

**Comments in Response To Inaccurate Internet Postings of My
Research and Historic Preservation Activities Concerning the Lolo
Trail as followed by Lewis and Clark**

by
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This commentary is in response to the information found on August 25, 2005 at the following URLs hosted by the Sierra Club, Northern Rockies Chapter, concerning the Sierra Club Lewis and Clark Wild America Campaign:

<http://idaho.sierraclub.org/lolo/>
and
<http://idaho.sierraclub.org/lolo.html>
and
<http://idaho.sierraclub.org/docs/Lolo.pdf>

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in response to your web pages located at URLs

<http://idaho.sierraclub.org/lolo/>

and

<http://idaho.sierraclub.org/lolo.html>

and

<http://idaho.sierraclub.org/docs/Lolo.pdf>

which give some inaccurate information about my Lolo Trail research and my qualifications.

SUMMARY OF MY COMMENTS

On the page <http://idaho.sierraclub.org/lolo/> the claim is made that “Gene Eastman is the foremost authority on the Lewis and Clark Trail through the Bitterroot Mountains of Idaho.” Mister Eastman is over a decade too late in making that claim. I have been doing scholarly research on the trail since 1985 and have worked with the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office to document and preserve this treasured historic resource. In all my early years exploring the Lolo Trail, I never met Mr. Eastman once although I was out hiking the trails for many weeks every summer. It was not until a few years ago that I met him on the Boundary Peak Road. At that time he said nothing about any of his research work on the Lolo Trail but I showed him my research maps and talked about my years of research documenting the Lolo Trail

It is through my efforts in the early 1990s that the Forest Service has known what trail tread to protect and avoid adverse impact on the old trail. I was able to convince them not to develop a new recreation trail intermingled with the original Nez Perce Trail followed by Lewis and Clark. The Idaho SHPO recognizes me as their Lewis and Clark Trail expert for Idaho and they maintain my precision GIS data for the exact location of the trail tread over the Lolo Trail corridor. My work is recognized in many publications and national news articles. I’ve done numerous technical reports and presentations for the Forest Service and National Park Service. I am the “Lewis and Clark in Idaho” workshop instructor for Idaho State University’s Sawtooth Science Institute and have held 4-day workshops for several summers now. Idaho teachers receive graduate credit for my workshops. Their website is imnh.isu.edu/ssi/

Nobody has worked harder or as many years as I have to implement historic preservation for the Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark and I have the track record to prove it. I wrote many letters to the Forest Service and submitted complete documents of my recommendations for historic preservation back in the early 1990s. I chose to work in a cooperative mode with land managers rather than the confrontational mode chosen by others and I’ve been wildly successful. Rather than “what might have been,” it is desirable to focus on “what is.” The truth of the matter is that “what is” is: 1) the Nez Perce historic trail is nearly all intact and well preserved, 2) the recreation trail was never constructed, 3) the “hardening” and turnouts every 1/4 mile planned by the Forest Service for the Lolo Motorway never happened, 4) the campsite “hardening” extensive

outhouse construction that was planned never happened, 5) the extensive signage that was planned never happened, 6) as per my recommendations, the traditional signage was implemented with the historical design.

SUMMARY OF MY QUALIFICATIONS

Books that I have authored or co-authored:

Russell, S. F., "Lewis and Clark Lolo Trail Precision Survey," Ames, Iowa, Historic Trails Press, 2005 (ISBN 0-9676327-0-6)

Aegerter, M. and S. F. Russell, "Hike Lewis and Clark's Idaho," Moscow, Idaho, University of Idaho Press, 2002. (ISBN 0-89301-257-2)

J. R. Fazio, M. Venso, and S. F. Russell, "Across the Snowy Ranges," Moscow, Idaho, Woodland Press, 2001. (ISBN 0-9615031-4-9)

Fazio, James R., ed., with Robert N. Bergantino, J. Wilmer Rigby, Hadley B. Roberts, Steve F. Russell, and James R. Wolf, "The Mystery of Lost Trail Pass: A Quest for Lewis and Clark's Campsite of September 3, 1805," WPO [We Proceeded On] Publication No. 14 (February 2000), Great Falls, Montana: Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.

An example of my research was published in the journal "Idaho Yesterdays." by the Idaho State Historical Society: Russell, Steve F. "The Riddle of Hungry Creek, September 18-20, 1805, and June 16, 18, 25, 1806." Idaho Yesterdays 44, no. 1 (2000): 19-31.

My research work was presented to a standing-room-only crowd at the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Foundation annual meeting in Missoula, Montana: Russell, Steve F., "Lewis and Clark on the Lolo Trail - In Search of Their Footsteps," presented at the 1994 National Convention of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Trail Foundation, Missoula, Montana, August, 1994.

My historic preservation recommendations were made in the following reports and presentations:

Russell, Steve F., "Engineering the Trail Location, " Lewis and Clark in the Land of the Nez Perce, A "Which Way did They Go?" workshop on the return route for May 5-10, 1806, sponsored by Lewis Clark State College, Lewiston, Idaho, June 10-12, 1999.

Presentation: Russell, Steve F., "Northern Nez Perces Trail - History and Preservation," presented to the Chief Joseph Band of the Nez Perce Tribe, Long House, Nespalem, Washington, 1995.

Presentation: Russell, Steve F., "Lewis and Clark on the Lolo Trail - In Search of Their Footsteps," presented at the 1994 National Convention of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Trail Foundation, Missoula, Montana, August, 1994.

Presentation: Russell, Steve F., "Lolo Trail - Its History and Preservation," presented at the Fall 1994 Meeting of Region-1 National Forest Archeologists, Powell, Idaho, 1994.

Russell, Steve F., "The Northern Nez Perces Trail," presented to people of the Nez Perce Tribe at the tribal museum in Spalding, Idaho, 1993.

Bill Loftus of the Lewiston Tribune featured my work in the outdoors section on Oct 26, 1996. My work was again featured in the Sunday edition of Aug 29, 1999 in a article by Mike Venso who was attending one of my workshops.

My work has been featured by the Associated Press in a nationally circulated article by Don Gallagher which appeared in February of 2000.

It is also mentioned on many web sites such as
COLUMBIA Magazine: Summer 2002; Vol. 16, No. 2
<http://www.washingtonhistory.org/wshm/lewisandclark/footsteps.htm>

Here is the web site and pages for the 1999 (filmed in 1997) Idaho Public TV documentary "Lewis and Clark: Echos of a Bitter Crossing." This hour-long show on Lewis & Clark, produced by Bruce Reichert, won a 1999 Regional Emmy in the Historical Documentary category. In January of 1999, it won a Bronze Medal at the New York Film Festival. The associated web site won a First Place award at the National Educational Telecommunications Association late in 1998. I did the section of the web site titled, "A GPS Expert on the Trail." My work was featured in this video. It now which runs daily at the Lolo Pass Visitor Center.
<http://idahoptv.org/lc/echoes.html>
<http://idahoptv.org/lc/campfire.html>

My web page biography from 1995
<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~sfr/sfr/tralpage.html>

One of my web pages:
<http://www.historic-trails.com/Public1.html>

MY OBJECTIONS TO MATERIAL POSTED ON YOUR WEB SITE

The text that I find to be inaccurate is as follows from pages 15 and 16 of the following PDF document, <http://idaho.sierraclub.org/docs/Lolo.pdf>. My comments will follow the text copied from that document.

"Idaho State Historical Preservation Office to remedy the lack of a complete heritage inventory for the Lewis and Clark Trail applied for and received a \$24,830 grant to precisely survey the trail using Global Positioning System (GPS). The work was done by Steve Russell, electrical engineering professor, Iowa State University, 2002 - 2003. The final report was due in 2003 and is still pending. 52 Russell is locating the designated

trail. The designated trail is the current Forest Service maintained “Historical” trail which continually changes. Sometimes trails are built for no good reason because the older trail is on better drained ground.⁵³ Sandy McFarland, Forest Service Region One Nez Perce Trails Coordinator stated, “No one would argue that the trail we built is the historic trail.”⁵⁴ However the Forest Service is labeling the trails they built as historic and creating a braided trail system and confusion in the Landmark.

Steve Russell stated that the Lewis and Clark Forest Service Trail 25 (current relocated designated trail) from Bradford Bridge to the 500 Road near Mex Mountain was the historic trail.⁵⁵ This trail is actually the designated trail that was constructed and continually relocated, from about 1971- 2004; which created a modern braided trail system in the corridor. This modern Forest Service trail system went on and off the historical trail but mostly off (90% or more). This management has changed the character in the corridor, created confusion and braided trails where none existed, and taken the historic trail out of the one-half mile wide corridor in places. Steve Russell was asked by the author if Russell’s Lewis and Clark Trail location matched the Lewis and Clark Journals? Russell replied, “My trail location doesn’t have to match the Journals.”⁵⁶ June 26, 1992, Steve Russell signed a Challenge Cost-Share Agreement between himself and the Clearwater National Forest. “Item A. The Challenger shall: #2 “Assist the Forest Service in locating a proposed recreation trail generally along the Bird-Truax route that will protect key segments of the historic routes.”⁵⁷ What has happened since this contract was signed is that the Forest Service trail crew is building a new trail that did not exist, and doing trail obliteration projects to the old trail in the corridor. Also the Forest Service is managing the new trail as the historic.

“Item B. The Forest Service Shall: #4 Work with the challenger to locate a recreation trail route that will preserve some segments of the historic routes for public use and interpretation.”⁵⁸ According to this contract, Steve Russell is locating a recreation trail and the location of the historic trail is known by the Forest Service. The contract reads: “... that will preserve some segments of the historic route...” All segments of the historic route should be preserved.

This sums up Forest Service management of the historic trail for 100 years, and 44 years as a landmark trail. The Forest Service has continually preserved some segments of the historic route, while destroying other segments. In 1992, the Forest Service built a “new segment” of the “historic trail,” just north of Lolo Forks. This was the second trail relocation project for this segment of historic trail - moving the trail, and corridor, further east. All segments of the historic route should be preserved in their historic condition and open to the public.

Idaho State Historical Preservation Office requested the Russell-Forest Service contract from the author which was sent to their office, so they are aware of the problem, but say they have no control over Forest Service management in the landmark.”

COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO THE PDF ARTICLE ABOVE

When I first began collaborating with the Forest Service in 1989, their land managers told me that they were managing the Lolo Trail as a corridor or route because there was no existing tread. I

informed them that I has documented the tread in many places for the previous summers and knew that the tread existed across the Clearwater National Forest. I grew up in the area because my family owned Lochsa Lodge from 1944 to 1958 and my grandfather had the outfitter license for most of the trail area east of Green Saddle. My natural interest in the area, and its trails, caused me to begin detailed scholarly research on the old trails. That effort began in 1985 when I visited the National Archives and obtained all their available maps for the Lolo Trail area. In the intervening years, I've amassed a large collection and have all the published and unpublished maps I know to be in existence.

In 1988, I published a book on the 1866 government trail constructed across the Lolo Trail corridor ("Geographical report on the Bird-Truax Trail: its history and geography with gazetteer of place names and topographically accurate maps, Call No. F752.B64 R87 1988, Library of Congress). This 1866 trail was constructed along the route of the Northern Nez Perces Trail tread followed by Lewis and Clark but destroyed very little of it. In the years after 1988, I did meticulous research on all the trail treads of the Lolo Trail and was able to distinguish the 1866 government trail from various branches of the old Nez Perce trail.

Many issues of historic preservation have arisen during the past two decades. The Lolo Trail has many historic sites, Nez Perce sacred sites, and graves. I have been very reluctant to publish any material that may expose these sites. I've also been reluctant to disclose them to the government agencies who do land management because the information can leak out. However, in 2005, I decided to publish the precise location of the trail tread followed by Lewis and Clark because the information was needed by the land managers and the Idaho State Historic Preservation office.

In the fall of 1991, I was contacted by the Idaho State Historian, Merle Wells, asking me to update his map records for the Lolo Trail National Historic landmark. He told me that he had made a crude, but educated, estimate of its location and wanted me to refine it. I knew that a precision survey would be needed and that the GPS tools available were too crude to do it. A traditional survey was out of the question because it would be very expensive. I deferred his request for several years but started a survey based on low-cost GPS while selective availability was still implemented. The 200 meter accuracy was not acceptable to me so more delay was necessary. Meanwhile, Merle passed away without knowing that in 2003, I would get a grant to do the precision survey he wanted.

In the early 1990s, I did some challenger cost share agreements with the Forest Service to be their technical expert on the location of the trail treads of the Lolo Trail. They were planning to build a "Cross the Forest" recreation trail and neither they nor I wanted it to impact the historic trail tread. At this time, I was disclosing only the location of the 1866 government trail tread and not the tread of the Northern Nez Perce Trail as followed by Lewis and Clark. It was, and still is, my goal to preserve all the tread.

Against my wishes and recommendations, the Forest Service began clearing portions of the 1866 government trail tread using volunteers under the "Take Pride in America" program. This, and earlier programs that I was not involved in, opened about 40 miles of 1866 government trail and a small amount of Lewis and Clark Trail that intermingled. I have all of this activity documented

because I traveled the trails before they were opened. Fortunately, nearly all of the Lewis and Clark trail was untouched.

In 1994, Jim Caswell became Clearwater Forest Supervisor. My concerns about the recreational trail became so great that I arranged to take him out alone to hike authentic Lewis and Clark Trail. He was impressed with the trail and its visuals and became convinced that the recreation trail was a bad idea and terminated all activity concerning it even though a route had been flagged. He was also instrumental in setting a policy of no improvements to the Lolo Motorway or campsites. I worked closely with him and others to preserve the Lolo Trail corridor.

Until the late 1990s, I continued to advocate to the Forest Service for preservation of the Lolo Trail corridor. At that time, I felt the necessary protections had now been implemented. I did a workshop for the Clearwater National Forest leadership team which included the district rangers and chief personnel at the supervisors office. We spent several days traveling the Lolo Trail and I had ample time to present my historic preservation plans and ideas. Since that time, I've not interacted with the Forest Service.

Over the years, I've continued to try to find a way to do a precision survey of the Northern Nez Perces Trail followed by Lewis and Clark. Finally, in 2001 I teamed with the Idaho State Historical Society to submit a grant proposal to the Idaho Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Community Assistance Grants Program. We received the grant which paid for the salaries of my survey assistants, the use of a precision GPS, and our living expenses while on the trail. I donated all of my time, over 60 days in the field and hundreds of hours of data processing time, as cost share. The survey was conducted in the summers of 2002 and 2003. I spent the winter of 2002-2003 and fall of 2004 (all donated time) doing all the data processing of over 50,000 GIS data points in a software program called ARCVIEW. The accuracy of the survey is 1-3 meters.

Recently, I published precise topographic maps of the Lewis and Clark Trail from Lolo Pass to the Weippe Prairie ("Lewis and Clark Lolo Trail Precision Survey").

POINTS IN THE PDF ARTICLE I AM REFUTING:

There was a heritage resource inventory done by the Clearwater National Forest and an archeologist firm out of Missoula, Montana but I did not participate in any of that activity.

I definitely did not survey a so-called "designated trail" and did no collaboration with the Forest Service. That agency had nothing to do with the precision survey. The trail location, associated research, and historical perspective are exclusively mine.

I've known Sandi McFarland since the 1990s when I was president of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail foundation. Sandi was trying to say that the 1866 trail was disturbed. I was, and still am, the only person who knows where the exact Lewis and Clark Trail is located and the only person in the last 100 years to have hiked its entire length in the precise erosion trace.

It is true that the Forest Service manages some of the new trail tread as historic trail. This was

something I pointed out to them almost 15 years ago but they wanted to do it that way. After years of reflection on it, I decided to go along with the practice. Why? Because it keeps the casual visitor, mountain bikes, and 4-wheelers from trashing the real trail tread.

Concerning the trail reconstruction at Lolo Forks, that was done with my knowledge but without my cooperation. Years before I began work on the Lolo Trail, the Forest Service had accidentally logged over the trail at that location and had not documented it. I pointed this out to some of their managers and that is what precipitated the reconstruction work. I have the work documented in my research files and know the details of what happened because I had documented the area both before and after the work was done. If this becomes a major issue, I would be willing to share my research work in a short publication for your readers.

I know the entire history of the Lolo Trail and what has happened to it over the past 20 years. It seems like there are many self-proclaimed experts for it but I have yet to be contacted by them for information. Even the Forest Service seems content to manage it without my expert input. However, it is my hope that they will take advantage of the precision survey data and my published work to manage it in the future.