

July 13, 2009

Gene Terland  
State Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
5001 Southgate Dr.  
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Gene:

As former members of the Bureau of Land Management's Central Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC), we were dismayed to learn that the final Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument is being challenged in court.

Given that the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument is such a special place, thousands of citizens voiced their opinions and the RAC made recommendations concerning the RMP in 1999. We understand that as a multiple use agency you are often caught in the middle of various user group interests. Litigation is one method used to resolve this conflict. Nonetheless, the BLM could have avoided this action if it had more accurately interpreted the intent and the letter of the Monument's Proclamation. The BLM is in the position of managing the Monument for the benefit of all Americans, not just its local neighbors.

In 1999, before the Monument was designated, the council provided recommendations to Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt about the way in which the Monument should be managed. The council is a 15-member citizen advisory group formed by the BLM, under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, to involve citizen stakeholders with public resource issues, decisions and management. The council is organized by three categories that evenly distribute participation among various interest groups such as oil and gas, grazing, Native American tribes, and the environment.

The council's consensus based recommendations in 1999 expressed the sincere intent of its members to preserve the natural, wild, and historic values of the Monument. The recommendations included:

- Ban commercial recreational overflights over the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River Corridor.

Secretary Babbitt said he did not have authority to act on this recommendation but agreed with the premise. At that time the council did not know of the existence of recreational backcountry air landing strips in the Monument, however there is clearly a close relationship between scenic overflights and backcountry landing strips.

- Personal watercraft (such as jet skis) shall be prohibited from the entire 149-mile stretch of the UMNWSR from the bridge at Fort Benton to the bridge at Kipp Recreation Area the entire year.
- OHV use be limited within the Expanded UMNWSR to designated roads and trails with the exceptions of administrative uses and land management purposes.
- The BLM should develop a policy which addresses the number and distribution of visitors, the types and distribution of trails, and public responsibility.

The last recommendation clearly demonstrates that the council, including ranchers, conservationists, sportsmen, and recreationists, placed the protection of the area above all interests. The BLM should take the time to review all of the original recommendations concerning the Monument.

After the Monument was designated in 2001, subsequent appointed councils made further recommendations asking the BLM to comply with the Monument's Proclamation in its management. For instance, the RAC drafted general parameters for the Monument travel plan, including the guidance that road densities in the Monument are excessive and needed to be addressed. In response, the BLM circumvented this recommendation by defining every user created two-track path as a road in the final plan.

This is just one example of the BLM's clear preference for commercial and motorized use in the Monument, and the reason why many of us left the council frustrated that our efforts to protect the Monument were disregarded.

The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument is both a state and national treasure; a historic landmark and as its

Proclamation states it, "has remained largely unchanged in the nearly 200 years since Meriwether Lewis and William Clark traveled through it on their epic journey." All Americans have a vested interest in its conservation. We once again have this window of opportunity to recreate what Lewis and Clark saw on their historic journey.

The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument is a special place and we served on the council to help see its future secured. We had hoped for a better management plan than what the BLM delivered for the Monument.

Sincerely,

Hugo Tureck  
Coffee Creek, MT  
Member 1995, Chair 1999-2000 Central Montana RAC

Craig Roberts  
Lewistown, MT  
Member 2001, Chair 2001-2002 Central Montana RAC

Tony Bynum  
East Glacier, MT  
Member 2004, Chair 2005-2006, Central Montana RAC

Arlo Skari Chester, MT RAC Member, 1995-2001	Mary Fay Helena, MT RAC Member, 2003-2006
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Mike Aderhold Great Falls, MT RAC Member, 1995-2000	Bill Cunningham Choteau, MT RAC Member, 2000-2006
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Randy Gray Great Falls, MT RAC Member, 2000-2006	Jeff Shelden Lewistown, MT RAC Member, 2003-2006
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Jim McDermand Billings, MT RAC Member, 1995-2001	Stan Meyer Great Falls, MT RAC Member, 1995-2002
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CC: Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar  
Carl Rountree, National Landscape Conservation System Director