

CROW TRIBE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Bacheeitché Avenue
P.O. Box 250
Crow Agency (Baaxuwuashé), Montana 59022



THPO Department

Alvin AJ Not Afraid, Jr.

CHAIRMAN

Carlson "Dukie" Goes Ahead

VICE CHAIRMAN

R. Knute Old Crow Sr.

SECRETARY

Shawn E. Backbone

VICE SECRETARY

June 5, 2019

Forest Plan Revision
Custer Gallatin National Forest
PO Box 130
Bozeman, MT 59715

Dear Supervisor Erickson and the Custer Gallatin Forest Planning Team,

The Crow Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) would like to formally submit the following comments on the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) Draft Revised Forest Plan. The CGNF Draft Plan (Crazy Mountains section) includes a reference to the significance of these Mountains to the Apsaalooke (Crow) nation. However, we believe the plan should be enhanced to protect cultural values and practices, guarantee tribal treaty rights and protect the wild character of the Crazy Mountains.

These mountains are globally unique for many reasons, including their size and location, their ruggedness and their singular, stunning form. For thousands of years, the Indigenous people of the Northern Plains recognized the spectacular beauty and tremendous spiritual power of the Crazies. For the Apsaalooke nation, the Crazy Mountains, or Awaxaawippiia, (Ominous Mountains) represent one of the most dynamic and important sacred places in their homeland; a place that has provided them an opportunity to sacrifice for knowledge, power and other blessings.

Because of their history of being blessed by the Crazies, many Crow people continue to turn to them today to fast and pray traditionally with no food or water, so that they may improve their lives and the lives of their family and community members.

The importance of the range to the Apsaalooke (Crow) people cannot be understated.

Many tribal historians believe that the mountains and the visions received through them, have been essential and critical elements in the survival of the tribe into the 21st century. Without the prophetic visions that guided our tribes' leaders during the key period of the latter half of the 19th century, there is little doubt that our tribe would have suffered incalculable devastation. The Crazy Mountains mean more than we can say to our families and our community. Although the Crow Reservation is located nearly 100 miles from the Crazies, the range still maintains a daily presence in the collective consciousness of our community.

The Great Apsaalooke Nation: "Teepee Capital of the World"

Though we lost the legal ownership over the Crazies in 1868, we have not forgotten their significance or what they represent. They represent the best of our community and make us recall the days when the Apsaalooke people were strong, courageous and enlightened. This is a vision of the past that modern day Crow people dream of recapturing some day in the future. But that ideal future depends on the Medicine in the Crazy Mountains, and on future generations of leaders being able to draw upon it when it is needed. Young Apsaalooke people must be able to pray as their ancestors did, in the sacred places that define and embody the essence of their ceremonial heritage, because the Crazies don't just offer a trip into the dim and distant past, they offer a path into a bright future.

In 1987 we challenged the management plan decision for the Crazy Mountains, because the proposed recreation development threatened the sacred area where we practice our religion. The Crazy Mountains Cultural Preservation Association was formed and appealed the 1987 Forest Plan. A settlement agreement was reached that promised to amend the plan to include a statement that recognized the importance of the Crazy Mountains to the Crow people. The appeal was withdrawn, but the Forest Service did not hold up their end of the bargain. The 1987 Forest Plan was never amended to include that statement.

Now that the Forest Plan is being revised again, we want to make sure that our cultural values are explicitly recognized and protected in the new plan. The THPO requests the following plan components to be included in the final forest plan.

Desired Conditions

- Interpretation and adaptive use of cultural resources provide public benefits and enhance understanding and appreciation of Crazy Mountains prehistory and history.
- The Crazies are characterized by a natural environment where ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, insects, and disease function and exist. Impacts from visitor uses do not detract from the primitive natural setting.

Standards

- The Crazy Mountains shall be managed in close consultation to fulfill Crow treaty obligations, and the federal trust responsibility. The area shall be managed to protect and honor Crow reserved rights and sacred land. The uses of this area must be compatible with desired conditions and compatibility shall be determined through government-to-government consultation.
- Management activities within the Crazy Mountains shall not pose adverse effects to the Crazy Mountain proposed traditional cultural landscape. Management activities shall consider scientific research and ethnographic research as they relate to Crow cultural land-use identities when analyzing project effects.

It is also important that the Crazy Mountains be managed to protect our opportunities for traditional cultural practices. During the travel management planning, our government repeatedly asked that no motorized recreation be allowed in the Crazy Mountains. Motorized recreation disrupts the sacredness of these mountains and takes away our opportunities to experience this place as our ancestors did. That's why we're asking the Forest Service to not expand mechanized and motorized travel in the Crazies. We are also asking the agency to not allow mining, the building of any new roads, construction of any new

We request that the Crazy Mountains be given the highest level of protection possible and recommended for wilderness. When the Crow look at the Crazy Mountains, they see a sacred mountain, something to be cherished and respected. Not a recreational playground. The Crazies deserve the highest level of protection possible. We also request that we have continued and improved access to existing roads to gather traditional forest products and plant materials including teepee poles.

Thank you for taking the time to read our comments. Also thank you for your hard work on behalf of all of us citizens who dearly treasure our precious public lands.

AJ Not Afraid, Apsaalooke Nation Chairman
William Big Day, Apsaalooke Nation THPO Director
Adrian Bird, THPO Lead Monitor
Shane Doyle, EdD, Crow Tribal Member