

Wilderness Management Review **Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness**

Submitted by: CP

Date: 8/3/2018

Report Title: White Cap Creek – Coopers Flat

Route: Where did you go? How many days were you camping?

A week trip up White Cap Creek to Coopers Flat.

Summary: (250 word max)

This was a week-long trip with ITA (Idaho Trail Association) volunteers to do trail maintenance. During this trip the group worked hard, experienced a wonderful Wilderness environment but also encountered several situations that raised questions regarding wilderness management:

- Why did the FS assign ITA this trail for maintenance?
- Why was an outfitter allowed to have a tent set up with a cache stored on-site at Coopers Flat?
- Why were four Smokejumpers dropped in the wilderness at Coopers Flat when no smoke was detectable?
- What was the emergency situation that dictated wilderness helicopter use to long line (remove) smokejumper gear from Coopers Flat?
- At the trail head the resident Outfitter placed notices on parked vehicles claiming that trailhead parking was exclusive to the Outfitter's employees and clients. (Note: Forest Service has responded, that contrary to the Outfitters notice, parking at this location was not exclusive to the Outfitter; reference previously posted issue report.)

Wilderness or Wild River: Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness

Management Unit: Bitterroot National Forest

Administrative Location: Hamilton, Montana

Head of Administrative Unit: Julie King, Forest Supervisor

Trip Report: Grade the success of the management agency with an A to F letter grade. Comments must support letter grades in each category; skip any category on which you do not want to comment.

B Access: is resource damage occurring at campsites on trails or at trailheads?

The trails, White Cap Creek and Canyon Creek, seemed in relatively good condition. There was a large Outfitter camp at the trailhead that appeared permanent and supporting a year-round operation. Observed camp sites seemed in relatively good condition. Trailhead parking was random, and the Outfitter had posted notes on parked cars claiming it was for exclusive use of their employees and clients. Follow-up with FS contradicted this claim.

C Management; regulations, permit systems, education, enforcement actions.

The trailhead information board was in poor condition. Overall information and education effort was poor.

F Stewardship; are management actions in accord with wilderness values and best practices in wilderness management?

An outfitter tent and cache was in place at Cooper Flat, very close to a FS administrative cabin. A query will be submitted to the FS as to the parameters of this use. Four smokejumpers were dropped at Coopers Flat in search of a smokeless fire based on GPS coordinates. The next day a helicopter made trips back and forth to long line (remove) smokejumper gear from the wilderness. A query will be submitted to the FS inquiring as to the nature of the emergency that dictated these non-conforming intrusions into the Wilderness.

B Wilderness; how well is management protecting the wilderness resource?

With the exception of the fire management actions/intrusions the Wilderness provided opportunities for solitude and physical challenge. There was the question of the Outfitter set up at the Flat and management use of the cabin by the FS. Both which tend to detract from a Wilderness environment.

D Fire Management, Wildlife Management, Other

Reference previous comments on fire management actions.

There was a profusion of spotted knapweed, but that could be considered part of the naturally occurring vegetative change?