



Friday, Sept. 11, 2020

Dear USDA Forest Service,

On behalf of the Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance in East Glacier Park, Montana and our hundreds of members and supporters throughout Region 1, I'm writing to express strong support for the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest's proposal to designate the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and Adjacent Lands as a Priority Area for trail maintenance and infrastructure funding from the Great America Outdoors Act (GAOA) in 2021. This designation is critical to ensure this region is on the national priority list for GAOA funding for the next five years.

Backcountry recreation in this region is beloved by so many people who live here and is drawing an ever-growing number of visitors. These visitors substantially fuel the local economy and small businesses in rural communities like East Glacier that neighbor the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. Yet the decline in regular trail maintenance, combined with increased blow down in aging wildfire scars, has impeded the ability of people to enjoy their public lands and concentrated use in the ever-dwindling number of maintained corridors at a time when more people than ever are engaged in backcountry recreation in this region. Addressing the deferred maintenance backlog will protect resources (including trails, wildlife habitat, water quality), enhance recreational experiences (including opportunities for Wilderness solitude), and provide direct and indirect economic benefits to rural communities. For these reasons, Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance enthusiastically supports full funding for deferred trail maintenance, and trail head infrastructure projects throughout this region. In particular, though, we encourage the Forest Service to once again clear some of the secondary trails in the Badger-Two Medicine as these trails have become clogged with blowdown, as well as to continue restoring decommissioned motorized routes. We also suggest improving the False Summit Trailhead in the Highway 2 Corridor – including improved horse loading/unloading facilities and noxious weed management.

Furthermore, while we recognize and support the Forest Service's need to recover its own capacity to conduct trail maintenance and infrastructure work, we simultaneously encourage the Forest Service to invest in its partnership with the Piikuni Lands Crew (a Blackfeet youth/young adult conservation corps crew) to conduct the appropriate work within the Badger-Two Medicine. This partnership empowers Blackfeet to conduct work on their aboriginal homelands, provides important job skills and career training for Blackfeet youth and young adults, and brings economic benefits back to the Reservation community.

Glacier-Two Medicine further encourages and supports expanded efforts by the Forest Service to address noxious weeds in the Badger-Two Medicine. Treating noxious weeds is an urgent concern to local landowners, residents,

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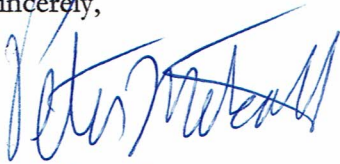
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hunters, anglers, and other backcountry recreationists. Noxious weed infestations are degrading fish and wildlife habitat as well as diminishing the quality of recreational experiences. They're also making it difficult for adjoining land managers (private, tribal, public) to address weeds on their respective lands.

Finally, we encourage the agency to explore ways to work with and engage the appropriate Tribal Nations, other government agencies, partner organizations, local community members, landowners, and other stakeholders to address access concerns in the region, in addition to the aforementioned trail and infrastructure maintenance and noxious weeds concerns.

Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance looks forward to the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and adjoining lands being designated as a priority funding area under the Great America Outdoors Act as well as to the managerial, ecological, and social benefits this designation will bring to the forest and neighboring communities.

Sincerely,



Peter Metcalf
Executive Director
Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance