

I am providing my opinions on the EIS for the Draft Revised Forest Plan. I follow the process through the papers, mainly the Bozeman Chronicle. I have no business or financial interests on Forest Service land. I sometimes use USFA lands for recreation, although infrequently at the present. All my access to public lands is motorized use, by automobile.

I have occasionally used FS land to scout for firewood and have obtained firewood in the past. I anticipate doing so again at some point.

My recreational use requires access by road, obviously. I fully accept that many USFAS roads are unimproved, to put it mildly. I consider it normal and proper for such roads to be rough and narrow.

I do not currently use developed campgrounds, but I know they are a mainstay for many people and are an important resource for recreation.

I do not use trail bikes or 4-wheelers but I feel they are a very appropriate use. The same goes for mountain biking. This is an important source of recreation for many people and I believe it is compatible with backcountry values and should be continued even if a given area is restricted from motorized use.

Of course, if motorized access is banned, that restricts the bulk of recreational users. As far as I can tell wilderness use is for a niche and forbids use by most recreationists.

I am willing to consider any opposing research but what I am aware of in the news doesn't seem convincing.

I do not use airstrips on USFS lands but I can see no reason to object to them. I also do not use rental cabins and certainly do not rent any out but this practice sounds like a very practical and beneficial component of a recreation-based economy. I concede I am not familiar with the details of this practice. The DEIS doesn't spell out if the reference is to USFS-owned cabins or to privately owned ones rented by owners.

The DEIS doesn't specify if access is by road or requires hiking or snowshoeing/skiing in. I have had some limited exposure to Forest Service cabins, although I have not ever personally rented one. As far as I am concerned it is all good if a family visiting Montana has the opportunity to rent an old patrol cabin as part of a western vacation. The same goes for privately owned cabins. In either case it would be a vacation experience that would be hard to duplicate (and wouldn't be available if the area was designated roadless or wilderness).

Of the selections in the DEIS I prefer Alternative E, but it is probably more realistic to put Alt. A, the Current Plan as the best available option.

ALT. A & Alt. E provide the most benefit to the greatest number of people. Expanding wilderness or roadless areas restricts access and benefits a niche of users.

Alt. B says motorized use would continue to be suitable uses in recommended wilderness areas. I can't imagine any situation where motorized recreation wouldn't be effectively blocked in any such area.

I believe domestic sheep grazing is an appropriate use of USFS lands and should not be banned. The wool industry is not particularly well known but it is a significant component of Montana agriculture and contributes to Montana's economy. I do not believe any threat to Bighorn Sheep is significant enough to ban an industry. Sheep are also produced for meat so there is another benefit provided by the sheep industry.

I am not familiar with the use of goats as pack animals but I can see no objection to their use as such as a component of the outdoor recreation industry. I have observed goats being used for weed control and I noticed they went straight to weeds such as leafy spurge when they were first turned into a temporary enclosure and were still chomping on them as they were being moved. Goat grazing is a chemical-free means of weed control.

There is also a benefit to the contractor and the herder employed to manage the goats. The DEIS mentions goat grazing either being not permitted or subject to a risk assessment. I expect a risk assessment would simply wind up being a complete ban on the process.

I expect landing strips being subject to permitting would be effectively banning them.

Page 3 of the DEIS refers to reasonable access and mineral development and existing oil & gas leases as a component of all alternatives. The term "grandfathering" is not used but seems to be the intended meaning. I don't believe this would be honored in B, C, or D.

I will refer a personal recollection of mine. Probably in 1984 Sen. John Melcher & Sen. Alan Cranston made an informal appearance in the MSU SUB which I attended. Sen. Melcher was asked about the provision in the original Wilderness Act which grandfathered existing mineral leases but which never allowed any extraction afterward. His response seemed lame and uninformative. For whatever reason he lost in the next election.

I predict the same result would occur in any scenario where existing rights were proposed to be grandfathered.

All the alternatives propose 19%-20% of land available for timber harvesting. An additional amount is to be available for such uses as fuel reduction. I don't see how there would be timber production or fuel reduction because there are groups that stop timber sales and also fuel reduction projects. They also delay salvage cuts until there is no longer any benefit from the projects and they have to be abandoned.

There were areas designated as Wilderness Study Areas back in the 1970s. They seem to be de facto wilderness at present and have been from the start. It looks like a backdoor maneuver to designate wilderness without formally doing so.

I put significant weight on the news accounts that the local communities and their elected officials want non-wilderness areas opened up to recreation. In practice the entire WSA seems to be considered wilderness and other uses are banned.

I am fairly familiar with the bison management issue. I have heard the argument that bison don't spread brucellosis and that cases in cattle came from elk, therefore bison should be tolerated and their range expanded to USFS lands.

This is a recipe for banning all livestock grazing, which I do not support.

Other states don't have to be tolerant because Montanans are told they should be. If they feel Montana cattle are a threat because they have mingled with bison they'll ban Montana beef. That is simply a basic reality which will exist if bison range is expanded. Therefore I recommend the existing plan of quarantine and shipment to reservations as the best course.

I basically support traditional multiple use including logging, mining, grazing leases, recreation, camping, hunting and fishing, firewood, post and pole harvesting, berry picking, mushroom hunting, ATV & trail bike use & snowmobiling. I oppose any alternative which locks out large segments of the public.

We are regularly exhorted that the way to go is in recreation as an economic driver. To go that route you need such activities as snowmobiling, RV camping and outfitted hunting. Wilderness designation eliminates that. I am aware there is published research from the University of Montana that puts a high economic value on wilderness as an economic force. I am willing to examine any such reports but I simply cannot believe wilderness can compete with snowmobiling or out of state hunters as an economic contribution.

I support keeping federal lands in federal hands. I in no way support selling them off or turning them over to the states. I believe they should remain in public ownership. I do believe it is acceptable to look at contracting with the states for management. This would still be subject to existing laws and regulations but there might be some benefits to having a local face on the enforcement of regulations.

There may also be intangible benefits. Sheriff Johnny France went into the back country alone after massive manhunts had failed to track down the notorious "Mountain Men." He brought them in unaided. All the parties were local, which no doubt was critical.

I don't know if that could be duplicated in any other situation or not. The confrontation at the Oregon wildlife area involved people from outside the local area.

I do feel that state employees with local connections might be able to preserve a less confrontational atmosphere and wouldn't inflame any situation the way an outsider with values and demeanor opposed to local values might do.

Of course a state employee in such a situation might be hired through national process and have the same baggage school administrators and city managers coming in from outside seem to have.

Anyway I feel this subject bears some consideration.

I am not a hunter or fisherman or snowmobiler. I am from a farm background but not in Montana. Grazing leases were not an issue.

Another use which is not covered in the DEIS is military training. I have trained on USFS and BLM land in the Marine Reserve, Army Reserve and Montana State National Guard. Most of this was small unit training which involved firing blanks or no firing at all. It involved land navigation, cold weather training, outdoor survival and general familiarity with the field environment.

Some training did involve live firing for weapons qualification and the use of heavy weapons. In some cases there was benefit in just getting a fairly large unit set up out in the field. I know from experience that that takes practice.

I was never deployed but I believe 4 units I formerly belonged to have deployed. The public lands were a vital part of their unit readiness and of the individual members. I was better prepared for any possible deployment because of my field training on public lands.

On at least one occasion my unit utilized a Forest Service cabin as a base for outdoor training.

I have worked for the Forest Service in the separate Custer and Gallatin National Forests and elsewhere. My jobs were doing Origin & Destination surveys, working on a survey party, thinning lodgepole pines for Timber Stand Improvement projects, inspecting grazing leases, maintaining ATV trails as part of a public-private project and weed spraying.

I was not hired as a firefighter but I fought forest and range fires as an additional duty in Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, California and Oregon.

I observed goats used for weed control on the Medora Ranger District in North Dakota. I fought one fire north of Yellowstone in 1988 where we had to hike in and supplies were brought in by horse-drawn wagon.

All my other firefighting relied extensively on road access. I had some training on the requirements of wilderness firefighting, but it's hard to imagine not even being able to use a chainsaw and to cut trees with a crosscut saw.

All of my work for the Forest Service and Park Service has involved road access to the various work sites. I do not believe forest roads need to be maintained to a high standard and obviously many are rough to say the least. Even unimproved vehicle roads provide practical access for recreation.

I remember on my first project fire a Forest Service supervisor told me a fire camp was organized like the military and asked if I could handle it! I had been in the Reserves for a combined total of 17 years at that time.

There was a joke in the Forest Service that some employees were on the 90-10 plan. That is, they did 90% of their work 10 feet from the road. I did a lot of trudging over rough terrain in my work in TSI and weed control, but roads were necessary to get to my work sites and the 90-10 workers were also doing necessary work.

The last time I was at the Big Timber Ranger District office it was closed to the public. Apparently anyone with business or seeking information needed to go Livingston, which is the closest location. I do not consider that an unreasonable requirement. The drive is on Interstate. Basically if someone is not prepared or doesn't have transportation to get to Livingston from Big Timber it would be very hard to access USFS lands. The forest boundary is nearly the same distance over both Interstate and county roads.

I noticed that when I was in the Midwest a couple of years ago, at that time the county agent's office was only staffed 3 days a week. There was a receptionist in the office throughout the week, I believe. This area is a major agricultural region and I believe it is a regional center for USDA offices separate from the Extension Service.

In both cases I believe the conditions are a rational and practical response to budget conditions and do not create an excessive hardship. I do believe this is about the most that can be done without causing major hardships, particularly for forest users. Going from Big Timber to Bozeman, for example, would be a considerable inconvenience.

At one time the Custer NF had districts in eastern North Dakota. That distance was impractical at that time. The current map indicates there are still districts in South Dakota. Travel to Livingston or Bozeman is not practical for getting a permit or information.

In 1988 I remember the Forest Service permanent staff occasionally had to go to Billings from Dickinson, ND. That was a major distance then. It was also a paid part of their job. The public could contact the Medora RD in Dickinson.

Even for USFS personnel travel to Bozeman or possibly Missoula for work would be a major undertaking, not to mention going from one of the SD districts.

I am aware there may be options for accomplishing business on a computer or by phone and that will be sufficient for a lot of people. I expect there are some matters where there is just no substitute for face-to-face contact.

I hope the Big Timber RD office is available for work crews working in the district. I certainly worked out of that office as a base when I worked there.

I basically feel the best use is one that provides the most opportunity for the greatest number of people. Options A & E are the best in that respect.

I believe part of the mission of the USFS is to provide "social goods" like scenery, solitude etc. I believe timber harvest and mineral and petroleum extraction are a social good. Timber harvest provides building material for housing and businesses. If the sale does not create a profit it is not an issue for me. The FS is not a profit-making business entity. There's no reason for it to need to make a profit. It is providing a social benefit.

Also, of course, it has to fight a lawsuit over most sales, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of not creating a profit.

Also, grazing leases provide a social benefit independent of the price income they generate. I have covered a lot of ground at some length in my effort to express my opinions and what formed them.

I have covered a lot of bases in this response. It represents my considered opinion as to the best alternatives of those presented.

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David. Henry  
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