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Comments:

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First: these forests lie within Montana, therefore we need to start with Montana's Constitution so we can set the tone for the value of USFS property to Montana's economy:

Article IX Sec 4 - Cultural resources. The legislature shall provide for the identification, acquisition, restoration, enhancement, preservation, and administration of scenic, historic, archeologic, scientific, cultural, and recreational areas, sites, records and objects, and for their use and enjoyment by the people.

Second: Montana receives 16% of the National Pittman-Roberts recreation sales tax dollars, which means that Montanans purchase 16% of the hunting and fishing equipment subject to this tax. However, Montana represents only .003 of the United States population. Outdoor recreation is 53 times more important to Montanans than the American population in general.

Third: Recreation ranks #3 among the primary economic sectors of Montana's economy. Agriculture ranks #4. Manufacturing and Exporting rank #1 and #2 respectively.

Fourth: When an author becomes too lazy to type the words: goal, guidelines, objectives - etcetera - the reader becomes suspicious that there is an under lying objective to baffle the reader with babble OR to hide the root of the author's objective. The author is NOT using a manual typewriter with a brush and eraser? The author(s) are using a word processor; embrace the ability to quickly and easily make corrections while using spell check and type out the words! Remember, Montana Loggers may want to make comments so don't be afraid to use some paper.

Page numbers need to be printed on the top corners so it is easier to work with the index and tables.

Headwaters Economics of Bozeman, Montana has produced several articles on the topic of economic growth and the value of Public Land. Access to public land is a significant variable in employee recruiting success. Headwaters credits Montana's public lands as a significant reason that Montana did not participate in the last economic recession. Easy and abundant access to public land will provide Montana employers with a recruiting advantage. <https://test.headwaterseconomics.org>

Last, Montanans pay 46% of the tourism taxes collected in Montana. This means that 1 million people pay 46% and 12 million non-residents pay 54% of the tourism taxes. Montanans also spend more time outdoors than any other state except Vermont. Montanans spend about 1/3rd of each year outside.

COMMENTS:

Bicyclists are fast approaching the number one spot for daily spending among Montana recreationalists (tourists). At present Elk hunters rank #1, bicyclists #2, deer hunters #3, and fishermen #4 in spending per day. This is important because bicyclists require roads and trails for their recreation. Bicyclists also require many different opportunities. Touring cyclists do not travel the same trail twice. When they visit an area they want a different "experience" each day, they stay in up-scale motels or Beds & Breakfasts, and eat at higher quality restaurants; if you provide them a variety of trail experiences.

This plan needs to report; How much public land, in each Geographic Area, is NOT accessible because of Private Property Owners? There should be a plan to purchase easements.

It needs to be reported for each identified Geographic Area [see how easy it is to spell out the words AND no one has to guess] the number of public access points and reveal the type of access; park and hike; dry camp; horse friendly; handicapped friendly. These Geographic Areas can hold a lot of people if there are LOTS of access points. The purpose of going into the forest is for the "explorer" experience; "I am the only one here today, I am the explorer!" This can only happen with lots of access points.

It is interesting to read the objectives. My grandparents were in the Sun River flood of 1964, I spent that summer herding sheep. My grandmother created the phrase; "What the Lord Giveth the River Taketh away." Mother Nature has little respect for man's objectives.

The current forest road obliteration program is a waste of time, money, and energy. This program also discourages hunting and hiking and has destroyed decades of Montana family hunting traditions. Hunters historically use logging roads and skid trails to remove their animals from the forest [game carts, dragging, horses, and etcetera]. These obliterated roads previously allowed hunters to penetrate deep into the forest creating the explorer experience and dispersing various hunting parties. If the trail is obliterated then it becomes pointless and impossible to continue hunting in that area. One volcanic eruption will cause more stream sediment than all of the logging roads ever built. It is this type of government action that gives government a bad name.

Who uses old logging roads and skid trails? Hunters, hikers, horsemen, forest animals, the handicapped, and forest fire fighters. Any action that discourages the use of the forest [public land] or reduces the options for dispersal of recreationalists is encouraging forest users to discover a new "non-forest" recreational opportunity. The discouraged are still voters. The forest wants "happy" voters!

Forest recreationalists do NOT want to camp within sight of a primary road. We do not go to the forest to see other people or do traffic counts. We go to the forest to find solitude and experience the "explorer" psyche. We do not go to the forest to be smothered in road dust or worry about our children being hit by a vehicle. Being able to snake your camper or tent into the trees [for shade] within a short distance of a creek is a Montanan's idea of a mountain forest experience.

There is no mention of any attempts to accommodate the handicapped. My research indicates that the USFS is exempt from a majority of the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]. Why would the USFS want to keep the handicapped voter out of the forest? If the forest is handicap friendly then it will easily accommodate everyone else. [the degree that USFS has to comply with ADA guidelines is laughable not laudable]

Hunters should be encouraged to use campgrounds during the winter. Hunters should be encouraged to camp for the entire season in one spot. The more people who are residing at a campground the less likely there is to be vandalism. A hunting party that wants to reside in one spot for the entire 6 week Montana Big Game season should be ASKED if they would also act as informal camp captains. With today's technology it is easy to take photos of vandalism, bad behavior, and general provide frequent communication. I know that my father would have been the best camp captain the USFS ever had, if dad was only encouraged instead of discouraged [an unhappy voter]. These camp captains would be no different than the camp tenders used on Smith River, Volunteers who love the outdoors. In the winter all hunters really need is a vault toilet to be happy campers. "Permanent" campers would also provide a added degree of safety for lost or sick hunters or other winter recreationalists [i.e. ski patrol]

The USFS rules for camping etcetera need to be consistent across Geographic Areas in Montana. The rules need to be "easily" found on a web site. There needs to be a consumer advisory board to which each Geographic Area manager is responsible.

Each Geographic Area needs to report the number of outfitters using that area. The public needs to know how many livestock permittees are also outfitters and the public needs to know how many permittees and outfitters own or lease land that borders USFS land. It needs to be revealed by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks which private landowners are "harboring" wildlife and does the harboring keep wildlife on, or off of USFS property.

- The variable for road maintenance is too broad. The current range of 100-500 miles is going to result in 100 miles. It is just too easy to steal money from the road maintenance budget when the variance is 400 miles. I recommend a variance of 400-500 miles. Recreation is the 3rd most important economic sector in Montana and roads are a key variable.

- The reconstruction variance is too small. Reconstruction should be based on 1/40th of the total road miles. A religious dedication to road reconstruction needs to be adopted. Again, with a wishy washy goal it becomes too easy to steal from the reconstruction budget.

- Trail heads should bear the name and contact number for the grazing and outfitting permittees and a picture of their brands. This information makes it easier for other forest users to report escaped livestock, fires, vandalism, and etcetera. This posted information allows forest users to be good neighbors. Cell phones make it easy for neighbor to help neighbor.

It should be encouraged for grazing permittees to install plastic piping for water tanks. As the Proposed Action document states, this part of Montana is filled with limestone features and streams often times disappear. The use of plastic piping to water livestock and subsequently wildlife allows for dispersion of both so the land is better utilized. Wildlife enjoys water tanks just as much as livestock.

- Wildlife Corridors - American Prairie Reserve has visions of wildlife corridors following the major rivers from their property on the Missouri to Yellowstone Park and from Ennis back to the Missouri. We are witnessing wildlife [bears] following the major water corridors in their search for food. I would recommend that USFS work with American Prairie Reserve so each independent effort can be done in harmony. Wildlife is going to follow water, just as man follows water. It is important for man to understand that obstructing a corridor is NOT going to deter wildlife from their natural instinct.

-Tourists of the 21st Century travel to learn. USFS must reveal the history that lies within its Montana land. There should be comments from the Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research on the value of tourism in each Geographic Area. Without tourism information, from the Institute, this report will be grossly inadequate. <http://itrr.umt.edu>

- This is a good example of too many rules. Even Disneyland has fewer rules than this Geographic Area and Disneyland deals with 40 thousand people per day on 85 acres or 473 people per acre / per day. Perhaps detailed time schedules could be accommodated IF USFS had a web site that easily revealed the schedule. [easily means - less than 3 clicks]

- Tour bus companies plan their routes using "Scenic Byway" lists. All scenic byways in Montana play an important role in Tourism ranking as the 3rd economic sector.

- USFS needs to work with Montana Departments of Transportation and Tourism. The significant frontier history artifacts that remain in Montana could allow Tourism to be the number 1 economic sector. But, we have to let the Tourists see the old wagon marks in the prairie. Tourists are voters.

- Each Geographic Area needs to start with a map and if there are specific rivers and streams mentioned - then the rivers and streams need to be indicated on the map.