

**Office of
The Board of County Commissioners
Granite County**

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Barton C. Bonney, Chairperson
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P O Box 96
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December 19, 2017

RECEIVED

DEC 22 2017

Ravalli County Commissioners

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

Re: Objection to the Repeal of the Sapphire
Wilderness Study Area

Dear Senator Daines:

Over 20 people were in our office today to enthusiastically object to the repeal of the Sapphire Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and they all requested more time for public comment to your office prior to a decision being made. A member of your staff, Spenser Merwin, and Stan Spencer had made an appointment on our agenda to request a letter of support for the repeal of the Sapphire WSA. After receiving the public comment, and many emails and telephone messages, this Board unanimously declined to write such a letter.

We feel that the characteristics of the Sapphire WSA are significantly different than any other WSA due to the nearly two dozen lakes that feed blue-ribbon trout streams, as well as secure habitat for big game and other wildlife. According to the diverse group of stakeholders we heard from today, they are willing to work through public participation for a more balanced approach to resolving Montana's wilderness study areas.

While we agree that it is time to decide on how these areas should be managed in the long term, we believe that the public is interested in a fair, transparent, inclusive and fact-based solution that recognizes the history of collaborative dialogue. While many proposed solutions have come before congress over the years, the many people here today expressed a sincere desire to have a voice and to truly participate in this decision.

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Navajo County Commissioners

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U.S. Senator Steve Daines
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We believe that a fair and balanced compromise can be reached if all voices are heard. A one-size-fits-all approach is not the solution to the WSA's in Montana, and most certainly is not the solution to the unique landscape of the Sapphire WSA.

This Board voted unanimously to request that you obtain more public discussion on WSA's in general, and specifically on the Sapphire WSA. Granite County would be willing to host, at your convenience, a forum for you to receive public comment and discussion on this topic that is so vitally important to the citizens of Granite County and to all Montanans.

Sincerely yours,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF GRANITE COUNTY



Barton C. Bonney, Chairperson

GCC/mk