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Re: Stan Potts Operating Area

Submitted Electronically to the Salmon-Challis inbox: comments-intermtn-salmon-challis-northfork@usda.gov



THE COMMENTORS

The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association is a non-profit business trade association representing the majority of the state's full-time licensed outfitters and guides. Members primarily are small, independently owned businesses offering guided fishing, river running, trail riding, hiking, biking, climbing, skiing, snowmobiling, guest ranch trips, and most central to the purpose of this letter, guided hunting trips.

Hunting outfitters and guides are committed to the conservation and enhancement of quality experiences on Idaho's wild lands, wild rivers, and wildlife. Hence, this is a matter of concern for IOGA as an organization—as advocates for said outfitters and guides.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on management of the Stan Potts Area.



IOGA has traditionally monitored and commented on vacated hunting areas especially ones that have traditionally been outfitted for decades.

IOGA supports the issuing of an outfitting and guiding special use authorization (permit) for big game hunting and shoulder season use in the Stan Potts Area. Despite the break in continuity of outfitted use in the Stan Potts area there remains a public need for outfitting and guiding services in that area.

Due to the wilderness nature of unit 20A, access is limited, and outfitters and guides are best placed to have a positive impact on land management in that area. In particular, licensed outfitters and guides are essential to deterring illegal and unlicensed outfitting and poaching. It is IOGA's experience that vacated areas tend to become a magnet for unscrupulous behavior by users. Enforcement resources are particularly limited due to

budget concerns. Outfitters provide regular, if informal, monitoring of difficult access areas from a reliable and invested source.

There is similarly strong cause for outfitter presence in the Stan Potts operating area in order to support and ensure that Idaho Department of Fish & Game management objectives for all species in this unit, including predators. Consistent annual bear, lion and wolf harvest has certainly been absent in this area.

Additionally, due to regular use, outfitters provide necessary trail maintenance and monitoring. Outfitters regularly invest significant resources in the maintenance of backcountry trail systems which are essential access points to the hundreds of square miles of wilderness throughout the state and in particular the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. The primary access to the vacated Stan Potts area is prone to wind events that render a trail useless even though it may have received recent maintenance.

On behalf of the members of IOGA we urge you to reinstate the historic outfitted use in the Stan Potts area by issuing an outfitting and guiding special use authorization. Further, a combination of wolf predation on elk and the trend toward larger outfitting areas in the 21st century make this area a prime candidate for absorption by neighboring outfitters.

Yours in Partnership,

Aaron Lieberman

Aaron Lieberman
Executive Director – Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association