

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS
DURING FOREST PLAN REVISION:
HELENA-LEWIS & CLARK NATIONAL FOREST
March 11, 2016**

From my personal perspective as a retired State of Montana wildlife biologist of 32 years, who's area of responsibility encompassed the Continental Divide landscape (largely east of the CD) from Rogers Pass at Highway 2 south to Butte, I offer the following comment and observations collected while flying wildlife surveys or conducting ground reconnaissance data collection. In the past nine years since my retirement, I have been a volunteer for MFWP in this landscape and am an avid hiker and hunter.

The following Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) together, provide links in a fragile chain that connects the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem to the north with the Yellowstone Ecosystem to the south. Movement of grizzly bears has proven that such movement is occurring when a NCDE grizzly was found on the Mount Haggin WMA south of Interstate 90. And movement information of other large carnivores supports that such ecosystem interaction is still being achieved. Recommendations for each IRA is provided below.

In addition to my contemporary comments, the following questionnaire data is also offered. In order to quantify the wildlife values provided by various IRAs, the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society circulated a questionnaire regarding each IRA in the State to wildlife biologists whose area of jurisdiction included these IRAs. Those IRAs for which I was responsible at the time are included here, giving a longer-term perspective regarding the value of these lands to wildlife and their habitat needs. Initial information collection began in 1984 and was updated in these questionnaires through 2005.

ANACONDA HILL

If it were not for the Mike Horse Mine, this area should be recommended for Wilderness. As it is, defining this IRA as "non-motorized backcountry with a wildlife emphasis" would be essential to establish this first link in the wildlife corridor extending from the Bob Marshall Complex south of Highway 200 south through the more fractured country along this portion of the Continental Divide west of Helena. I recorded extensive grizzly bear digs along the spectacular ridge with views to the Scapegoat and Bob Marshall Wilderness Areas. Bear hair snare collections in this area conducted by MFWP over the past 10 years has resulted in "hits" for grizzly bear.

The following is the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society's canvassing questionnaire regarding roadless values for possible Congressional consideration of wilderness for Anaconda Hill.

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

ROADLESS AREA (name) Anaconda Hill 17,461 net acres (#1602-HNF Forest Plan 1986)

National Forest _____ Helena NF
Direction and distance to nearest town _____ Helena – 25 mi SE; Lincoln – 15 mi SW
Hunting Districts in which Roadless Area occurs: _____ HD339
Individual providing this information: _____ Gayle Joslin
Email: _____ 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.) Elk, Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, Mountain Lion, Lynx, Wolverine occur. Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goats are known to occur in this area as they move between the Continental Divide and the Wolf Creek Canyon and the Sleeping Giant area to the east. Grizzly bear are known to den in the area, and a female grizzly produced several litters of cubs in this area during the 1990's and into 2000. Essential fall big game security is provided. Portions of the RA are winter range for elk, mule deer and moose. The Continental Divide Scenic Trail runs nearly the length of this RA. No fisheries.

2) Is there hunter/angler access to the area? YES. From Flesher Pass, Rogers Pass, Beartrap Creek, Lyons Creek, the Lincoln Highway (279), and from the MFWP Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area that adjoins the Roadless Area on the south. Hunters use the area heavily.

3) Are there adjoining parcels of land that could be added to this Roadless Area? No.

4) Does this Roadless Area provide a buffer zone between Wilderness and developed public or private lands? NO, but it adjoins the Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area, the MFWP O'Connell Ranch Conservation Easement, the MFWP Sieben Ranch Conservation Easement, and is within ½ mile of the Specimen Creek Roadless Area for approximately 5 miles, with only the Lincoln Highway in between, so roadless continuity in this area is good.

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 – some old roads occur, but nature for the most part is reclaiming them. Enforcement to minimize illegal use of OHVs is important.

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

The biggest threats to this area are subdivision proposals on private lands in Woods and Greenpole Creeks, and illegal motorized use from adjacent private lands.

8) Does this area contribute to wildlife movement through the landscape? YES. It straddles the Continental Divide for approximately 8 miles. The Continental Divide is possibly the most important and perhaps the most threatened wildlife movement corridor in North America. Wildlife are known to move through this area along the Divide and to branch off to the east, moving through a series of private land conservation easements and State and BLM land. This

eastern movement corridor is realized by a variety of wildlife such as bighorn sheep and mountain goats, moose and bears crossing Interstate 15 to get to the Sleeping Giant Wilderness Study Area and even crossing the Missouri River to get to the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness and the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area in the Big Belt Mountains. (Map attached)

9) Is there good/poor travel planning on surrounding public lands? N/A. Surrounding lands are in private and state ownership. Enforcement of existing travel restrictions is important in retaining the Roadless Character of this area on the Helena National Forest.

10) Would the surrounding areas of non-Roadless public lands be capable of providing yearlong functional habitat and security? Probably, because much of the adjacent land on the east and south are in conservation easements with MFWP. The western adjacent property is heavily roaded Helena National Forest and the abandoned and toxic Mike Horse Mine.

SPECIMEN CREEK

This IRA encompasses the area from Flesher Pass to Stemple Pass and provides a connection with Anaconda Hill to the north, Crater Mountain to the west, the Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area to the east, and Nevada Mountain to the south.

The following is the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society's canvassing questionnaire regarding roadless values for possible Congressional consideration of wilderness for Specimen Creek.

SUMMARY OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & HABITAT VALUES FOR ROADLESS AREAS

ROADLESS AREA (name) Specimen 11,281 net acres (HNF Forest Plan 1986)
National Forest Helena NF
Direction and distance to nearest town Helena – 25 mi SE; Lincoln – 13 mi SW
Hunting Districts in which Roadless Area occurs: HD343
Individual providing this information: Gayle Joslin
Email: 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.) Elk, Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, Lynx, Wolverine occur. Likely bear denning. Important wildlife movement corridor along Continental Divide. Essential fall big game security. Lynx habitat. Portions of the RA are winter range for elk, mule deer and whitetails. No fisheries.

2) Is there hunter/angler access to the area? YES. From Flesher Pass or Stemple Pass, and

from the Lincoln Highway (279) immediately across the highway from the MFWP Canyon Creek Wildlife Management Area in Section 34 T14N R6W. Hunters use the area heavily.

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

YES. By adding approximately 700 acres to the upper west corner of Specimen RA, it would connect to the Crater Mountain RA (west of the Divide) to make these areas contiguous. In addition, if the southern boundary of the Specimen RA is extended southward slightly to incorporate the Continental Divide trail, then wildlife habitat and security would be significantly improved by adding less than 400 acres. The connected areas and the CD trail addition would total approximately 21,000 acres.

4) Does this Roadless Area provide a buffer zone between Wilderness and developed public or private lands? NO

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 – unauthorized OHV trails could be reclaimed. In October 2002, the Lincoln Ranger District in conjunction with MFWP and citizens reclaimed a seriously eroded trail in the Specimen-Tarhead area (photos available). Other reclamation opportunities exist. Local citizens indicate that as of 2005, the area is not being regularly violated by ATV users as in the past, and big game are utilizing the area more consistently.

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

Illegal motorized use is a threat but is being curtailed. Road-building for commercial timber harvest was proposed in 2004, but logging companies indicate that roads are not necessary for logging if the area is within 2 miles of an established road.

8) Does this area contribute to wildlife movement through the landscape? YES. It straddles the Continental Divide, which is possibly the most important wildlife movement corridor in North America. Within 15 miles, the Continental Divide runs through (and thus connects) 4 other Roadless Areas.

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.

10) Would the surrounding areas of non-Roadless public lands be capable of providing yearlong functional habitat and security? Not without implementation of wildlife friendly travel management with carefully designated routes and consistent monitoring and enforcement.

NEVADA MOUNTAIN

My recommendation for this area is Wilderness. I personally observed wolverine tracks and a

den on the steep east slope of Nevada Mountain when conducting aerial wildlife surveys. Wolves have been harvested from this areas. Many reports of grizzly bears occur in this area. The Gould-Helmville motorized trail should be closed to ensure intact wildlife habitat and avoid bisecting the proposed Wilderness.

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

SUMMARY OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & HABITAT VALUES FOR ROADLESS AREAS

ROADLESS AREA (name) Nevada Mountain 49,530 net acres (HNF Forest Plan 1986)
National Forest Helena National Forest
Direction and distance to nearest town Helena – 22 mi SE; Avon – 8 mi N
Hunting Districts in which Roadless Area occurs: HD343
Individual providing this information: Gayle Joslin
Email: 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.) Elk, Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, Lynx, Wolverine occur. Likely black bear and grizzly bear denning. Wolverine have been observed, and winter tracks photographed. Important wildlife movement corridor along Continental Divide. Essential fall big game security. Lynx habitat. Portions of the RA are winter range for elk, mule deer and whitetails. Wolves are present. No fisheries.

2) Is there hunter/angler access to the area? YES. There is road access for 9 miles along the northern boundary of the Roadless Area from the Poorman Road, in addition there is access from roads in Marsh Creek, Little Prickly Pear, Meyers Hill, Threemile Creek, Mitchell Creek, Nevada Creek, Washington Creek, Madison Gulch, Dalton Mtn. Hunters use the area heavily, and depend on it to provide security and thus older bull elk and buck mule deer.

3) Are there adjoining parcels of land that could be added to this Roadless Area?
NO.

4) Does this Roadless Area provide a buffer zone between Wilderness and developed public or private lands? NO. But it is the largest expanse of Roadless land along the Continental Divide from Highway 200 south to Electric Peak just north of Butte. It is the largest Roadless Area within Hunting District 343.

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 – an OHV trail in the northern third of the area could be reclaimed. In 2004 and 2005, the Montana Snowmobile Association along with the Montana Wilderness Association met at the Lincoln Ranger District and requested technical support from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to develop a negotiated Winter Use Agreement. That Agreement was signed in March 2005 by all involved parties and acknowledged the importance of the Nevada Mountain Roadless Area for wildlife among other values.

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

Illegal motorized use is a threat. ATV users have been cutting unauthorized trails into the area from the Threemile Creek access. In addition, ATV users using the Gould-Helmville trail and have been cutting new trails from it out into the Roadless Area. Measures are being taken to discourage additional creation of ATV trails. The Gould-Helmville trail should be reclaimed.

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. Within 15 miles, the Continental Divide runs through (and thus connects) 4 other Roadless Areas.

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.

10) Would the surrounding areas of non-Roadless public lands be capable of providing yearlong functional habitat and security? No. Even if wildlife friendly travel management is implemented in the Helena National Forest that would include carefully designated routes and consistent monitoring and enforcement, the Nevada Mountain Roadless Area is critical to the continuity of wildlife habitat.

SWEENEY CREEK

My recommendation for this area is non-motorized backcountry with a wildlife emphasis. This area is historic mule deer winter range as well as yearlong moose habitat. Past HNF land management decisions in Sweeney were based on this information and were designed to stimulate existing but suppressed populations of bitterbrush for mule deer winter forage. Documented use of this area by lynx, wolverine, and wolves and then linking this area to Jericho, is significant, and critical to assuring linkage across Highway 12. In my official capacity as a wildlife biologist for the State, I collected a lynx that had been hit by a vehicle just south of MacDonald Pass. Sweeney Creek provides an important north-south link across the Highway on the Continental Divide for Wildlife Linkage. It is the stepping-stone IRA between Nevada Mountain and the Jericho IRA.

JERICHO

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 canvassing questionnaire regarding roadless values for possible Congressional consideration of wilderness for Jericho Mountain.

SUMMARY OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & HABITAT VALUES FOR ROADLESS AREAS

ROADLESS AREA (name) 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 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 MacDonal 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.

LAZYMAN-BLACK MOUNTAIN

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 canvassing questionnaire regarding roadless values for possible Congressional consideration of wilderness for Lazyman-Black Mountain.

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
Email: 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 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.

ELECTRIC PEAK

Recent grizzly bear occurrence has been captured through MFWP camera monitoring and several reports from the public indicate that this area is used consistently by grizzlies. The photo of a grizzly in March strongly suggests that the area is used for denning. It is the largest IRA in the wildlife corridor linkage along the Continental Divide, and one of the most important in providing a stepping off point for genetic connection bridging Interstate 90 to wild lands available in the Yellowstone Ecosystem south of I-90. Electric Peak provides an island of wildlife security in an otherwise heavily roaded and cut landscape. I documented during aerial wildlife surveys a moose killed by wolves about a mile south of the IRA in the upper Boulder River. My recommendation for this area is Wilderness.

The following is the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society's canvassing questionnaire regarding roadless values for possible Congressional consideration of wilderness for Electric Peak.

SUMMARY OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & HABITAT VALUES FOR ROADLESS AREAS

ROADLESS AREA (name) Electric Peak 46,497 net acres (HNF Forest Plan 1986)
National Forest Helena National Forest
Direction and distance to nearest town Deerlodge – 9 mi W; Elliston – 5 mi N
Hunting Districts in which Roadless Area occurs: HD215 and HD318
Individual providing this information: Gayle Joslin
Email: 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.) Several mountains in this Roadless Area extend above 8,000 feet thus providing a range of habitat needs for a variety of wildlife. This area is notable for its sightings of wolverine. A female grizzly inhabits the area and consistently produces cubs. Elk, Mule Deer, Moose, Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, Lynx, Wolverine occur along with a variety of grouse and other wildlife and birds. The area almost certainly provides black bear, grizzly bear, wolverine, and lynx denning habitat. Wolverine have been repeatedly observed over the years by a variety of individuals and FS employees. Essential wildlife movement corridor along Continental Divide, particularly in this portion of the state where motorized recreation otherwise dominates the landscape. It is critical fall big game security. Portions of the RA are winter range

for elk and mule deer. Wolves are present in the area. There is a brook trout and cutthroat trout fishery.

2) Is there hunter/angler access to the area? YES. The Little Blackfoot River road runs into Little Blackfoot Meadows and ends at Kading Campground. This is a direct access point to the Roadless Area. In addition there is access from Telegraph Creek, and from a variety of roads along the western southern half of the area, as well as the Basin Creek road, and from near the end of the Thunderbolt Creek road.

3) Are there adjoining parcels of land that could be added to this Roadless Area?
YES. The eastern and northern boundary could be expanded outward by 1 to 3 miles to incorporate lynx and wolverine use areas as well as quality big game summer range and Cliff Lake which is a small lake that hosts a rare population of high elevation, permanently neonatal salamanders. The Electric Peak RA could be expanded northward along the Continental Divide to connect with the Jericho Mountain RA and thus enhance protection of the Continental Divide as a wildlife movement corridor. (Maps attached.)

4) Does this Roadless Area provide a buffer zone between Wilderness and developed public or private lands? NO. But it is the second largest expanse of Roadless land along the Continental Divide from Highway 200 south to the Pioneer Mountains south of Butte. It is the most important Roadless Area within Hunting Districts 318 and 215, and would be enhanced if it were connected with Jericho Mountain.

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 eventual reclamation of roads along the Continental Divide in the connection area between Electric and Jericho RAs. Travel management to control off road use is particularly necessary on the Deerlodge National Forest portion of this Roadless Area. On the Helena National Forest side, the past supervisor closed the Helena forest portion to snowmobiling, which has substantially enhanced successful denning opportunities for bears and furbearing animals. In 1997, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks worked with the Jefferson Ranger District and the Deerlodge Snowmobile Club to clarify snowmobile use south of the area on the big game winter range. It was decided that the state would not contribute snowmobile grooming money to connect trails between the Helena and the Deerlodge Snowmobile Clubs because too many motorized trails already existed across the Berkin Flats Winter Range. This decision helped to maintain the non-motorized character of the Roadless Area, particularly along the RA boundary north of the Boulder River.

7) What are the threats to this Roadless Area? (motorized use/expansion; etc.)
Illegal motorized use. ATV users have been establishing unauthorized trails into the area from several access points. Recognition of the RA and enforcement of its boundaries is essential.

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. It occurs about 3 miles south of the Jericho Mountain Roadless Area, also along the Continental Divide just south of Highway 12.

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. On the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, travel planning is not even being incorporated into current forest planning. The status of management of off-road travel on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge is shameful. [Divide Travel Plan was signed 2/29/2016]

10) Would the surrounding areas of non-Roadless public lands be capable of providing yearlong functional habitat and security? No. Particularly since travel management is not being implemented on either the Helena or Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests. Carefully designated routes and consistent monitoring and enforcement are urgently needed in this area if the Continental Divide is to continue to provide continuity in the wildlife movement corridor and between functional wildlife habitats.

OTHER AREASS FOR CONSIDERATION

The following is the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society's canvassing questionnaire regarding roadless values for possible Congressional consideration of wilderness for Holter.

SUMMARY OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & HABITAT VALUES FOR ROADLESS AREAS

ROADLESS AREA (name) Holter 1,743 net acres (#A1610-HNF Forest Plan 1986)
National Forest Helena NF
Direction and distance to nearest town Helena – 20 mi S; Wolf Creek – 12 mi. NW
Hunting Districts in which Roadless Area occurs: HD339
Individual providing this information: Gayle Joslin
Email: 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.) Five separate parcels make up this Roadless Area. Two of the parcels lie west of the Missouri River in HD339, the others are east of the river in HD455 and HD392. Bighorn sheep, Mountain Goats, Mule Deer, Elk, White-tailed Deer, Black Bear, Mountain Lion, Turkeys, and Grouse occur as well as a variety of other wildlife. The northern four segments constitute important Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goats habitat. The Missouri River provides important fisheries.

2) Is there hunter/angler access to the area? YES. From the Missouri River and the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area. The MFWP Beartooth Wildlife Management Area adjoins the most northerly Roadless Area parcel, while the next parcel down adjoins the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness and the Gates of the Mountains Game Preserve. The next two parcels to the south adjoin the Game Preserve and the river. The most southerly parcel is apparently an addition to the Wilderness Area addition along the scenic Beaver Creek-Refridgerator Canyon road, Hunters use the area heavily.

3) Are there adjoining parcels of land that could be added to this Roadless Area? No. These parcels fill out the missing pieces to other jurisdictional roadless areas.

4) Does this Roadless Area provide a buffer zone between Wilderness and developed public or private lands? Yes, four of the parcels provide a buffer between Wilderness and private lands, or they connect previously disjointed roadless/Wilderness lands or provide continuity to the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area or the Gates of the Mountains Game Preserve.

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? No, they are largely undeveloped.

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

There are few threats to these areas because of the rugged nature of the country.

8) Does this area contribute to wildlife movement through the landscape? YES. These parcels fill in the puzzle pieces that constitute a wildlife movement corridor across the Missouri River and ultimately between the Continental Divide to the west and the Big Belt Mountains to the east. Many species of wildlife are known to cross the Missouri in the vicinity of these parcels including bighorn sheep, mountain goats, mountain lions, moose, mule deer, elk, bear, and even pronghorn antelope.

9) Is there good/poor travel planning on surrounding public lands? N/A. It is not a matter of travel planning, rather it is a function of the rugged nature of the country that is not conducive to motorized travel. Surrounding lands are in private and state ownership.

10) Would the surrounding areas of non-Roadless public lands be capable of providing yearlong functional habitat and security? Yes, because much of the adjacent land are already in Wilderness or Wildlife Management Area, or Game Preserve status.

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