

# **CAPITAL TRAIL VEHICLE ASSOCIATION (CTVA)**

**P.O. Box 5295  
Helena, MT 59604-5295**

February 18, 2017

Senator Steve Daines  
104 4th Street North, Suite 302  
Great Falls, MT 59401

Re: Please rescind Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977

Dear Senator Daines,

We enjoy riding our OHVs on primitive trails and roads in the Lewis and Clark National Forest. All multiple-use land managed by the Forest Service provides a significant source of these OHV recreational opportunities. We have observed that 97% of the visitors to our public lands are there to enjoy motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities. We are passionate about OHV recreation for the following reasons:

## **Enjoyment and Rewards of OHV Recreation**

- Opportunity for a recreational experience for all types of people.
- Opportunity to strengthen family relationships.
- Opportunity to experience and respect the natural environment.
- Opportunity to participate in a healthy and enjoyable sport.
- Opportunity to experience a variety of opportunities and challenges.
- Camaraderie and exchange of experiences.
- We like to build and maintain trails for all users.
- For the adventure of it.

We want to bring a problem to your attention that is important to many outdoor recreationists. The problem involves two areas in the Lewis and Clark National Forest, Middle Fork of the Judith and the Big Snowies. These two areas are being held from the public by the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (MWSA 1977). The Middle Fork of the Judith in the Little Belts and the Big Snowies were designated wilderness study areas by a congressional act way back in the 1970's. The act clearly stated these areas were to be evaluated and designated as wilderness or returned to multiple-use (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/95/s393/text>). The law did not intend for these areas to remain in limbo for 40 years because of inaction but unfortunately that is what has happened.

The Lewis and Clark National Forest is one of the most popular areas for outdoor recreation in Montana. Two of the most popular and scenic areas within the forest is the Middle Fork of the Judith River and the Big Snowies south of Lewistown. Unfortunately, multiple use of both areas by the public has been severely restricted by the MWSA 1977. The Act has been a critical factor in the

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Forest Service's inability to develop a reasonable forest plan for the area. Rescinding the MWSA 1977 designation would open the area for enjoyment by all of the public and allow the Forest Service to better manage the forest in these two areas.

The Forest Service has repeatedly stated these two areas should not be designated as wilderness and have recommended they be managed as non-wilderness lands as demonstrated by the following summary of land management actions:

- 1960- the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act directs our forests to be managed for multiple use
- 1972- RARE I Study- Middle Fork scores were not sufficient for wilderness designation
- Montana Wilderness Study Act (MWSA of 1977)- designated areas in Middle Fork of the Judith River (92,000 acres) and the Big Snowies (98,000 acres) as study areas.
  - June 1977 to January 1979, the FS RARE II study (1970's) recommended further study before a final wilderness recommendation could be made
  - In 1982, the FS completed the MWSA analysis and their Final Environmental Statement (FES) did not recommend the Middle Fork as a candidate for wilderness designation
- In 1986, the Forest Service the Forest Plan Record of Decision for the Lewis and Clark National Forest recommended "non-wilderness for both areas"
- In 2003, the Forest Service published the 'Judith Restoration Environmental Impact Statement' and did not recommend the Middle Fork of Judith for further study
- Motorized recreationists was asked to support the Rocky Mountain Heritage Act since the Act released wilderness study areas (WSA) designation in other areas of the Front
  - Motorized recreationists asked that removal of the WSA designation be included as part of the legislation
  - Our request was addressed by Senator Baucus's office
- In Montana, the wilderness experience already exists in many other places including:
  - 16 USFS Wilderness areas (3,606,715 acres)
  - 2 National Parks (3,233,113 acres),
  - 39 BLM managed lands (449,963 acres),
  - National Monuments,
  - National Wildlife Refuges, and
  - Conservation Management Areas
- These two areas have been "studied" since 1972 – over 44 years
  - Declaring these two areas as WSA's has restricted public use which was not supposed to happen per the original legislation unless they were officially designated as wilderness areas
  - Continued management as WSA's allows very limited management of the forest

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- Removing this designation would facilitate Forest Service management of these areas and the forest surrounding them and allow the public much needed access and multiple-use opportunities

Congressional action on the MWSA of 1977 is the only way that this situation can be fixed. We are asking you to help remove the Wilderness Study Area classification from the Middle Fork of the Judith River and the Big Snowies and also direct the Forest Service to manage these areas as non-wilderness multiple-use areas as originally designated by congress in the Multiple-Use Act of 1960. We ask for your support to rescind the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 and return the Middle Fork of the Judith and the Big Snowies to multiple-use management for the benefit of all of the public.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

/s/ CTVA Action Committee on behalf of our 240 members and their families and friends

Capital Trail Vehicle Association (CTVA)<sup>1</sup>  
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<sup>1</sup> CTVA is also a member of Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association ([mtvra.com](http://mtvra.com)), Blue Ribbon Coalition ([sharetrails.org](http://sharetrails.org)), and New Mexico Off highway Vehicle Alliance ([nmohva.org](http://nmohva.org)),. Individual memberships in the American Motorcycle Association ([ama-cycle.org](http://ama-cycle.org)), Citizens for Balanced Use ([citizensforbalanceduse.com](http://citizensforbalanceduse.com)), Families for Outdoor Recreation ([ffor.org](http://ffor.org)), Montana 4X4 Association, Inc. ([m4x4a.org](http://m4x4a.org)), Montana Multiple Use Association ([montanamua.org](http://montanamua.org)), Snowmobile Alliance of Western States ([snowmobile-alliance.org](http://snowmobile-alliance.org)), and United Four Wheel Drive Association ([ufwda.org](http://ufwda.org))