

From: John Robison, Idaho Conservation League
RE: French Creek Proposal - **DRAFT**
January 12, 2023

French Creek Proposal from ICL

The Land Allocation Committee is discussing legislative options for the French Creek area. This is a draft proposal and we are hoping to refine and improve it based on discussions with the Land Allocation Committee and other members of the public.

Please see the attached Member Packet for a description of the Land Allocation Committee's goals.

Primitive Area

Evidence of man's activities may be present and obvious to a knowledgeable observer. However, evidence is not dominant and the landscape is generally perceived as possessing natural, primitive or backcountry characteristics. Furthermore, Primitive Areas have boundaries which maintain the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, ecological, wildlife, archaeological, and historic uses but can also be managed to allow existing motorized and non-motorized uses.

Maintain current diversity of recreation management patterns

Instead of making any specific travel management decisions, this proposal would retain the current Recreation Opportunity Spectrum of a "[Semi-Primitive Area](#)" for both motorized and non-motorized recreation. This means that the current diversity of uses would be retained as they are today. There will be a continued emphasis on summer non-motorized recreation in the northern and core areas and on summer motorized recreation in southern and perimeter areas. In the winter the entire area would be semi-primitive non-motorized. This is the current distribution:

- Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized: Summer 40%, Winter 0%
- Semi-Primitive Motorized: Summer 55%, Winter 99%
- Roaded Natural: Summer 5%, Winter 0%
- Roaded Modified: Summer 0%, Winter 1%

This means that motorized trails would remain motorized and non-motorized trails would remain non-motorized. There are portions of 15 system trails in the area, including an estimated 51 miles of motorized trail and 22 miles of non-motorized trail.

Some flexibility may be warranted to allow for new trail connections, trail reroutes due in the event of landslides or short-term trail closures if needed for resource protection as long as the current Recreation Opportunity Spectrum ratio is maintained and the area does not shift into a more developed Roaded Natural theme (see descriptions below).

Trail maintenance

Chainsaws and other motorized equipment would continue to be allowed for trail construction and maintenance.

Vegetation management, fuel reduction and fire suppression

The designation would utilize the current Idaho Roadless Rule guidance for management of Backcountry Restoration and Primitive Inventoried Roadless Areas.

Outfitting and guiding

Outfitting and guiding would continue.

State Section

The State inholding would be prioritized for a land exchange.

Mining

There would be no mineral withdrawal.

River and water quality protections

Use protections other than the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to protect fish habitat and scenic qualities. Any current water diversions in the area will be maintained at the request of water users but no additional water diversions would be allowed that would harm fisheries. There is no private land within the Forest Service portion of the French Creek corridor. Both motorized and non-motorized uses would continue within the river corridors.

Outside of French Creek, the Forest Service deemed that nearby Lake Creek, the Secesh River and South Fork Salmon River are suitable for consideration by Congress as Wild and Scenic Rivers. We believe that the LAC should discuss Wild and Scenic River Protections or equivalent protections for these rivers.

Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers: If this proposal is legislated, the Forest Service will not need to review the French Creek area for Wilderness or Wild and Scenic potential in the next Forest Planning effort.

Overview of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum within the French Creek Area

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (retain at Summer 40%, Winter 0%)

Physical:

Theme: Predominantly natural/natural appearing; rustic improvements to protect resources.

Remoteness: 1/2 mile or more from designated motorized routes and areas.

Size: 2,500 or more acres

Infrastructure (access and facilities):

Access - Non-motorized routes. Foot/horse/mountain bike use - no motorized travel. Closed and temporary roads may be present.

Rec sites – Typically development scale 0-1, sometimes 2; minor investments to protect resources.

Sanitation – No facilities, leave no trace.

Water supply – Undeveloped, natural.

Signing – Rustic, natural materials.

Interpretation - Typically self-discovery.

Water crossing – Rustic structures for foot/horse traffic.

Vegetation: Treatments enhance forest health and mimic natural vegetation patterns.

Scenic Integrity: Typically high.

Managerial: Minimum or subtle signing, regulations, or other regimentation. Low encounters with Forest Service personnel.

Social: High probability of solitude, closeness to nature, self-reliance, high to moderate challenge and risk. Usually 6 to 15 encounters with other parties on trails. Six or fewer parties visible from camping sites.

Semi-Primitive Motorized (retain at Summer 55%, Winter 99%)

Physical:

Theme: Predominantly natural/natural appearing, motorized use visible and audible.

Size: 2,500 or more acres

Remoteness: 1/2 mile or more from maintenance level 3-5 roads, but containing maintenance level 2 roads and motorized trails and/or designated motorized areas.

Infrastructure (access and facilities):

Access - Motorized routes: maintenance level 2 roads and trail class 2 typical; OHVs allowed on designated routes and areas.

Rec sites – Typically development scales 0-2; investments to protect resources.

Sanitation – Limited facilities; outhouses may be in areas of concentrated use.

Water supply – Undeveloped, natural.

Signing – Rustic, made of natural materials.

Interpretation – Self-discovery; some located on site or at trailheads.

Water crossing – Rustic structures or bridges.

Vegetation: Treatments improve forest health and mimic natural vegetation patterns.

Scenic Integrity: Typically high to moderate.

Managerial: Minimum, subtle on-site controls; designated motorized routes/areas.

Social: Moderate to high probability of solitude. High to moderate degree of risk/challenge. Typically 6 to 15 encounters with other parties on trails. Six or fewer parties visible from camping sites.

Roaded Natural (retain at Summer 5%, Winter 0%)

Physical:

Theme: Natural appearing with nodes and corridors of development such as campgrounds, trailheads, boat launches, and rustic, small-scale resorts.

Remoteness: Within 1/2 mile of maintenance level 3-5 roads. Maintenance level 2 roads may also be present.

Size: n/a

Infrastructure (access and facilities):

Access– Typically: maintenance level 3-5 roads. Maintenance level 2 roads may also be present. Typically trail classes 3-4, highway vehicles, off-highway vehicles, and other motorized travel on designated routes.

Rec sites– Typically development scales 0-3, sometimes 4.

Sanitation– Typically vault toilets.

Water supply– Often developed.

Signing– Variety of materials, blend with natural setting.

Interpretation– Simple roadside signs; some interpretive displays.

Water crossing– Bridges constructed of natural materials.

Vegetation: Vegetation treatment are evident but in harmony with the scenic character.

Scenic Integrity: High to moderate typical. Low may also occur.

Managerial: Signs and regulations present but typically subordinate to the setting. Moderate likelihood of encountering Forest Service personnel.

Social: Moderate evidence of human sights and sounds; moderate concentration of users at campsites; little challenge or risk. Opportunities to socialize.