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from JH.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION FOR THE FRANK CHURCH RIVER OF NO  
RETURN WILDERNESS NATIONAL FOREST

A PROPOSAL BY WILDERNESS WATCH

March 4, 1993

**BACKGROUND**

This great Wilderness is suffering from years of fragmented administration by two Regions, six National Forests and twelve Ranger Districts. An in-house Task Force tinkered with this arrangement in 1989 and administratively changed the organization a bit. Now there are six Ranger Districts, four National Forests and two Regions. A two year trial has demonstrated that further major changes are needed. Wilderness Watch believes that the FCRONRW must be managed as a single unit.

**OBJECTIVE**

Wilderness Watch has prepared a statement of our vision for the Frank Church River Of No Return Wilderness. A copy of that Vision statement is attached. It provides the basis for our proposal. We believe that to realize that vision the following objectives must be met:

1. One person must be given the authority and responsibility to establish policies and Plans to guide the administration and use of the entire unit. That person must not be distracted by responsibilities for administrative activities not directly related to the Wilderness.
2. The public must have reasonable access to the person responsible for implementing the Policies and Plans at the project or site specific level. These people must have authority to speak and act within their District and be fully accountable for stewardship results.
3. The entire organization should be geared to the mission of gathering and disseminating information about the wilderness concept in general and the values of this Wilderness in particular.
4. Achieve maximum efficiency of the funds and manpower allocated to this Wilderness.



5. Get the people responsible for this Wilderness out into it. A provocative article by Thomas L. Fleischner titled PRESERVATION IS NOT ENOUGH - A NEED FOR COURAGE IN WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT expresses the need. He says " *Wilderness management today suffers from a lack of vision. ... Wilderness managers must ask: what should this place look like in one hundred years?*" He goes on to say " *To keep our wilderness vision broad we must spend as much time as possible out there. ... It should be an Agency requirement that all managers ... spend at least two weeks a year in any Wilderness whose future they help to shape. Responsibility to the place itself - rather than to the political powers - is felt more clearly while sleeping on the ground and listening to it's spirit than while sitting in a windowless meeting room, behind a computer or at the end of a telephone cord.*" We endorse these thoughts except that two weeks in the Wilderness is not enough.

Wilderness Watch believes that a single National Forest will best meet these objectives. Our proposal is to create the Frank Church-River of no Return Wilderness National Forest and eliminate the Challis National Forest. The new wilderness forest would consist of 6 approximately equal size ranger districts and the remaining non-wilderness portions of the Challis would be incorporated into the Salmon and Sawtooth National Forests. The boundary of the new forest is the current Frank Church RONR wilderness boundary with the exception of including a few long road corridors that have been "cherry stemmed" out of the wilderness. (see attached map) The Proposed ranger districts are:

**Magruder** - Approximately 368,000 acres; Headquarters, Magruder R.S. in summer and Hamilton, MT in the winter. We believe it is important to maintain a Montana connection to the FCRONRW.

**Middle Fork** - Approximately 368,000 acres; Headquarters, North Fork, ID.

**Stanley** - Approximately 399,000 acres; Headquarters, Stanley, ID.

**Frank Church** - Approximately 414,000 acres; Headquarters, Challis.

**Big Creek** - Approximately 391,000 acres; Headquarters, Big Creek in summer and McCall ID in winter.

**Chamberlain** - Approximately 391,000 acres; Headquarters, Big Creek in summer and McCall ID in winter.



The non-wilderness portion of the Yankee Fork Ranger District (still a large district) would be transferred to the Sawtooth National Forest and remain headquartered at the present location near Clayton, ID. The non-wilderness portion of the Challis Ranger district, and the entire Lost River Ranger District of the Challis National Forest would be transferred to the Salmon National Forest. The Challis RD would remain headquartered in Challis, ID and the Lost River RD would remain at Mackey, ID.

The most important benefit of this proposal is to place the administration of the largest Wilderness in the lower "48" under one responsible Forest Supervisor and 6 District Rangers who will be able to concentrate on stewardship of the wilderness resource for "... present and future generations. ..." Each wilderness district will have the wilderness resource only to nurture and steward without the distractions of difficult non-wilderness management challenges that each district must struggle with today. The other resources and uses of wilderness will be fully coordinated with the wilderness resource. Managers will be able to concentrate on ecosystem protection and preserving the visitors wilderness experience instead of just "hitting" some of the over use problems.

Another important advantage is decreased overhead costs of eliminating one Forest and creating a wilderness Forest with a much smaller supervisors staff. Specialist needs for wilderness programs can be obtained from adjoining forests and there is no need for large engineering, personnel, or business staff on the "all Wilderness" NF..

Following is what we believe would be a good starting organization. It will require adjustments as time goes on based on experience and available funding. Whoever, it will result in much improved stewardship over that being applied today even if no increased funding is available.

Supervisor - This person must be a good motivator and manager of people but must also have strong skills in communication both upward in the Forest Service and outward to key folks outside the Agency. She/he must be a missionary for the wilderness idea. This person should have a natural resource academic background but more important she/he must have a heart-felt personal commitment to the resource of wilderness and spend 25 or more nights each year sleeping on the ground in the Wilderness. This person needs to be a modern day Aldo Leopold with the stature and prestige to place him/her on a level with the other Forest Supervisors in the Regional Management Team. The position should carry a GS 14/15 classification.



Supervisor's Staff - The Supervisor's staff should consist of five permanent full-time professionals plus the necessary clerical and technical support. The support must be sufficient to insure that the Supervisor and Staff are not diverted from the stewardship mission. There will be an Administrative Officer; Wilderness Education Officer; Planning & Monitoring (LAC) Officer; an Ecologist/Fire Management Officer; and a person responsible for trails and other "necessary" administrative facilities. All of these people including the support folks would be required to spend a significant amount of time in the wilderness each year. The fire "control" needs will take additional study to determine how best to handle them.

District Rangers. Our proposal is for a total of 6 Districts of a size that will permit the Ranger to become reasonably familiar with the District in the first year on the job (350,000 to 450,000 acres). Each Ranger should be expected to spend 35-40 nights in the Wilderness each year. We would expect him/her to cover every mile of trail every 3 years and at least 60 % of the trails each year. This is not to suggest that riding or hiking trails is the "the job" - trails are merely the way the wilderness resource is accessed. Each outfitter operation should be inspected by the District Ranger at least once in the field each year. The District Ranger must be supervising the inventory and monitoring work. Like the Supervisor, the District Rangers must personally be involved in carrying the wilderness message in all of their contacts with the public. Also like the Supervisor, we need top people in these positions. They must have fire in their eye, sand in their craw and a love for wilderness in their heart. At some time in the future these people will be expected to have academic degrees in wilderness stewardship. However, until such degrees are given, they must be selected from the committed wilderness folks currently in the ranks of the Agency. They should be GS 12/13s.

District Staff - Each District Ranger should be supported by 4 or 5 career Wilderness Rangers (GS 7 to 11). All will have career appointments but some will be PFT and some will be WAE depending on the work load. The PFT's will do education work, compile inventory data, etc. during the winter. An important part of their field time will be involved with inventory and monitoring the wilderness resource. Each District will need at least one PFT person to do clerical work and keep the office open for the public.

The starting organization we have described calls for 42 individuals plus the necessary support at the SO level. We estimate that 12 Wilderness Rangers may be 8 month W&Es. Thus the total person years would be 38 plus SO support. We estimate salary costs for these 42 people at \$1,140,000.00.



According to the 1991 Annual Report 118 people spent 43.28 person years working for wilderness at a total salary cost of \$1,212,916.00. Also according to that report the total of all funds spent on the Wilderness in 1991 was \$1,815,151.00. The total budget for the FCRONR Wilderness National Forest as we visualize it should probably be about \$2,000,000.00. However, we recognize in the current belt-tightening climate this level of funding may not be available. If staffing must be reduced below that we have recommended we offer the following reductions in order of priority:

SO Facility Staff

SO Education Officer

There are nay-sayers who will tell you that what we are suggesting is not feasible because the Supervisor and Rangers cannot hold the grades we are suggesting without a large staff of people under them. We recognize that classification standards currently applied to District Ranger and Supervisor positions would be a barrier. The current grades for these positions depend on the number of people supervised. However, we point out that the Civil Service classification process was developed to provide a basis for matching the pay with the skills or abilities needed to get the job done. We need top people as stewards for this magnificent Wilderness. The challenge for the FS personnel professional is to find a way to describe these jobs to reflect the skills actually needed. It was done to cover research scientists. It can be done for wilderness stewards.

We believe that very little will be needed in terms of new infra-structure. Existing computers, office space and equipment, and vehicles can simply be re-assigned.

Here is a brief list of additional advantages of our proposal:

- Better balanced National Forests; moving the Yankee Fork RD to the Sawtooth and the Challis and Lost River RD's to the Salmon, gives the Sawtooth and Salmon 6 Ranger Districts each, while keeping the headquarters in the same communities.
- The Yankee Fork, Cobalt and Challis RD's can do a better job on the non-wilderness resource issues such as mining, recreation, range and timber opportunities. The same goes for the huge Krassel RD on the Payette and the Loman district in the Boise NF.



- Putting a district Headquarters in Stanley ID will please the community. They have been upset since the Sawtooth NRA Headquarters were located in Ketchum ID. It will give Stanley a great economic boost and Stanley is the best place to administer the Middle Fork float program. Most private parties and outfitters are coordinating their trips from Stanley now.

- The administration of the Middle Fork Wild River program would continue to be handled by one district (the Stanley District) as currently being administered by the current Middle Fork District.

- The administration of the Main Salmon Wild River float program would continue under the new Middle Fork District with their Headquarters still in North Fork ID. The Main Salmon Recreation River could be administered by the North Fork District.

- Challis will keep the Headquarters of the new Frank Church Wilderness Forest and would house 2 Ranger Districts, the Challis (non-wilderness), and the Frank Church (wilderness) District. This is a great economic boost for Challis and they can be recognized as the premier Idaho wilderness community.

- Recognizing Frank Church as District name is great public relations.

- Big Creek and Chamberlain will get back to a size that can be effectively managed and enable manager to get on top of numerous wilderness management problems. This advantage applies to the other new districts also. The wilderness districts are from 368 to 414,000 acres, enabling District Rangers to stay on top of problems and visit their districts more often.

- Including "cherry stemmed" road corridors will improve wilderness approach management.

- On the other hand, keeping the new forest boundary almost entirely on the wilderness boundary will encourage the Forest Supervisor and District Rangers to coordinate with adjoining non-wilderness forests in the management and construction of facilities such as trailheads in approach corridors that can have a profound effect on the wilderness resource.

- The Magruder RD would serve as an important contact with Montana wilderness visitors and relationships with the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The Smaller District can be added to when the Bluejoint Roadless area is



added to the Frank Church in the future. The Bluejoint area appears in all of the Montana wilderness bill proposals.

- This proposal gives the opportunity to consolidate the management of the Pioneer Roadless Area (proposed wilderness in all of the Idaho wilderness bill proposals) under the Ketchum RD, Sawtooth NF, who are experienced in wilderness management.
- This proposal also gives the opportunity to consolidate the management of the proposed White Clouds Wilderness (various proposals in Idaho bills) under one manager, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.
- Eliminating the Challis National Forest and replacing it with the Frank Church keeps the same number of National Forests but frees up a lot of dollars to more fully fund the wilderness program.
- No Ranger Districts will leave the communities they are already in, helping to maintain local economies.
- The only new Ranger Districts are in the wilderness and have existing office space for the most part. There may be a need for additional space at Stanley, Big Creek, North Fork, and Challis, but if needed it can be phased in and can be done at Stanley in coordination with the Sawtooth NRA which is currently expanding to meet their needs.
- This proposal re-establishes the historic Magruder Ranger District and puts a much needed presence in the northern end of the Frank Church and contact with the people of the state of Montana. The present management by the Nezperce is not meeting the wilderness education and contact need in Montana.
- This proposal puts two ranger districts in the community of North Fork, boosting their economy and freeing up the North Fork district to concentrate on their rapidly growing recreation and other multiple use resource opportunities.
- This proposal frees up the Bitterroot and Nezperce National Forests to concentrate on the management of the larger Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, also needing increased management attention. In fact this wilderness should also be consolidated under one management and become a National Forest (but that's another story). Under no circumstances should the Selway-Bitterroot be combined with the Frank Church Wilderness as a single Forest. The resulting monster, ranging across a very wide physical and social



/cultural area would serve as perfect example for un-coordinated wilderness management. It would be a recipe for failure!

- This proposal allows the Red River Ranger District to concentrate on the management of the Gospel Hump Wilderness and all its management opportunities.

- This consolidation into one wilderness forest will be highly beneficial to the wilderness visitors and other wilderness users in some of the following ways:

- Information can be gotten from one forest.
- Outfitters will see more consistent and fair administration.
- Information will be up to date.
- The wilderness education program will be greatly strengthened. Each district will take on schools and other "targeted" populations in all the surrounding towns.
- There will be more time to spend on a fully coordinated National education program strategy.

- Temporary management closures of campsites and trails, size limits of parties, distribution of parties, etc., can be consistent and agreed upon with one Forest Supervisor to "break ties" or settle differences.

- Trail maintenance and reconstruction can be more efficiently planned and carried out with the highest priorities first. Districts will not be "overly" competing for trail funds as the separate National Forests are doing presently. They will be under one coordinated Plan that will detail the trail needs and priorities. Trails will be maintained by need rather than by the most "skilled" negotiator.

- The already successful river float management programs will be even stronger. The same people will remain involved. The team can concentrate on the wilderness aspects of the river programs. Large number of floaters are currently reducing the quality of the wilderness experience available and creating serious impacts to the Native American Cultural sites along the river.

- Consolidation into one wilderness forest will greatly enhance the historical, cultural, and archaeological management program. This special emphasis item in the Central Idaho Wilderness Act has largely been ignored except for a few highly visible sites on the Main Salmon River.



•The Bighorn Crags area, now heavily used, will receive more management attention.

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