

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2600

May 13, 2015

RECEIVED

The Honorable Thomas L. Tidwell
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1111

JUN 01 2014

Ravalli County Commissioners

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Dear Chief Tidwell:

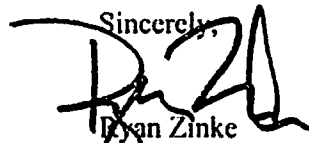
Part of what makes Montana great is our recreational access to some of the most astounding natural resources in the world. From Glacier National Park to the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest, traversing the landscape by foot, boat, snowmobile, bicycle, vehicle, or horse allows all people the opportunity to fully utilize the outdoors. Our thriving tourism industry and recreational accessibility show that multiple uses of our public lands is not only an important part of Montana's heritage, but our very way of life.

The release of the Travel Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Draft Record of Decision (ROD) for the Bitterroot National Forest threatens the very tenants of the multiple use doctrine touted by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). I am concerned cutting summer and winter motorized uses in Wilderness Study Areas will have negative ramifications on the outdoor recreational community, Ravalli County, and the western region. 70 percent of Ravalli County is composed of federal lands. Recreational users, who help fuel the local tourism economy, will now face severe limitations whether riding bikes in the summer or using snowmobiles in the winter.

We have enough inaccessible acreage in Montana. The priority should be working with the resources we have to stabilize our forest lands, preserve public access, and promote multiple uses and sustained yields. I firmly believe local counties and communities should be thoroughly consulted by the USFS before any travel management plans are completed. We should be engaging affected communities for their input, especially when 45,000 residents could be impacted. I strongly urge you to get concurrence from Ravalli County on the proposed action and re-work the plan to incorporate their perspectives.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to working with you on this issue and appreciate your timely response.

Sincerely,



Ryan Zinke
Member of Congress

CC: David Schmid, Acting Regional Forester, Region 1, U.S. Forest Service
Julie K. King, Forest Supervisor, Bitterroot National Forest