EXHIBIT 9
DATE 2.11.05
HB HJ18

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee

My name is Ryan Sparhawk, I live in Billings.

I traveled here from Billings today because I care about the Pryor Mountains, southeast of Billings.

I hike in the Pryor Mountains.

The Pryor Mountains are an incredible place – they are unique in Montana, with an amazing diversity of landscapes, from desert to high mountain plateaus. The scenery is spectacular and there is great wildlife habitat and fantastic hiking.

In my time on these lands I have seen the negative effects of illegal off-road vehicle use in the Pryors. These activities have scarred the land and created conflicts with other values and users.

The Forest Service has started a very public process to try to resolve these issues and come up with a new plan for managing the various recreational uses in the Pryors. There have already been several opportunities for public input and there will be several more.

It is interesting that under the current plan for the Pryors only 100 miles of roads are allowed, but the most recent inventory found 200 miles of roads – so there are 100 miles of roads in the Pryors that are illegal. I believe this has compromised wildlife habitat and caused user conflicts. It looks to me like the Forest Service is trying to restore some sense of balance to this wonderful place.

I would like to see this Forest Service process go forward, with an opportunity for the agency to apply its on the ground expertise to balance the various competing demands on this place, with full public participation and input.

If Congress were to do as this resolution asks, the Forest Service would not be able to have a meaningful public process, as it would not have the full range of options to address the various public demands and concerns.

For that reason I oppose HJ 18.

Thank you.