

LAZYMAN-BLACK MOUNTAIN IRA

Pileated woodpeckers, great-gray owls, black bears, and mountain lions are a few wildlife species not regularly observed by people but which I have been fortunate to observe in this area. Within 50 m of the northeast boundary, I have seen a wolverine. This is my family's favorite hunting area, providing elk, mule deer and white-tailed deer for our table. Moose are regular inhabitants. This area is rare in its ability to provide undisturbed secure habitat for big game.

At its northeast edge, the Lazyman IRA provides a landscape link along the ridgeline to the east toward Skihi Peak and then to the Elkhorn Mountains. And from its southern end it also provides a link to the southeast toward Chessman Reservoir, Park Lake, to Boulder Pass, another connection to the Elkhorn Mountains and connectivity from there southward to the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

This area is within 15 minutes of Helena – an extremely rare opportunity for any state capitol city. And yet, from upper Nelson Gulch to Colorado/Black Mountain and Blackhall Meadows, this country is as wild as a place can be. It deserves to be left like that. Where timber suitability currently overlaps with this IRA on its southern end, please remove the “suitable for timber” classification. My recommendation for this area is Wilderness.

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 Lazyman-Black 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
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Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Member

SUMMARY OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & HABITAT VALUES FOR ROADLESS AREAS

ROADLESS AREA (name) Lazyman Gulch 11,928 net acres (#1608-HNF Forest Plan 1986)
National Forest Helena National Forest
Direction and distance to nearest town: Helena-4 mi NW; Rimini-1/2 mi W
Hunting Districts in which Roadless Area occurs: HD335
Individual providing this information: Gayle Joslin
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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 Lazyman Gulch Roadless Area occurs east of the Rimini Road and within 4 miles of Helena. It includes Colorado Mountain and Black Mountain and part of Blackhall Meadows. Elk, Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, Moose, Black Bear, and Wolverine occur along with a variety of grouse and other wildlife and birds. MFWP recovered a dead wolverine on the eastern boundary of the RA in the headwaters of Travis Creek. Grizzly Bear crossing from the Jericho Mountain RA east into the Lazyman Gulch RA have been observed by locals. Critical fall big game security is provided. The area used yearlong by elk, deer, moose, and a variety of other wildlife. About 1/3 of the area is winter range for elk, moose, and mule deer. There are no fisheries but Tenmile Creek, which flows north along the western 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 Beaver Creek, Grizzly Gulch, and Travis Creek. Hunters heavily use these areas.

3) Are there adjoining parcels of land that could be added to this Roadless Area?

YES. The Lazyman Gulch RA should be modified along its southeastern boundary to incorporate all of Blackhall Meadows, and the Spruce Hills. Currently defacto adjacent roadless areas are not recognized as Roadless and will be lost to unauthorized motorized uses if measures are not taken to preserve their character. Secure habitat within Hunting District 335 is limited so expansion of this roadless area would serve to improve wildlife habitat and improve big game security. The Spruce Hills is a heavily used piece of public land that is vulnerable to habitat security loss unless it receives protected status. [Since this questionnaire was sent, the Spruce Hills, Park Lake, and Chessman Reservoir area were dramatically clear cut – these areas need to be regenerated. A heavily used elk nursery area was eliminated with clearcutting on the east end of Chessman Reservoir.]

4) Does this Roadless Area provide a buffer zone between Wilderness and developed public or private lands? NO. Lazyman is a relatively small roadless parcel, but it is heavily used by the recreating public of Helena since it is within 4 miles of the city limits. This RA is critical to big game security in 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 important would be reclamation of the old Colorado Mountain road, and the closed road leading into the Spruce Hills. [Clancy-Unionville and Divide Travel Plans are now in place.]

7) What are the threats to this Roadless Area? (motorized use/expansion; etc.)

The Helena National Forest is proposing a timber sale in the Blackhall Meadows area and the Federal Highway Department is proposing to pave the Tenmile Road, which will spur second

home development on old mining claims and bring more human influence to the area, and impacts to wildlife habitat. [Tenmile-South Helena timber project DEIS is out as of March 2016. The proposal that would seriously compromise what remains of security both within and outside of the Lazyman IRA. Objections regarding changes to wildlife security standards have been filed. Outcomes of this project are undecided.]

8) Does this area contribute to wildlife movement through the landscape? YES. This Roadless Area is adjacent to the Jericho Mountain RA, and thus provides a connection to a secondary movement corridor through Black Mountain toward the Elkhorn Mountains to the east, and through Colorado Mountain toward the Boulder Divide to the southeast.

9) Is there good/poor travel planning on surrounding public lands? Moderate. Travel planning on the western side of this RA has been deferred indefinitely by the Helena National Forest until funding is available from the Regional Office. On the eastern side, the Clancy-Unionville Project has incorporated designated route travel management that is slowly being implemented. Full implementation and enforcement of the travel plan is critical to wildlife security and habitat integrity. [Divide Travel Plans is in place as of 2/29/2016]

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 to provide functional wildlife habitats and continuity in the wildlife movement corridors.