



File Code: 1950

Date: May 30, 2000

Dear Wilderness Friends:

We are pleased to announce our decision for new management direction for the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. Because you have expressed an interest in the Wilderness, we are sending you a copy of the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact. We are also enclosing several other documents, including a map, which will help explain the decision.

The decision amends three Forest Plans to change the management direction for the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. These include the Beaverhead, Deerlodge, and Bitterroot Forest Plans. This is a non-significant amendment. The purpose of these changes is to clearly define management objectives, standards, and guidelines in order to protect and preserve the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness in accordance with the 1964 Wilderness Act. We are also enclosing the Forest Plan Amendment (Appendix I of this package).

In May of 1999, we released an EA proposing changes to the management of the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. During the comment period that followed the announcement, approximately 85 individuals contacted us with many questions and comments about all aspects of the proposal. The interdisciplinary team, which studied the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness, prepared responses to all the questions and comments we received. The responses are in Appendix II of this package.

Between the release of the EA and this decision, we have had several discussions with representatives of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP). These discussions have focused on the statutory roles and relationships between the agencies as it relates to fisheries management and fish stocking. Additionally, we discussed our goals and objectives for fish stocking and wilderness management. Appendix IV contains new language relative to fisheries management in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness and is attached for your convenience.

This decision was not easy, or simple, or without effects on you and other users. Please understand that while much of the attention regarding this project has been focused on recreation use, our decision sets the stage for the management of many elements of the Wilderness - from stock use and group sizes to outfitters and guides and noxious weeds. In rereading the Wilderness Act of 1964, we are reminded that the intent of Congress was "to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.... to secure for the American people of



present and future generations, the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.”

If we have learned one thing through reading letters and talking to people about the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness, it is that wilderness means many different things to different people. It is our responsibility to ensure that the Wilderness continues to exist for all individuals however they choose to experience it, now and in the future. It is also our responsibility to ensure that the Wilderness is not degraded for future generations. This is a fine but critical balancing act. Working together, we are confident that we can secure the benefits of a truly enduring resource.

If you have any questions about this decision, or would like additional information, please contact Deb Gale at the Wisdom Ranger District, PO Box 238, Wisdom, MT 59761, (406) 689-3243 or Judith Fraser at the West Fork Ranger District, 6735 West Fork Road, Darby, MT 59829, (406) 821-3269.

Sincerely,

JANETTE KAISER
Forest Supervisor
Beaverhead-Deerlodge N.F.

RODD RICHARDSON
Forest Supervisor
Bitterroot N.F.

Enclosures