



**P.O Box 262  
Hamilton, MT 59840**

Senator Steve Daines  
1 Russell Senate Courtyard  
Washington D.C. 20510

cc: Ravalli County Commissioners  
215 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Hamilton MT 59840

Dear Senator Daines

The Bitterroot Chapter of Trout Unlimited is interested in the current legislation (S.2206) you have proposed to "release" the Montana Wilderness Study Act (MWSA) areas to the uses identified in Forest Plans. We do have some concerns to share with you as you move forward. We are aware that the Ravalli County Commission has already written to you in support of S.2206 and is currently receiving comments about their correspondence and the proposed legislation. We are sharing this letter with the Commission for their consideration.

We applaud your desire to move toward resolution for these areas but we do have some concerns. First of all Trout Unlimited (TU) is dedicated to ensuring cold, clear water is available for trout and other species that depend on it. We are aware that this water most often begins in headwater streams that are protected as Wilderness on public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service. This is of great benefit to fisheries and the local economies and people both in Montana and from other states who travel to enjoy our world class fisheries. We believe your efforts to take action on the MWSA is a good first step but should also include designation as Wilderness for portions of these areas that are most suitable. We suggest as a first step that you ask your staff to review recommendations in the Forest Plans and past proposed legislation. We believe that will reveal a great deal of support for additional Wilderness in both the Sapphire and Bluejoint MWSA areas as well as support for "releasing" portions of these areas. There are suitable areas such as those portions contiguous with existing Wilderness and portions that are not suitable such as areas adjacent to private lands and areas suited to mechanized recreation not allowed in Wilderness.

We believe legislation that addresses additional Wilderness as well as releasing lands not well suited is a better approach than all or nothing, all Wilderness or all non-Wilderness. Bitterroot Trout Unlimited is very willing to help you or your staff identify these different areas as you move forward.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Respectfully

Greg Chester  
President  
Bitterroot Trout Unlimited

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Chester", is written over the typed name and title.

11-20-58

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