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Ravalli County Commissioners

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January 22, 2018

To : Ravalli County Commissioners

The Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen (BRBCH) chapter would like to express its concerns with Senator Daine's bill to eliminate the Blue Joint and Sapphire Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) from consideration as possible permanent wilderness areas. Both areas lay within the Bitterroot National Forest System.

Many of our members are quite familiar with these areas in question. Riding horses in the backcountry has given us a personal appreciation for these wild untrammelled areas. These pristine roadless areas are one of the natural treasures that make our area so special. In addition to enjoying the backcountry on horseback, our chapter works diligently with the local Forest Service staff to keep the trails through these areas open for everyone to enjoy.

Setting aside areas that are still wild and pristine and designating them "wilderness" is a uniquely American concept. Once altered, these areas are gone forever.

We also need to appreciate that tourism of all sorts is fast becoming Montana's largest industry. As the local stewards of these two WSAs in question, we should think twice before relinquishing them for all time.

The board of directors of BRBCH is in support of having a truly collaborative and transparent conversation to determine the fate of these two WSAs that have hung in limbo for so many years.

Sincerely,

Alfred Weisbecker
BRBCH Issues Chairperson

Glenda Wiles

From: alfred weisbecker <fredweis@cybernet1.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2018 10:50 AM
To: Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Subject: letter from Bitterroot Backcountry Horsemen Chapter
Attachments: wsa letter 2.doc

Dear Commissioners,

please accept the attached letter relating the Bitterroot Backcountry Horsemen Chapter's thoughts on Senator Daine's bill to remove the Sapphire and Blue Joint WSA's from consideration for wilderness status.

Sincerely,

Fred Weisbecker
Policy/Issues Chair BRBCH