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First name: Chuck

Last name: Jarecki

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 218 Pheasant Ridge

Address2:

City: Polson

State: MT

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code: 59860

Country: United States

Email: skywagon@centurytel.net

Phone: 406-883-2248

Comments:

My comments on your draft plan are directed to the subject of airfields. In review of the section on airfields, I was dismayed to get the impression that your staff is prejudicial against the use of aircraft to access our public lands. Aircraft landing sites at suitable locations can provide access that does not have the effect on the landscape as do roads or trails. Aircraft landing sites are on open areas that are level. Aircraft do not have powered wheels. Research done by University of Montana environmental studies has shown that aircraft have no stressful impact on wildlife.

A good example of the aviation community working with the USFS is to be found in the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Through working together, the Russian Flat airstrip was recently created for recreational access to the Little Belt Mountains. The entire cost of the airstrip and associated facilities was born by the aviation community and annual maintenance is performed by the aviators. Such a project could be done at suitable locations on the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

Your plan is deficient in that the airfield section (2.4.12) does not address the five plan components: Desired Condition, Objectives, Standards, Guidelines and Suitability. Airstrips can easily fit into your plan except at locations where airstrips are prohibited by law. The provision in alternative D is very prejudicial. Perhaps you should have that same provision in regards to roads and trails.

In summary, your plan should have provisions for studying the feasibility of approving the creation of one or more recreational airstrips and working with the aviation community to achieve success.