taxes for road, bridges and schools in this area will be devastating to the economy of Adams County, an area that has been very close to the top of Idaho counties in unemployment for the last 10 years.

Log landings generated during the project should be evaluated for potential use as dispersed camp sites. Many people come to the area and camp in groups. Log landings are generally fairly level, outside RCA's and are relatively close to existing roads. In many cases they are within the

300 feet of existing roads where dispersed camping is allowed. Log landings, even those that may be outside 300 feet of existing roads, should be evaluated prior to decommissioning for their dispersed camping potential. Having large areas available to campers may reduce the pressure on camp sites being used in less appropriate areas. The public has shown a preference for no-fee dispersed camping in this area. These areas could also be used to park vehicles, horse and OHV trailers or as spots people can park to enjoy lunch away from road dust. They would also allow firewood cutters a safe place to park while gathering firewood that may be left behind during the project. Leave as many as possible to increase recreational opportunities and safety in the area.

Please make sure that there will be no alteration of snowmobile trails groomed under MOU in the project area. Rerouting roads can result in greater road miles. This can create problems since this is a LAU and no additional miles of groomed trail are allowed without the proper NEPA analysis. Do not obliterate roads, bridges or culverts or reroute roads that are a part of the snowmobile grooming system without doing adequate analysis to make the necessary changes to the existing MOU. Please take into consideration groomed snowmobile trails when developing timber contracts. West Mountain is a very popular snowmobile area and people need access into the area.

Recreation is grossly underfunded on the Payette National Forest. I do appreciate the improvements recommended for developed and dispersed recreation in the project area.

Please evaluate wildlife use of roads before obliterating them. Make sure adequate passage is left so as not to impede wildlife travel in the area. Many of our roads and motorized trails started as wildlife trails.

Please try to release scoping requests for comments while roads are accessible. I have talked with a number of people who hunt in the area that are very concerned that roads they use may not remain on the landscape. They are not able to go out and map those roads at this time. If they cannot make comments on specific roads until the DEIS is released for comment, the decision may have already been made to obliterate those roads. For this reason, I believe that you should require consideration of roads and trails to remain on the landscape at the DEIS level since it is not possible for some to provide this information at this time. Requests received between now and the close of comments on the DEIS for roads to remain open should be evaluated and be given full consideration. It is not the fault of the public that scoping occurred during the winter months when travel on many routes in the project area is not possible. I am attaching two maps that show routes in the area that local hunters would like to see remain open during hunting season.

UTV's are the fastest growing segment of motorized recreation. There needs to be more than 3 miles of trails open to 70" or less vehicles in this project area. Please evaluate ATV trails to determine which ATV trails would be suitable for 70" wide UTV's.

I am glad to see that some work is being proposed in RCA's. If not treated those overgrown areas will become conduits for fire. High density canopy closures result in little to no grass and shrubs on the ground. This leads to greater erosion in RCA's. Enough light needs to penetrate into the RCA's to allow grass to grow. This will reduce sediment reaching streams.

Exactly what water quality improvements do you expect to see as a result of road decommissioning? In what locations?

Please consider drivable dips where possible. Water bars require more maintenance and can make roads less safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Becky Johnstone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Becky Johnstone  
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208-634-2888







