

Glenda Wiles

From: Jeff Burrows
Sent: Tuesday, January 15, 2019 2:58 PM
To: 'Russ Lawrence'; Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Subject: RE: Natural Resource Policy / Marty Gardner

Russ,

Wrong on so many levels it does not warrant a response. I am curious what part of "boy from Illinois" is racist? The phrase was not coined by the current Commission, but was by a former Commissioner, you probably know him.

Jeff

From: Russ Lawrence <russworks@outlook.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 15, 2019 10:21 AM
To: Ravalli County Commissioners Office <commissioners@rc.mt.gov>
Subject: Natural Resource Policy / Marty Gardner

Commissioners:

I regret that I couldn't attend the presentation by Marty Gardner, but I have watched the full video of his presentation. I have some observations:

First, I believe that a Ravalli County Natural Resource Policy is unnecessary and a waste of county resources, both your own and those of unpaid citizen volunteers who will inevitably spend uncounted hours participating in its development. There is a reason that most counties with federal lands have not developed such a document, a la Karen Budd-Falen's recommendations: they don't need them. Ravalli County has attempted to be "the point of the spear" on too many issues ("Dark Money," WSA release bills, etc.) and has been regularly rebuffed, but only after the expenditure of thousands of hours of citizen effort. I believe this to be another such case, having just done a search that turned up no other Montana counties with such a policy in place or in development.

Next, should you decide to pursue a revision or development of a new Natural Resource policy, please note: a county policy document differs significantly in form and purpose from a National Forest Management Plan. County policies are to guide the commissioners and other county employees in their decision-making regarding public safety, health, and welfare of county residents. They should be succinct and general; a Forest Plan exists to guide professional resource management personnel in the management of public resources, and is by nature highly specific. These are two widely divergent roles, one focused on decision-making for the benefit of Ravalli County residents, the other focused on resource management on behalf of the American people. They should not be treated alike.

Therefore, I disagree strongly with Mr. Gardner's assertion that a county Resource Policy be modeled on the USFS Forest Plan format and terminology. Ravalli County is not the Bitterroot National Forest, and county priorities are not National Forest priorities, which are spelled out by Congress and federal regulation.

If you are determined to pursue a Ravalli County Natural Resource Policy, I would suggest instead that it be written to address county priorities, with those being the major headings: public safety, public health, roads, etc. Then, develop policies under each heading to optimize outcomes for Ravalli County citizens, regardless of how the Forest Plan ultimately turns out. Plans are changeable and subject to changing circumstance; well-written policies, ideally, should be based on unchanging principles.

Any county policy should focus on those things over which the county has actual control: allocation of taxpayer dollars, allocation of human resources, and clear goals.

Certainly, the county has a role to play in the development of any new Bitterroot National Forest Plan, but that role should be focused on County issues, not federal resource management issues.

With regard to Mr. Gardner's comments on his collaboration model, I applaud his efforts to reach out to the widest possible range of groups, but I still believe that collaboratives are exclusionary by their very nature. Many serious individuals do not join groups, but still deserve to be heard.

Further, with regard specifically to the "boy from Illinois" comments: I will assume that the term was used innocently and without thinking, but it is at best demeaning, and at worst racist. You might consider another phrase for future reference.

That notwithstanding, I still take issue with the substance of those remarks. That person, regardless of where he or she lives, is a citizen of the United States, and our federal lands are managed on their behalf, just as much as they are managed for you and me. Even in the presence of a proposal from a recognized, local collaboration group, those voices deserve to be given fair and equal weighting – in fact, federal statute and regulation require that those voices be solicited, heard, and fairly counted, the same as yours and mine, on decisions involving federal land management actions.

Nobody living outside our county should be required to "join a group" participating in a collaborative, as Mr. Gardner suggested, in order to have their voice heard. The suggestion that this is their only recourse is not only misguided, it is contrary to federal statute.

I hope and expect that you will take these comments in the constructive spirit in which they're offered, before you embark on any revision or update of the county's deeply flawed Natural Resource Policy.

Yours,
Russ Lawrence
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