



Beaverhead County Commissioners

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September 8, 2017

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Daines,

Beaverhead County strongly supports legislation to finally deal with WSA's (wilderness study areas). Beaverhead County for years has been asking Congress and the federal agencies to address this critical land use issue. All of the WSAs in Beaverhead County have been studied by the BLM and Forest Service and we agree with and support their recommendations which are mentioned in this letter. The following part of this letter is nearly identical to the one we sent to our Congressional leaders in 2011. It is amazing how these issues are still important now, six years later.

In a call for public lands that have **STRONG LOCAL** support for permanent protection as wilderness under the Wilderness Act we argue that there are **NO** such areas in Beaverhead County. Agricultural interests, timber interests, mineral development interests, power transmission interests, communication interest, summer and winter motorized recreationists whom populate our County, as well as a small core of wilderness advocates agree with the BLM and Forest Service recommendations discussed in this letter. Thus, there are no areas that are not fully contested when

proposals are forwarded to remove lands from multiple-use management and add them to the acres managed as wilderness.

When reviewing lands within Beaverhead County being considered for future wilderness designation, of paramount importance to our residents, are the Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) that have undergone analysis by the BLM and Forest Service with the analysis resulting in a finding of "Not Recommended for Wilderness." These areas are still Wilderness Study Areas not because they have outstanding wilderness characteristics, but because Congress has not acted and removed the WSA designation it imposed by legislation going on 30-40 years ago. Beaverhead County Commissioners would stridently advocate any future legislation from Congress dealing with or designating WSAs to recognize the areas listed below as "Not Recommended for Wilderness" by the BLM. Management prescriptions for these areas should be developed to address multiple uses including motorized recreation, grazing, timber, minerals, transmission lines, communication towers, as well as ecological services.

These areas are:

- Blacktail Mountains (south section) consisting of 6,893 acres
- East Fork of the Blacktail Deer Creek consisting of 6,230 acres
- Hidden Pasture Creek consisting of 15,509 acres
- Bell and Limekiln Canyons consisting of 9,650 acres
- Henneberry Ridge consisting of 9,806 acres
- Farlin Creek (west section) consisting of 529 acres
- Centennial Mountains consisting of 22,047 acres
- West Pioneer Mountains consisting of 148,150 acres

As for the three areas listed below that have been "Recommended for Wilderness," Beaverhead County Commissioners do not recognize any outstanding needs for representative ecological communities in the wilderness lands inventory that these areas would fill that are not currently well represented by lands already protected by wilderness designation. Our understanding of the wilderness lands inventory directive is one where simply adding acres or quantity is not an

analysis/decision criterion. Farlin Creek does not meet the 4,000 acre minimum size and as such should not be considered. Given the recommended wilderness and wilderness designations on neighboring/adjoining Forest Service managed lands, these areas appear to be Recommended Wilderness not due to outstanding wilderness character, but due to their locale and potential for creating large blocks of wilderness.

- Blacktail Mountains consisting of 10,586 acres
- Farlin Creek 610 acres
- Centennial Mountains 23,054 acres

Beaverhead County Commissioners believe these areas would best be managed as National Protection Areas as a means to preserve their wilderness characteristics and yet allow for utilitarian use of resources vital to Beaverhead County's and the nation's residents.

As the budget problems persist in D.C., Beaverhead County Commissioners would like to stress the importance of federal revenue sharing that comes from the non-preservationist management of federal lands. Economic potential of responsible, use-oriented resource utilization on public lands would greatly benefit our nation beginning with our local economy, extending to the many visitors who travel to Beaverhead County to recreate on these lands and hopefully federal agencies' budgets from permits, income, and fees.

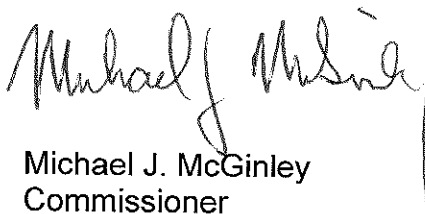
In conclusion, the Beaverhead County Commissioners believe that the over 10 million acres of wilderness and national parks within one day's drive of Dillon are ample in meeting ecological, environmental, and human needs for wilderness in this region. We therefore urge the agencies to forego an agenda of adding acres to wilderness for the sake of adding acres to wilderness. As well as to manage remaining non-wilderness federal lands to allow the greatest degree of access to the widest spectrum of users, to provide the highest level of utilitarian-compatible multiple-uses, and to employ our knowledge of revenue generating methods for the benefit of Beaverhead County Citizens,

the visitors who come to see this northern Rocky Mountain landscape, and all of the people of the United States.

Sincerely,



C. Thomas Rice
Chairman



Michael J. McGinley
Commissioner



John Jackson
Commissioner