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Today, the Helena Hunters and Anglers Association (Helena Hunters) filed a motion to intervene on behalf of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest in defense of the Divide Travel Plan. More than six years after issuance of the Divide Travel Plan, a group of motorized interests has decided to sue the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest.

The motorized groups filed a lawsuit in February, 2022 against the Forest Service's 2016 Divide Travel Plan for the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest maintaining some of the motorized route closures along the Continental Divide were illegal. Helena Hunters is seeking to participate in that case in order to defend the plan and route designations and protect big game habitat and security along the Divide.

"I have been very fortunate to hunt elk in the Divide area for almost fifty years and want to ensure that others have the same opportunity" said life-long resident Doug Powell. "Lately, all types of recreation in the area have increased so much that wildlife are being displaced to private land, especially during hunting season. So, by restricting travel routes along the divide as the travel plan does, elk and other wildlife that live there won't be displaced to areas where hunting opportunities are less."

Recently retired Forest Supervisor Bill Avey signed the Record of Decision for the Divide Travel Plan on March 1, 2016. The intent of forest travel planning is to provide an adequate motorized route system while minimizing potential adverse effects to forest resources. Forest resource values and issues of particular concern to Helena Hunters include wildlife seasonal habitat requirements, reduction of duplicative and dead-end travel routes, minimizing

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Helena Hunters Move to Defend the  
Forest Service's Divide Travel Plan**

erosion and sedimentation that impact water quality and fisheries habitat, and maintaining quality hunting environments.

The Divide Travel Plan established 323 miles of motorized routes within the Divide planning area that range in use from year-long to seasonal. Helena Hunters and Anglers Association has been actively involved in the Divide travel planning process since its inception in 2000 and continuing through multiple scoping opportunities leading to a draft Environmental Impact Statement in 2014, a final EIS in 2015, and a final Record of Decision in 2016. Concerns voiced by Helena Hunters (and largely addressed by the current Travel Plan) include maintaining critical mule deer winter range, provision of fall security for big game, protecting wildlife movement corridors along the Continental Divide, and ensuring that year-long habitats within four Inventoried Roadless Areas within the planning area remain non-motorized.

“All of our members are passionate about the Divide country. How could we not be when we live right here along the Continental Divide?” said Helena Hunters and Anglers President, Steve Platt.

“Few agencies have more history or meaning to us than the Forest Service with its colorful and courageous genesis out of the corporate exploitive era of the late 1890s and early 1900s” said Helena Hunters member Gayle Joslin. “The Helena National Forest was in fact, one of Theodore Roosevelt’s ‘Midnight Forests’ – one of 21 National Forests that he and his staff created out of western public lands.” Explaining that Roosevelt himself proclaimed that these wild places would be reserved “for those yet unborn in the womb of time.” She noted, “We are those unborn souls he was referring to, and we do not believe we have the right to drop the ball or retreat from the responsibility to be involved in the future of our public lands.”

Platt noted that “HHAA members have been active participants in Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest planning for more than 40 years, and we plan to stay engaged for at least 40 more.”

Helena Hunters and Anglers Association is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to conserving and restoring fish and wildlife to all suitable habitats, and safeguarding all natural resources as a public trust, vital to our general welfare. HHAA promotes the highest standards of ethical conduct and sportsmanship.