

*Don - Pass this on Al E. when finished.*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE  
Region 1  
Missoula, Montana 59801

2150

July 8, 1971

Mr. Fred W. Rabe  
1114 Highland Drive  
Maerow, Idaho 83843



Dear Mr. Rabe:

This acknowledges your letter pertaining to the Salmo-Priest area.

The Priest River is identified as a study river in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Our field study will begin this year to develop a recommendation pertaining to its classification and future management. We will announce a public hearing at an appropriate time to give the public an opportunity to review and comment on the proposal.

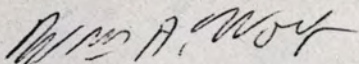
The Salmo area is also being reviewed. Forest Supervisor Smart, Colville National Forest, has assured the public that no road or logging development will be considered for the Salmo watershed before all alternatives, including Wilderness, have been evaluated.

An intensive ecosystem analysis of the Salmo watershed will be completed by Colville Forest people. This analysis and the resource inventories will be the basis for developing management alternatives. Interested groups and individuals will have the opportunity to assist the Forest Service in identifying these management alternatives. Until these intensive studies are completed, alternatives identified, management direction decided, and management plans prepared, we believe the Salmo area is very well protected by existing Forest Service position and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Supervisor Smart and his staff are currently studying areas adjacent to the Salmo and the remainder of the Sullivan Lake Ranger District. Other roadless areas need to be reviewed. Also, areas of high recreational potential, big game winter range, and critical soil areas need to be examined. Hopefully, other areas of probable use conflict can be identified and discussed with the public early enough to minimize future misunderstanding.

You may be interested in reading the enclosed February 8 press release pertaining to this area. We appreciate you writing and expressing your views.

Sincerely,



Wm. A. Worf, Chief  
Recreation and Lands

Enclosure

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE

1630

Colville National Forest  
Colville, Washington 99114  
February 8, 1971

PRESS RELEASE

Copies sent to: Statesman Examiner  
Chewelah Independent  
Republic News Miner  
Newport Miner  
Spokesman Review (Through Colville Correspondent)  
Daily Chronicle (Through Colville Correspondent)  
Radio Station KCVL  
Mr. Fred Peterson, Editor, The Outdoor Press  
Fishing and Hunting News  
Maurice Vogel, U.S.F.S.

Salmo Wilderness Situation Explained:

Colville National Forest Supervisor, Bob Smart, today expressed concern that the public is not fully aware of the Forest Service position regarding the Salmo wilderness proposal. "Letters being received by Regional Forester Neal Rahm and myself indicate controversy and concern are still circulating about the Salmo" said Supervisor Smart.

The Forest Service was recently presented a petition with over 7300 signatures supporting wilderness designation for 36,000 acres of national forest land in the Colville and Kaniksu National Forests of Washington and Idaho.

According to Smart, the Colville National Forest is taking a completely new look at the Salmo. The Forest Service proposed development plan has been set aside. Smart said "The Forest Service at present has no plans of any kind for the Salmo. We will seriously consider all alternatives, including wilderness, before any decisions are made."

Smart acknowledged that he is aware of critics who contend the Forest Service is using delaying tactics by questioning the wilderness proposal and petition. Replied Smart, "I am not saying that the wilderness proposal is wrong. The entire area needs more study. We agree that the Salmo should be studied for wilderness. I am glad the public questioned our initial road development plan."

"The Colville National Forest is planning to complete an ecosystem analysis of the Salmo watershed as a basis for developing management alternatives. These alternatives will be presented to the public. A comprehensive ecosystem analysis may in itself preclude road development within the Salmo drainage. Preliminary soil and hydrologic observations indicate problem areas which could severely limit logging and roading by conventional methods. However,

future developments such as helicopter logging may provide a method to remove individual trees upward without damage to other trees or the soil, and without the need for roads.

Until these intensive studies can be made, the Salmo is very well protected by the National Environmental Policy Act and present Forest Service policy."

Salmo wilderness supporters are actively soliciting petition signatures in the Spokane area. Smart said he feels the public should question the present wilderness proposal just as they questioned the Forest Service's original road proposal.

"Wilderness may not be the best long-term alternative," Smart said. "No one, including the Forest Service, Sierra Club, Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, or Spokane Mountaineers has enough facts or scientific information upon which to plan the best management for the Salmo. A wilderness designation is premature." ?

"Questions need to be answered" explained Smart. "The Salmo watershed is within 100 miles of Spokane County's 300,000 residents, and is easily accessible by auto. Most of the area is very steep, densely covered with trees and brush. Camping opportunities are limited along the Salmo River and ridges - two primitive trails provide the only access to the river and the Salmo basin." B.S.

"What is the capacity of these key areas under the intent of the 1964 Wilderness Act? Under present U.S.F.S. Multiple Use Guides, wilderness is considered a separate resource from recreation: Recreation needs of people in designated wilderness units are secondary to preservation of the solitude and ecological characteristics of the wilderness."

"How many hikers and fishermen can use these trails or camp overnight without overcrowding the area or creating a wilderness slum? What restrictions or controls may be needed to protect this small area from hordes of people? Would some more highly developed recreation or "pioneer" area better meet the public's demands? What are the social and economic costs for these alternatives?"

The Mountain Caribou are another important consideration in the Salmo management, Smart said. These rare animals are known to have an extensive roam area, including the Salmo, portions of northern Idaho and adjacent British Columbia. Smart feels there is not enough scientific data about the Caribou's range, food habits, or protection needs to plan for their management.

Most Caribou sightings have been near logging operations and along the Canadian Trans-Continental Highway 3A east of Salmo, B. C. Highway salting and lichens in the tops of felled trees seem to attract the

animals. Although lichens and moss are acknowledged to be the main winter food for Caribou, little is known about the ecology of these plants. Studies in other areas link heavy lichen growth to old, overmature trees; because of this, many believe that Caribou must have extensive areas of old growth timber to survive.

Smart contends that microclimatic conditions may be a more controlling factor in limiting or encouraging lichen growth than just the age of the trees they grow upon. "I can point out numerous areas on the Colville National Forest where very heavy lichen growth is found in trees only 40-50 years old," Smart added. "Likewise there are old, overmature tree stands in northern Pend Oreille County where there are almost no lichens. More research is needed."

Supervisor Smart urges the implementation of an international scientific study of the Salmo-Priest-British Columbia Caribou herd to gather essential ecological data. "It disturbs me," emphasized Smart, "that funds to hunt and capture the "Sasquatch" are seemingly unlimited, but there are no dollars available to research this Caribou herd. At least we know the Caribou exist!"

Only one Caribou sighting has been reported in 1970; this was near Roundtop Mountain, several miles south of the Salmo area. A recent snowshoe survey by a Colville National Forest forester and a Washington Dept. of Game biologist into the Salmo basin revealed one set of large tracks, probably Caribou. No animals were sighted.

Smart explained that although one Inland Empire university is interested in Caribou research, funds are very limited. The fact that two states plus British Columbia are involved complicates the coordination task. "I hope some national wildlife or environmental organization will become interested in this Caribou research proposal," said Smart.

The Forest Service is fully committed to the protection and management of any rare or endangered animals," Smart added. "Once we have the scientific background to determine the Caribou's needs, we will do our best to provide for these needs. We need to consider all the alternatives. For instance, if research indicates that poaching or careless hunters are a hazard to Caribou, the agencies involved may need to consider closing the critical areas to hunting and firearms. Our management must be progressive and not hampered by hasty emotional decisions."

Smart said the Colville National Forest does not accept statements by Sierra Club spokesmen that the Salmo drainage is the only area in northeast Washington that meets the minimum requirements of the Wilderness Act. He indicated two areas in northern Pend Oreille County - the North Fork of Sullivan Creek and the Hooknose-Abercrombie area - that

meet these criteria. He said there are other areas which should be given special area consideration in the development of management alternatives.

"Since a moratorium has been declared on any development in the Salmo basin," said Smart, "I feel it is much more important to identify our future problem spots before they also become major issues. The roadless areas mentioned above need study. Likewise areas of high recreational potential, big game winter range and critical soil areas need to be examined."

The Colville National Forest 5-year timber sale and road development program includes timber sales and roads that will effect both the North Fork Sullivan Creek and Hooknose Abercrombie roadless areas. The North Fork Sullivan Creek is also the municipal watershed for the town of Metaline Falls and a principal Elk range.

"These areas are where we want to place our study emphasis," said Smart. "Our funds and man power are limited, and we must set priorities. We are hopeful any possible conflict areas will be identified early enough to prevent future misunderstandings."