

*Dan Fiehrer*  
The proposed trail would pass thru a long RIPARIAN area that is the habitat for white tail deer, black bears, pheasants, ducks, geese, fish and other animals.

SB #210 promotes hundreds of bikers/hikers to traverse this protected corridor.

The wildlife that now lives along this riparian area will disappear due to the pressure caused by the presence of so many people.

It has been the custom for government agencies to cost share with ranchers in fencing off these riparian areas to protect animal habitat. Who will cost share in fencing off the affected habitat to protect it from hikers/bikers if Rails to Trails becomes a reality?

Presently there are already many usable routes in the same corridor as the proposed trail from Great Falls to Helena: The Recreation Road, The Craig/Wolf Creek Frontage Road, I-15, and the Missouri River! Another route is NOT needed to access this area! The present routes already allow too much pressure and over use in this riparian area. Following the drought of 1988, the Missouri River has/is being loved to DEATH by floaters and fishermen.

Another access to this area will only hurry its demise. If there is a Rails to Trails corridor added to this riparian area, it will further exacerbate the problem of over use and more deterioration of this once pristine area will occur.

As property owners on the Missouri River, we have seen the fishing increase ten-fold in the last several years, with fishermen coming from all over to enjoy this world class river. On many days you can experience combative fishing and no fishing etiquette. More people are not needed

The area between the Wolf Creek Bridge and the Craig Bridge currently has shoreline with four conservation easements. These easements strive to maintain the natural integrity of this pristine area and prevent development. Allowing development of a public trail to access this area is counter-productive to the purpose of the easements.

As property owners with a conservation easement, we do not want the railroad right-of-way to become public domain. Public access thru this property will violate the habitat we have tried to preserve, as well as our privacy. During fishing season we daily see 50 to 70 drift boats fishing by our property with frequent trespassing and littering occurring. Adding hikers and bikers to this equation does not create a palatable situation.

Another concern that we have is about fall game as well as duck and goose season --- this trail passes thru heavily hunted areas. It is impossible for hunter/ biker/hiker conflicts not to occur. Too many floater/fishermen and waterfowl hunter/fishermen conflicts occur as it is. The safety of hikers/bikers that might travel the trail at this season also needs to be considered.

Other issues that concern us are: who will be responsible for hikers/bikers safety on grazing range? Who will prevent the bikers/hikers accompanying dogs from chasing new calves and fawns? Who will insure fire safety along this highly grassy area? Where are there handy latrine facilities (outside of at the Craig Bridge)? What about the RR contaminants that exist along the route, buried ties?

Lastly, we are further frustrated by the presentation of this bill and the little effort that was made to notify affected landowners.

Again, I am opposed to SB# 210!