

Ravalli County Commissioners Office

From: Theresa Manzella <theresa@willing servants.org>
Sent: Friday, March 28, 2014 9:37 AM
To: coliver01@fs.fed.us; ggale@fs.fed.us
Cc: Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Subject: Public comment from Dwain Rennaker concerning Schram grazing allotments

3/25/2014

To: The U.S.F.S.

Mr. Chuck Oliver
712 North Main
Darby, MT. 59829

Mr. Gil Gale
Sula, Mt.

From : Mr. Dwain Rennaker
2022 Old Darby Rd.
Darby, Mt. 59829

Dear Mr. Oliver, Mr. Gale and other interested employees of the USFS,

My name is Dwain Rennaker. The intent of this letter is to offer my input, experience and opinion on the Sleeping Child grazing allotment currently being considered for Dave and Julie Schramm, as well as grazing allotments in general.

I have lived on my ranch for 72 years, and owned it for 50. My ranch is located approx 8 miles south of Hamilton and runs along the river bottom with the largest portion lying between Old Darby Road and the USFS.

My family held a grazing permit for 69 years, from 1942 to 2011. During many of those years Clarence Duus, Max Henault, Harry Walters, Fred Shawver, Pat Patterson, Richardson & Wakeham, and my father, Lloyd Rennaker shared an allotment and ran approx 800 cows, annually. We shared the use of the land, as well as the work load, and together we did our part in feeding Americans healthy beef at a reasonable price. I relinquished my grazing allotment permit in approx 2011 after having the USFS cut my AUM (animal unit number) number down in 1998 from 80 for 5 months, to 40 for 3 months, or less than half of what it previously once was.

Today, there are no cows in that area. No cows to help keep the understory trimmed down as a deterrent for wildfire. No ranchers keeping a watchful eye on their stock while providing free labor in maintaining the condition of the land, fixing fences, springs and riparian areas, or managing noxious weeds and downed timber. No cows to feed Americans. No cows generating a revenue stream for the state to help fund our local school systems. What used to be a WIN/WIN has been turned into a LOSE/LOSE for all parties concerned, and I can't pretend to make any sense of it. I have quietly watched the number of cattle produced in the Bitterroot Valley decrease year after year due to a lack of available grazing. I personally sold 1600 of the 3200 that left the valley in 2002. By not utilizing the land, it is my opinion that the USFS is guilty of not only contributing to the

possibility of wild fire, as the allotment that I previously utilized and managed has become a tinderbox, but also higher meat prices at the grocery store for the American citizen.

Also, I have witnessed the results of the introduction of the Canadian Grey Wolf on the cattle industry in the Bitterroot Valley. The additional stress of wolves have created lower conception rates, lower birth and weaning weights, and thus taken a tremendous toll on the ranchers bottom line, to the point that many have "thrown in the towel" and sold off their lands for subdivision. I now have elk have competing with my cows on my private property, as they've figured out is safer there then in the hills. That, too, comes at a great cost to my bottom line.

I personally support the Schrams use of the grazing allotment. They are a relatively small land owner land owner and need the grazing allotment to make their operation work, financially. Without it, they will most certainly experience financial hardship and be forced to cut down their numbers. They do not put up their own hay during the summer, which allows them more time to ride and manage their stock on the grazing allotment. These factors should, in my estimation, make them perfect candidates for the use of the Sleeping Child grazing allotment.

Sincerely,

Dwain Rennaker

375-5324

This letter was composed and sent by Theresa Manzella on behalf of Dwain Rennaker with his approval. A signed hard copy will be forthcoming.