

## JERICHO MOUNTAIN IRA

My recommendation for this area is non-motorized backcountry with a wildlife emphasis. This IRA extends from MacDonald Pass south for 6 miles and provides crucially important wildlife linkage in an otherwise fragmented landscape along the Continental Divide west of Helena. Together with Sweeney Creek IRA, Jericho offers a relatively pristine wildland conduit that abuts Highway 12, giving wildlife immediate refuge once crossing Highway 12 has been accomplished. Lynx and wolverine are regularly located in this area.

The following is the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society's 1984-2005 canvassing questionnaire regarding roadless values for possible Congressional consideration of wilderness for Jericho Mountain.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment regarding recommendations for our valued Inventoried Roadless Areas. I commend the HLCNF for extending this opportunity and providing an informative and educational method to gather this information through the Interactive Mapping exercise offered at the Open House that was held at Jorgensen's Inn on March 7, 2016.

**Gayle Joslin, Wildlife Biologist**  
**Retired Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**  
**Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Member**

### **SUMMARY OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & HABITAT VALUES FOR ROADLESS AREAS**

**ROADLESS AREA** Jericho Mountain 8,968 net acres (#01607 in HNF Forest Plan 1986)  
National Forest Helena National Forest  
Direction and distance to nearest town: Helena-4 mi NW; Elliston-5 mi E; Rimini-1.5 mi E  
Hunting Districts in which Roadless Area occurs: HD335 and HD215  
Individual providing this information: Gayle Joslin  
Email: [gjoslin@mt.gov](mailto:gjoslin@mt.gov) Phone: 495-3268

**1) Please briefly explain the importance of the area to wildlife and fisheries. Consider wildlife use/habitat for as many of the following as pertinent: Elk, Mule deer, White-tailed deer, Moose, Mountain Goat, Bighorn Sheep, Other species of concern (important seasonal use, security, denning habitat, connectivity to other important habitats, spawning habitat, coldwater downstream fisheries, etc.)** The Jericho Mtn Roadless Area extends south of Highway 12 from MacDonald Pass along the Continental Divide. Elk, Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, Moose, Black Bear, and Wolverine occur as well as a variety of grouse and other wildlife and birds. Grizzly Bear and Lynx, are known to move through the area. Even a bighorn sheep ram was observed moving through this RA. About 6 miles of the Continental Divide is encompassed by this narrow RA, so the RA is essential in helping to maintain the wildlife movement corridor along Continental Divide. Its value could be enhanced if the RA were extended south to connect with the Electric Peak RA. Jericho Mountain is separated by less than

½ mile from the Lazyman Roadless Area that lies across the Rimini Road to the east. Jericho Mountain provides critical fall big game security, and is used throughout the spring and summer by elk, moose and deer, among other wildlife. About 1/3 of the area is winter range for elk, mule deer, and moose. Wolves are known to occur in the area. There are no fisheries, but Tenmile Creek, which flows north along the eastern boundary, sustains brook trout and rainbow trout.

**2) Is there hunter/angler access to the area?** YES. There is a direct access from the Tenmile Creek Road, as well as access from U.S. Highway 12 and Telegraph Creek. Hunters heavily use these areas.

**3) Are there adjoining parcels of land that could be added to this Roadless Area?** YES. The southern end of the Jericho Mountain Roadless Area could be extended to connect with the Electric Peak RA and thus incorporate an essential segment of the Continental Divide.

**4) Does this Roadless Area provide a buffer zone between Wilderness and developed public or private lands?** NO. This is a relatively small Roadless parcel, but because it is adjacent to Highway 12 and MacDonald Pass, and the Tenmile Road, it is heavily used by the recreating public of Helena. Together with the adjacent Lazyman Roadless Area, these roadless areas provide less than 15% of the area but provide essential roadless big game security within HD335.

**5) Are there areas in this Roadless Area that should be removed from Roadless status?**  
NO

**6) Are there opportunities for reclamation within this area to improve its Roadless character?** YES – several miles of old roads occur and could be reclaimed, particularly mine waste haul roads on and up to the crest of the Continental Divide in the connection area between Electric Peak and Jericho Roadless Areas.

**7) What are the threats to this Roadless Area? (motorized use; ski developments, etc.)**  
The Helena National Forest and Montana Army National Guard propose a Biathlon Facility near this RA and the Federal Highway Department is proposing to pave the Tenmile Road, which will bring more uses to the area and influence wildlife habitat. The Forest Service is also proposing expansion of the Cromwell-Dixon campground adjacent to the roadless area. Additional enforcement would improve habitat effectiveness in the Jericho Mountain RA.

**8) Does this area contribute to wildlife movement through the landscape?** YES. It straddles the Continental Divide, which is the most important wildlife movement corridor in North America, and it provides a connection to the Lazyman RA and a secondary movement corridor eastward toward the Elkhorn Mountains to the east. The Jericho Mountain Roadless Area occurs about 3 miles north of the Electric Peak Roadless Area, also along the Continental Divide and north of the Boulder River.

**9) Is there good/poor travel planning on surrounding public lands?** Poor. Travel planning on this portion of the Helena National Forest has been deferred indefinitely until funding is available from the Regional Office, thus the maintenance of this Roadless Area is critical to wildlife security and habitat integrity. [Divide Travel Plan was signed 2/20/2016]

**10) Would the surrounding areas of non-Roadless public lands be capable of providing yearlong functional habitat and security?** No. Carefully designated routes and consistent monitoring and enforcement are needed in this area if the Continental Divide is to continue to provide continuity in the wildlife movement corridor, and to secondary corridors, and between functional wildlife habitats.