

Montana Wilderness, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Reserved Water of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, Ninety-eighth Congress, First Session, to Review the Montana Wilderness Recommendations, Missoula, Mont., July 5, 1983; Anaconda, Mont., July 7, 1983, Great Falls, Mont., July 9, 1983 – United States. Congress.

Senate. Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Subcommittee on Public Lands and Reserved

Senator Melcher. Gary Ingman.

STATEMENT OF GARY L. INGMAN, NEVADA CREEK CONCERNED SPORTSMEN

Mr. Ingman. I'm Gary Ingman, a third generation Helena native and I am representing a group of about 75 Helena-area citizens who call themselves the Nevada Creek Concerned Sportsmen.

Our group came into being in the fall of 1981 when we organized in response to the Helena National Forest's announcement of planned timber harvests in the 58,000-acre Nevada Mountain RARE II area. During our organization and at public meetings held by the USFS regarding the proposed timber sales, it became apparent that the Nevada Mountain area along the Continental Divide northwest of Helena was indeed quite popular with hunters, hikers, and recreationalists from as far away as Billings and Poison. At an initial public comment-gathering meeting held by the Lincoln Ranger District on two of the timber sales, between 75 and 100 people attended to express opposition to the sales and plead for status quo management of the area. In addition, the Lincoln Ranger District received countless letters protesting development of the area.

Since that meeting in January 1982, through our affiliation with the 2,000-member Helena Forest Conservation Coalition, we have actively participated in the forest planning process and have had input into the Helena National Forest plan with the inclusion of our Citizen's Alternative, High Amenity Alternative. The Helena National Forest supervisor's office has been generally receptive regarding our recommendations for management of much of the Nevada Creek-Nevada Mountain area. At a May 18 meeting, the Helena National Forest announced to the HFCC and industry that the tentative land allocation under the preferred alternative will exclude much of the area from the regulated timber base presumably because of the poor economics of accessing the limited timber in the rough terrain. Several timber sales which had been planned will be dropped.

The Nevada Mountain country supports an abundant wildlife population. The elk herd in that portion of the Continental Divide and the surrounding lower elevation mountains has grown to nearly 1,000 animals from a 1930's plant of 25 animals. And wolverine, cougar, and black bear are plentiful. Grizzly presence in the area was documented by the USFS in 1981.

In consideration of the questionable timber values, the highly valued wildlife resources, the popularity of the area adjacent to a major population center and the documented extensive public opposition to development of the area, it seems that designated roadless management is a fitting alternative for the Nevada Mountain area. There is no surer safeguard to the area's preservation than to protect it under the wilderness system.

In closing, the Nevada Creek Concerned Sportsmen and the Helena Forest Conservation Coalition wish to express their support and urge your support of the Montana Wilderness Association's Alternative W. We support soft release of other appropriate nonwilderness RARE II areas.

I would be happy to fly the Nevada Creek-Nevada Mountain country with you at your convenience to discuss firsthand the area's qualities. I am attaching an additional resume outlining some of the Nevada Mountain area's unique features. Thank you for your time. [The resume follows:]

UNIQUE QUALITIES OF THE UPPER NEVADA CREEK-NEVADA MOUNTAIN AREA WARRANTING SPECIAL CONSIDERATION IN NATIONAL FOREST PLANNING

Proposed timber sales in upper Nevada Creek and adjacent drainages along the Continental Divide, northwest of Helena, have caused a great deal of concern among long-time users of this area. It is the expressed opinion of many of these sports men that this area, for several reasons, is unique to the Helena National Forest, and should therefore receive special consideration and protection under the Wilderness System.

This uniqueness is attributable to the following facts:

(1) Upper Nevada Creek and adjoining country to the south (Gleason Creek, Nevada Mountain and Black Mountain) comprise the largest roadless area remaining within the Helena National Forest along the Continental Divide (outside of wilderness areas) .

(2) This area consists of prime wildlife habitat and supports one of the largest elk herds in the Helena National Forest, as well as several rare species including wolverine, mountain lion, and grizzly bear. The presence of these animals can only be attributed to the undisturbed nature of the area.

(3) This large roadless area is unique in that it is largely accessible from several points around its periphery which can be driven to under most conditions. Wilderness quality hunting and hiking experiences are available to those willing to walk even short distances. An extended pack trip or overnight camping is not necessary, and day hikes are the rule.

(4) Contained within this area are the two highest peaks to be found along some 50 miles of the Continental Divide: Nevada Mountain and Black Mountain. From these 8,000+ foot vantage points the mountains of the Lincoln-Scapegoat, Mission, Flint Creek and Elkhorn ranges are dramatically visible. This panorama is difficult to achieve elsewhere, and would certainly be of great aesthetic value to users of the proposed Continental Divide Trail if the visual quality of the surrounding area is not drastically altered by timber cuts and roads.

(5) The Nevada Creek watershed presently provides the high quality water necessary for the survival of native Bull Trout, which have been observed spawning in the creek. Such habitat is becoming increasingly rare due to man's impacts on water quality.

It seems very likely that any road construction or timber harvest allowed in this area would destroy its highly unique character. Far greater benefit can be derived by the public if this section of the Continental Divide is allowed to remain in its current state through preservation under the Wilderness System.

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MONTANA WILDERNESS

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PUBLIC LANDS AND RESERVED WATER
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
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UNITED STATES SENATE
NINETY-EIGHTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION
TO
REVIEW THE MONTANA WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

MISSOULA, MONT., JULY 5, 1983
ANACONDA, MONT., JULY 7, 1983
GREAT FALLS, MONT., JULY 9, 1983



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Printed for the use of the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1984