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**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

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January 12, 2006

The Honorable Governor Brian Schweitzer  
Montana State Capitol, Room 201  
PO Box 200850  
Helena, MT 59620-0850

Dear Governor Schweitzer,

We want to thank you for taking time to meet with us and seek input from Lewis and Clark County in developing Montana's National Forest Roadless Conservation Policy.

Lewis and Clark County is one of Montana's largest counties, spanning the Continental Divide with large roadless public land tracts on the Helena, Flathead, Lolo and Lewis and Clark National Forests. These public lands comprise the historic and traditional backcountry traversed by trails as in the days of Lewis and Clark.

Since 1979, each successive county commission has recognized the vital importance of these roadless tracts and urged federal policy-makers to take the necessary steps to insure these rugged mountain areas remain in a wild condition.

Our rugged mountains, sparkling rivers, abundant wildlife and uncrowded spaces are essential to the future of our state and county. Roadless public land areas provide county residents with hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, abundant wildlife, and a quality of outdoor life that is second to none.

Roadless headwaters provide Lewis and Clark County residents with clean drinking water and clear mountain streams; vital for municipal and irrigation water as well as sustaining our blue-ribbon trout waters.

Roadless areas such as the Devil's Tower, Gates of the Mountains and Silver King-Falls Creek include nationally-significant historic and cultural resources, including Native American trails and routes followed by Captains Lewis and Clark nearly two hundred years ago.

**200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION**



supported certain lands for wilderness<sup>2</sup> and others for snowmobiling, this would require additional analysis and broader public involvement beyond what the state can expect to complete in a Montana roadless conservation petition.

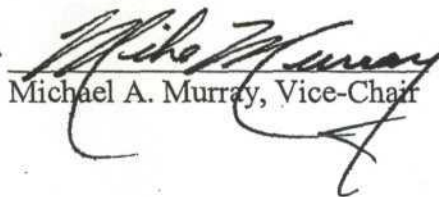
Important decisions like these are best made by the U.S. Forest Service in their revised travel and forest plans process.

Thank you, Governor Schweitzer, for your leadership to conserve open spaces and mountain lands vital to the future of our growing county and state. We are proud to help safeguard the clean water, clear streams, hunting, fishing, wild lands and outdoor traditions enjoyed by residents of Lewis and Clark County.

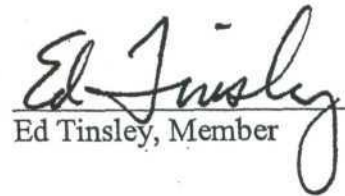
Respectfully submitted,



Anita L. Varone, Chair



Michael A. Murray, Vice-Chair



Ed Tinsley, Member

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<sup>2</sup> Successive commissions have testified repeatedly in support of specific additions to the Scapegoat, Bob Marshall and Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Areas, as well as the proposed Nevada Mountain Wilderness.