



USDA Forest Service
Northern Region
Date: Feruary 1, 2005

EXHIBIT 11
 DATE 2.2.05
 HB HJ9

Topic: US Forest Service Wilderness Study Areas in Montana

In 1977, Congress passed The Montana Wilderness Study Act, Public Law 95-150, which required the study of nine areas for their suitability for preservation as wilderness, with a report on to be submitted to the President. The Act designated these areas as Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), and gave broad direction for their management:

Sec. 3. (a) Except as otherwise provided by this section, and subject to existing private rights, the wilderness study areas designated by this Act shall, until Congress determines otherwise, be administered...so as to maintain their presently existing wilderness character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System (P.L. 95-150).

Many of the areas had established jeep roads as well as snowmobile and motorcycle use in 1977. A subsequent House Report (H.R. Rep. No. 95-620 (1977), clarified congressional intent to allow established uses to continue: "Nothing in S. 393 will prohibit the use of off-road vehicles, unless the normal Forest Service planning process ...determines off-road vehicle use to be inappropriate in a given area...It is the intention of the committee that the areas in S. 393 remain open to off-road vehicle use unless and until they are formally designated as wilderness."

In 1983, Congress acted on two WSAs, Taylor-Hilgard and Mount Henry. Public Law 98-140 included portions of the Taylor-Hilgard WSA area in the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, and removed the rest of the Taylor-Hilgard and the Mount Henry WSAs from further study or wilderness suitability protection.

The WSA areas currently managed under the Act are:

<u>WSA</u>	<u>Gross Acres</u>	<u>National Forest (s)</u>
West Pioneer	151,000	Bearverhead-Deerlodge (B-D)
Bluejoint	61,000	Bitterroot
Sapphire Mtns	94,000	Bitterroot and B-D
Ten Lakes	34,000	Kootenai
Middle Fork Judith	81,000	Lewis and Clark
Big Snowies	91,000	Lewis and Clark
Hyalite-Porcupine- Buffalo Horn	155,000	Gallatin

Of the seven WSAs, only portions of the Bluejoint and the Ten Lakes were recommended by the Forest Service for eventual wilderness designation. Congress has not acted on any of the seven.

Current management of congressionally designated WSAs is consistent with the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977. These seven areas will continue to be managed under the direction in the 1977 legislation pending further Congressional action. Because the 1977 legislation allowed for some motorized recreation to continue in areas where it was already established, those uses may still be allowed in certain WSAs.

Should Congress repeal P.L 95-105, management of these areas would be guided by Forest Resource and Management Plan direction. Currently five National Forests in Montana are revising their Forest Plans, with the remaining four Forests scheduled to begin revision in 2006.



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EXHIBIT 12
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HB HJ9

Topic: National Forest Wilderness Areas in Montana

There are twelve congressionally designated Wilderness areas totaling 3,374,126 acres on National Forest System lands in Montana for a. They are:

<u>Wilderness</u>	<u>National Forest</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Date Designated</u>
Absaroka-Beartooth	Custer/Gallatin	936,331	March 27, 1978
Anaconda-Pintler	Beaverhead; Deerlodge; Bitterroot	157,874	September 3, 1964
Bob Marshall	Flathead; Lewis & Clark	1,009,035	September 3, 1964
Cabinet Mountains	Kootenai	94,360	September 3, 1964
Gates of the Mountains	Helena	28,600	September 3, 1964
Great Bear	Flathead	286,700	October 28, 1978
Lee Metcalf	Beaverhead; Gallatin	241,297	October 31, 1983
Mission Mountains	Flathead	73,877	January 3, 1975
Rattlesnake	Lolo	33,000	October 19, 1980
Scapegoat	Helena	239,936	August 20, 1972
Selway Bitterroot ¹	Bitterroot	241,676	September 3, 1964
Welcome Creek	Lolo	28,440	February 24, 1978

¹ additional 1,096,005 acres in Idaho

In accordance with federal law, direction for management of wilderness areas is provided by the Wilderness Act of 1964 and National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans. These Forest Plans established standards that provide direction on water and air quality, and management of wildlife, fisheries and recreation use. Resource conditions are monitored regularly (typically every five years) and actions taken are if conditions deteriorate beyond an acceptable level. For instance, every Forest in Montana monitors for noxious weed infestations and most have direction to eradicate new infestations by hand pulling or spraying. All Montana National Forests are either revising their Forest Plans or will be within the next few years. Working with the public, the forests will revisit current direction on management of Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas and revise direction where needed. Two key issues that will be addressed are fire and invasive species. Where necessary, forests will consider the use of prescribed fire to reduce unnatural fuel buildup and to prevent fires from escaping wilderness boundaries.

Every National Forest in Montana employs personnel dedicated to Wilderness management. This workforce, consisting of permanent and seasonal employees and volunteers, is critical to managing our Wilderness areas. Montana citizens volunteer thousands of hours annually completing inventory, monitoring, maintaining trails and campsites, and restoring heavily impacted areas.

Montana Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas provide important wildlife habitat and contain many strongholds for Montana's native fisheries. They also provide abundant and diverse opportunities for recreational users, who come from all parts of the United States. Approximately 400 outfitters and guides provide opportunities to people who would not otherwise be able to enjoy Montana's wildlands and rivers.