

SAMPLE COMMENT LETTER

*This is only an example. PLEASE do not copy word for word.

February 8th, 2012

Kootenai National Forest
Forest Plan Revision
31374 US Highway 2
Libby, MT 59923

Dear Forest Planner,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Kootenai National Forest Draft Forest Plan and accompanying DEIS. As a concerned citizen who values, uses and enjoys the Kootenai National Forest in a multitude of ways, I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Draft Plan.

After reviewing the proposed Draft Plan, I've found there to be a substantial lack of recommended Wilderness in alternative B. The Forest Service has the obligation to repair decades of oversight when it comes to Wilderness designation on the Kootenai. The desire for recommended Wilderness deserves equal importance as those values expressed by timber interests and motorized recreation. Gold Hill West, Saddle, Grizzly, and the westside of Zulu IRAs should all be recommended for Wilderness designation. These IRAs rank highest when evaluated by the USFS for capability, need and availability. In particular, Gold Hill West IRA is a spectacular keystone for elk, native trout, and furbearers. "W"ilderness protects valuable water sources and biological reserves in the unique ecosystems found on the Kootenai.

Although it was great to see the land management designation for Roderick IRA in the preferred alternative, the entirety of that IRA should be included for recommended Wilderness. This rich island of biodiversity is a missing 6,100 acres from recommended Wilderness as currently mapped in the alternatives. These lands, which are favored habitat by Yaak Grizzly Bears, are critical to the success of the struggling Grizzly Bear population.

Also missing from the alternatives are the collaboratively agreed to management areas and boundaries that were the result of the Three Rivers Challenge and are also included in the pending Forest Jobs and Recreation Act legislation. True collaboration efforts require legitimizing the desires of all collaborating parties, including Wilderness. The Forest Service should adopt the multi-use designations that resulted from the local diverse interests that went into these efforts. These groups came together to find common ground in high-conflict areas. Specifically, these include motorized and non-motorized designations in Northwest Peaks, Buckhorn Ridge, Roderick and Mt. Henry. Although there is some over-lap between agreements made in the Three Rivers Challenge and alternatives in the Draft Plan, the agency should fully honor the management and boundary designations in the Three Rivers Challenge.

I support the decision to manage the West Fork of Yaak IRA and Mt. Robinson IRA as Backcountry (5a) as listed in alternatives B and C. Non-motorized recreation activities in these areas are crucial for wildlife habitat movement and connectivity.

I am concerned with the nondescript language involving salvage sales (timber harvest that is done after a natural disturbance such as fire or insect infestation) in Backcountry areas in the Draft Plan. The backcountry standard, MA5a,b,c-STD-TBR-01, should include language that explicitly prohibits salvage sales in Backcountry (5a) designations. Salvage logging slows the natural recovery of forests and streams, damages soils and encourages erosion. Removing organic material - namely, dead or damaged trees - means removing the homes for plants and animals that rebuild forests and other ecosystems.

The emphasis on habitat restoration in the vegetation, as well as the watershed/riparian sections, is extremely encouraging. Hunting for big game and fishing for native trout on the Kootenai National Forest are important activities for me. Quality experiences are only possible if the animals' security, forage, and connectivity needs are met, while clean water is essential for thriving trout populations. I urge the Forest Service to prioritize habitat restoration goals by those areas that are functioning at the highest risk to ecosystem function and process – separate from commodity based resource decisions. Decades of high-grade timber practices have resulted in fragmentation on the land and sedimentation in our streams and rivers. I would like to see these areas receive restoration attention.

Noxious weeds are a silent killer on the Kootenai National Forest. They choke out native vegetation and are easily spread. I feel that prevention and mitigation invasive plants should be made a priority on the Kootenai N.F. The Draft Plan calls for an increased amount of prescribed fire for habitat restoration purposes. Although this will greatly benefit wildlife, it will also increase the spread of weeds on the forest. I urge the Forest Service to step-up their monitoring efforts and mitigation techniques when it comes to fighting weeds on the Kootenai N.F.

Thank you for all of the time and effort put into the revision of this document.

Sincerely,

Mr. Roderick
2012 Seventeen Mile RD
Yaak, MT