

HELENA FOREST CONSERVATION COALITION (HFCC)  
1982 to Present

July 20, 1991

The Helena Forest Conservation Coalition was started in January 1982. Its purpose was to obtain better protection for watershed, wildlife, wilderness, and low-impact recreation on the Helena National Forest.

Its proponents consist of environmentalists, conservationists, and sportsmen. ~~Nine~~ organizations signed on in July of 1982. HFCC produced a Position and Policy Statement which stated its goals. One of its first jobs was immediate protection of roadless areas (RARE II). Among these were nine candidates selected for wilderness:

Big Belt Mountains - Camas Creek, Mt. Baldy, additions to Gates of the Mountains.

Elkhorns - Elkhorn Wildlife Area

Continental Divide - Black Mountain, Nevada Mountain, Electric Peak, Black-foot Meadows, Falls Creek

In 1986 - Appealed the Helena Forest Plan.

In 1987 - Appealed Treasure Mountain Sale.

Between 1982 and 1990 HFCC operated informally with only a treasurer as officer.

In 1991 HFCC formed several committees to better handle an increased number of appeals and other programs. It chose Mike Vashro for its President; Gary Ingman stayed on as Treasurer. American Wildlands of Bozeman offered technical assistance on Forest appeals, and also has given workshops on the appeal process to local groups. Its contribution to better resource management on the Helena Forest has been very helpful.

Through the years HFCC has met many times with the Forest Service to improve resource management and has held a number of news conferences to express conservation concerns. Its members are also called on to provide information to reporters about the Helena Forest. Its main job is appealing timber sales of most concern. Because of its presence the Forest has made changes beneficial to watershed, wildlife, fisheries, and recreation. Though its influence is not always measureable, we believe it is accomplishing positive improvement.

For example, our Wilderness selections are intact and roadless areas are being protected. Specifically, the 1986 Helena Plan set aside only 10,000 acres for Wilderness. After our comments the revised plan increased the acreage to about 30,000 acres. The HFCC proposal is nearly 150,000 acres, and the likelihood is that we will get most of this.

We should note, however, that oversight by the HFCC is needed now more than ever because of greater pressure on the Forest Service by commodity groups to log and mine.

*Noel Rosetta*

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