

# OPINION

## A showcase for how to get it done

It would seem impossible that the logistics could be mustered to build a \$1 million lodge in the middle of nowhere, and on federal land to boot, but that is exactly what the Idaho Aviation Foundation has done with the reconstruction of Big Creek Lodge.

Ground-breaking ceremonies were held last Saturday at the remote site of the lodge at Big Creek, the most popular gateway to the Frank Church River of Return Wilderness. When the lodge that had sat on the site for decades burned in 2008, it was assumed a piece of history was lost forever. That would be a good bet given the policy of the Forest Service, which says that all rights to a private use on federal land disappears if the use is not maintained. Lost with the lodge would be a popular refuge for hikers, pilots and anyone else who desired a bit of civilization to break up their backcountry adventure.

Enter the foundation, which struck a unique deal with the Payette National Forest. The pilots group said it would raise the money through private sources to rebuild the lodge, but would not try to claim it as a haven only for pilots. Since it is located on public land, any new buildings would have to be opened to the public, even to those who are afraid of flying. The Payette seized on the deal, knowing the value of having a high-quality amenity at a location that is known nationwide by wilderness lovers.

The foundation has raised \$700,000 toward the project and is confident it can get the rest of the needed \$200,000 donated, so work has begun on a new two-story log building with four bedrooms to rent and all the comforts of home. The result will be a first-class facility that will rival anything like it in the nation.

Pilots are sometimes described as a pampered class who demand a disproportionate share of public funds and facilities so they can practice their hobby. But in this case, the members of the Idaho Aviation Foundation have brought forth a project that projects true community spirit and which will benefit all users, and not just pilots, for a very long time.

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