

**SOUTH BELTS TRAVEL PLAN EA – PUBLIC COMMENTS and FOREST SERVICE RESPONSES**

February 2008

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
1	11-15-07	Andy Onushco	Email Support for Alternative 2	Thank you for your comment.
2	11-20-07 Additional Comments via Letter and comment sheet	Terry Beaver	<p>Via phone, letter and comment sheet Road 4190-A1 near Blacktail road in Section 36 – confusion between it and 4190-C1 where it connects to 4190. Alt 1 and 2 Maps appear to be wrong. Routes are currently open 5/15-10/15, not closed 5/15-12/1.</p> <p>Location of south end of Sulphur Bar road is wrong on Alt 1 map.</p> <p>139-H1 has been obliterated beyond tank trap.</p> <p>Closed roads were not shown on the proposed action map and it doesn't show the cumulative road closures accurately.</p> <p>ATVs and motorcycles are not fairly represented in Alt 2. Entire length of 483 is desirable for ATVs and motorcycles. FS didn't consider enough existing road prisms for potential motorized trails. Would consider the Little Camas route in exchange for Grassy 124.</p> <p>Travel plan rationale for proposed changes (OHV increases, less private land access, OHV damage) are all arguments for a good system of designated</p>	<p>The Alternative 1 and 2 maps are in error. There are no proposed changes for these routes in Alternative 2. The Alternative 2 decision map has been corrected based on this comment.</p> <p>We respectfully disagree with the commentor on the south end of Sulphur Bar road. A review of the 1999 aerial photo shows the location as described on Alternative 1 and 2 maps is correct.</p> <p>We respectfully disagree, in part, with the commentor on the condition of road 139-H1 beyond the tank trap in Section 28. While a portion of the road is impassable just north of the tank trap, the remaining road bed is passable by vehicle. The purpose of this change is to locate the closure in a better turnaround location.</p> <p>Currently closed roads were not shown on the Proposed Action map in March 2007 because the intent was to have the public focus on what we were proposing to change. The proposed changes included opening some currently closed routes (1.8 miles) as well as closing some currently open routes (38 miles). The map provided with the Proposed Action highlighted a statement that currently closed roads not proposed for change was not on the map. The EA and Alternative 1 and 2 maps disclose and display the closed roads by alternative.</p> <p>Only one of the stated purposes of the project was to provide motorized opportunity. Alternative 2 does increase the miles of motorized trail from the existing 2.6 to 10.2 miles, utilizing existing road prism. Opening all of the Little Camas area roads (483 and others) as motorized trails was considered by the interdisciplinary team but only a portion of the routes were included in Alternative 2 because of concerns for off route use on open ridges and concerns for creating conflicts in use in this motorized corridor area between two popular backcountry areas. The 483 route does provide a short loop opportunity where it connects with 139-H2.</p> <p>We agree. An emphasis for this planning effort is to designate the motorized trail system. The limitations of the project scope, however, limit this designation to only currently existing roads or trails.</p>

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			<p>motorized trails.</p> <p>Noncompliant should not dictate decisions because it punishes the prudent users. If forest utilization is too restrictive, it will create conflict instead of reduce conflict.</p> <p>Disturbance to wildlife and big game security-how can this be a rationale for yearlong closures when ungulates are documented in many places to coexist well with humans (deer in Helena, elk in North Park Co, Alaska and moose).</p> <p>Noxious weed spread-FS vehicles are responsible for this as they don't get washed. ATV users, contractors, are more prudent.</p>	<p>We agree. As identified in Appendix A of the Environmental Assessment (EA), few routes were closed 5/15-12/1 solely to address issues of route proliferation by the noncompliant (NS3, 139-G1, NS 51).</p> <p>This issue was considered during development of the Proposed Action and Alternative 2, and, as displayed in Appendix A of the EA, no routes were closed during 5/15-12/1 strictly for wildlife reasons (open road density). Elk, deer, moose, and other large wild animals are known to tolerate varying degrees of human presence under certain circumstances. Those circumstances generally involve enclaves where the animals are not hunted or seriously threatened and where they manage to suppress their natural distrust of humans in order to access an abundant food resource not available elsewhere. Deer in Helena are a good example, as are moose that wander through Rocky Mountain towns in winter feeding on shrubs—as well as elk that move down onto rangeland in winter to take advantage of productive bottomland and haystacks. Also often cited is the “Yellowstone phenomenon”, where elk have become habituated to a National Park environment in which they are not hunted and where most humans, though large in number, are confined to narrow corridors from which they observe at a certain distance. Meanwhile, the animals can retreat into adjacent wildland areas of vast extent whenever they feel the need. A number of the travel restrictions in the South Belts are designed to enhance a few of these safe wildland enclaves into which elk—in this case a skittish hunted population—can retreat when they feel threatened [Wildlife Specialists Report: p.13, 19-20].</p> <p>We agree that the job of keeping noxious weeds off of public lands includes more washing of vehicles, the Forest Service included.</p>
3	11-26-07	Bob and Jan Braico	<p>Email</p> <p>Support of preferred alternative, Alternative 2</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
4	11-26-07	Michael Santi	<p>Phone call</p> <p>4178-G1; 4178-F1-Agrees with having them closed in Alt 2.</p> <p>Upper Holloway road – people are taking the gate down and causing allotment admin problems. Any recourse to this?</p> <p>Our alternative maps show inventoried roadless mapped on private property that he leases for</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Vandalism and changes in effects by alternative is addressed in the Range Specialists report in the project file. A possible future action is installation of an electronic eye camera. This would require cooperation between the permittee and Forest Service for its installation and monitoring.</p> <p>Inventoried Roadless Area boundaries, including those with private land in them, will not be identified on the final Motorized Visitor Use Map (MVUM) which is the free map that will be</p>

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			<p>grazing. People will use the private land as public land if they see the 'pattern' on the map.</p> <p>Wants notification if any other alternatives are developed as a result of comments on the EA.</p>	<p>developed for public use following the decision on this project. Private land will be identifiable on the MVUM map.</p> <p>No other alternatives were developed as a result of comments on the EA. Please refer to the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for a discussion of the changes to Alternative 2.</p>
5	11-27-07	Joe Jepson	<p>Letter, email and office visit</p> <p>NS 65 should be closed yearlong, at least south of the Power Line to Section 29. Otherwise, it funnels public traffic to his private land fenceline. He does not need these roads for access to his private land as there are alternate routes available to him through private land.</p> <p>583-G1 should be closed also, all or in part, because it funnels traffic to his private land in Section 29. There is a fenceline in Section 30 that goes from a private inholding across NFS to his property in Section 29. There is no gate in the fenceline so people have to turn around there anyway. MAP and Sketch provided with comment.</p>	<p>Closure of routes NS 65 and 583-G1 to motorized use 5/15-12/1 was not identified as a needed change with this project, thus they were not included in Alternative 2. The priority for travel planning in the short term will be implementation and monitoring of this decision.</p>
6	11-28-07	Brent Larson	<p>Email</p> <p>Closures are resulting in millions of acres closed to motorized vehicles and every project results in more closures.</p>	<p>The analysis and decision will affect the motorized transportation system on 83,000 acres of National Forest lands in the South Big Belt Mountains. The EA discusses impacts of travel changes to recreational users under Alternative 2 in Chapter 3 pages 28-35. It is true the cumulative affects of travel planning on National Forest System lands throughout the country may limit or prohibit motorized travel on millions of acres. It should also be noted that one purpose of travel planning is the protection of natural resources in conjunction with providing an appropriate amount of motorized recreation.</p>
7	11-29-07	Montana Multiple Use Association	<p>Forest Service and BLM are locking gates that access your private property.</p>	<p>General comment not specific to South Belts Travel Plan project. Thank you for your comment.</p>
8	11-29-07	G.B. Carson	<p>Letter</p> <p>Why have the Broadwater and Meagher County commissioners endorsed the specious and bogus concept of multiple use, i.e. an endorsement of the ATV/snowmobile industry?</p>	<p>Broadwater and Meagher Counties provided comment letters and feedback during Commission meetings on the March, 2007 Proposed Action. They identified their support for a multiple use alternative at that time and generally supported no net closure of roads. Subsequent discussions were held with them regarding the substance of Alternative 2 and the EA, and the rationale for not evaluating a multiple use alternative in the EA. We received no written comments from either commission on the EA and received no verbal comments that identified lingering issues with Alternative 2 as displayed in the EA.</p>

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9	11-30-2007	Tim Horan	<p>Email</p> <p>Keep Summit of Grassy Mountain quiet and motor free. Eight reasons why:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Designating a ridgetop ATV-way across Grassy Mountain will spread noise and weeds throughout the area, spook wildlife, and rob all of quiet mountain experience.</li> <li>2. Grassy Mountain has no natural barriers to prevent ATV drivers from further damaging high meadows once they gain the crest.</li> <li>3. The so-called OHV camp rule allows ATVs to legally drive a 600-foot wide swath centered on the crest of Grassy Mountain.</li> <li>4. Designating the Grassy Mtn crest trail (#124) as an ATV-way ruins five lovely quiet loop trails.</li> <li>5. Most of Grassy Mountain was deemed too fragile for over-snow vehicles in the South Big Belts Winter Travel Plan —why ATVs?</li> <li>6. The proposed ATV skyway would almost certainly be featured in next-door developers' marketing.</li> <li>7. Forest Road #583 —east of Grassy Mountain—parallels the entire proposed ATV-way with a far less destructive opportunity for motor vehicles.</li> <li>8. Grassy is a special mountain that merits our respect.</li> </ol>	<p>Route 124 as shown on the Alternative 1 (existing condition) and 2 maps in the EA is identified as a road open 5/15-12/1 north of the microwave site; a road open 5/15-12/1 south of the microwave site in Alternative 1; and a motorized trail open 5/15-12/1 on the Alternative 2 map. This route was displayed the same way in the March 2007 Proposed Action as in Alternative 2. Helena Forest records and maps identify that 124 has been used and has been open to motorized vehicles for at least 23 years, starting with the 1984 travel map, with no recorded use conflicts. See also response to letter #35.</p> <p>A primary purpose of this project is to designate the motorized route system and prevent proliferation of nonsystem routes (EA, pages 1,4) . See also response to 1 above.</p> <p>The 2005 Travel Rule supercedes the 2001 OHV ROD (see EA page 1) and requires designation and signing of routes to dispersed campsites. Alternative 2 incorporates designation of these routes, although most do not show at the scale of the alternative maps presented to the public in the EA. The Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) that will be made available free will identify the routes greater than 300 feet to dispersed campsites and dispersed camping areas less than 300 feet from open designated routes.</p> <p>See response to 1 and 2 above.</p> <p>The northern portion of Grassy Mountain IRA was not designated for snowmobile use due to its winter range value and to retain the integrity of the IRA. (South Belts Winter Travel DN and FONSI, January, 1999). See responses to 1-4 above.</p> <p>The Forest Service has no authority over private land activities, including their advertising of adjacent public land opportunities. Indeed, most of the Helena National Forest is surrounded by private lands.</p> <p>Road 583 does not provide the type of unimproved, riding experience for 4x4 users that route 124 does. Few other routes for this kind of motorized opportunity are available in the South Belts travel plan area and many of them are closed in Alternative 2, including the Stovecamp trail 118/139-F1, Duck Creek microwave road NS82, 583-D1 Crazy Bastard Hill road and connected spurs, and others.</p> <p>Effects to the Grassy Mountain roadless area are summarized in Table 2.4 of the EA and are described in Appendix C of the EA. It should be noted that the 2001 Roadless Rule</p>

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				(36CFR294) authorized existing motorized uses in roadless areas (See Decision Notice p. 8). Thus, inclusion of 8.2 miles (in Alternative 2 modified) of existing routes as designated for motorized use in the Grassy Mountain IRA is in compliance with the roadless rule. Alternative 2 modified does nothing to change the existing uses in this IRA on the roads that will remain open to motorized use as the scope of this project clearly excludes physical work to change size, capacity or location of any of the roads. Alternative 2 modified results in closure of 2.0 miles of existing motorized route within the Grassy Mountain IRA.
10	12-1-2007	Phyl Miller	<p>Letter and map Appendix A Comments: 583-L1 – This route does not connect with 583. Used for logging in 1950 and is overgrown and impassable. 583-I1 – Route is correct on map. Keep open for private land access.</p> <p>4194, 4194-A1 and A2-Landowner currently does not prevent access to Section 26 NFS. Putting up a locked gate will result in private fence damage. Options to this?</p>	<p>The Alternative 1 and 2 maps were modified from the Proposed Action map in attempt to address the issues/inaccuracies identified during comments on the Proposed Action. We believe the result of Alternative 2, which closes route 583-L1, effectively responds to the commentors issue. This will also result in a correction to the Forest roads GIS data layer.</p> <p>There are numerous routes in the South Belts travel area where the access to public land is roads that cross private lands with no public easement/right of way. Alternative 2 was developed in consideration of the existing and unavailable public easements across these properties. Where easements do not exist at the time of the printing of the EA, no public accesses are shown on the alternative maps. Management of these routes where a change in public use will occur because of a lack of public access will take cooperation for implementation between the landowners and the Forest Service on a case by case basis. The limitations of this analysis preclude ground disturbance for road closures.</p>
11	12-1-07	Thomas A. Warr, MD, FACP	<p>Letter. Same comments as Bliss Letter # 12.</p>	<p>See response to letter #12 below.</p>
12	12-3-07	Eric Bliss	<p>Letter</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="499 1040 1024 1308">1. A reasonable motorized alternative needs to be developed. Group enjoys motorized use of primitive roads and trails. More OHV users justifies more availability of routes on public land and Alt 2 is contrary to that. EA did not include an alternative for growth and enhancement of motorized opportunities. Motorized recreation needs ignored.</li> <li data-bbox="499 1341 1024 1406">2. Table 1.1 is inaccurate-29% of Montanans enjoy OHVs=291,000 Montanans</li> </ol>	<p>As indicated in the EA, Chapter 3 within the Recreation section, ATV activity is not a major use or Forest Service emphasis for this area. However, Alternative 2 was developed to provide a reasonable ATV riding experience for this area, knowing that the North Big Belts provides much more trail riding opportunities. One of the purposes for this travel plan analysis was to designate the motorized travel plan given the increased use and popularity of OHVs. Additional motorized routes could be considered in the future following implementation and monitoring of this decision. They would require additional environmental analysis and public involvement.</p> <p>Statistics for Table 1 of the EA indicate a trend of growing ownership and use of OHVs on public lands in Montana, which is recognized by the Forest Service. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks reports 46,707 registered OHV's in Montana during calendar year 2006 (Statistics from Department of Justice, Title and Registration Bureau).</p>

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			<p>3. Disclose the miles of non-motorized trails in project area, particularly, Mt. Baldy, Boulder Baldy, Cedar Bar areas. Miles of nonmotorized trails indicates Alt 2 is not balanced. Need a 50:50 balance for motorized/nonmotorized uses.</p> <p>4. Cumulative effects of motorized closures are significant. Analysis ignored cumulative effects. Displacement and resulting compacting of users not addressed adequately and will result in more resources impacts and unjustified hardships.</p> <p>5. Statistics from NVUM, USDA and CTVA for describing popularity of motorized use ignored.</p> <p>6. An alternative needs to provide OHV access from Skidway Campground and use the Skidway ski trail as a summer OHV trail.</p> <p>7. Request addition of the routes identified in the May 22, 2007 meeting between CTVA and Steve Wyatt.</p> <p>8. Alt 2 will close off the road network to OHV use as no routes are designated dual use with this plan. Results in a dysfunctional, unconnected network of OHV routes.</p>	<p>There are currently 20.8 miles of non-motorized trails in the Mt. Baldy area, 2.9 miles of non-motorized trails in the Camas Creek/Boulder Baldy area (within the project area), and 9.8 miles of non-motorized trails in the Cedar Bar/Grassy Mtn area. These were not included in this project analysis because the project focus is compliance with the 2005 Travel Rule regarding designation of motorized travel routes. The purpose and need for the project does not direct that both uses need to be equal.</p> <p>Cumulative effects of the two alternatives on recreation are found in the EA (Chapter 3) under Recreation, Environmental Consequences. Displacement was addressed within the EA in the sections entitled Recreation, Affected Environment, and Recreation, Environmental Consequences, Chapter 3, and in the Recreation Specialists Report in the project file.</p> <p>NVUM statistics collected in 2002/2003 for the South Belts area are referenced in the recreation specialist report and is part of the project record. These statistics revealed that motorized visitor use at those sites during those data collection periods was relatively light . See also response to comment 1, above. However, the Helena Forest recognizes the tremendous growth in popularity and increase in ownership of OHVs in Montana ( See response to 2 above) and indeed it is this growth in use on public lands that is driving the need for route designation.</p> <p>Road 124 provides motorized access for licensed vehicles from Skidway Campground to Grassy Mountain in Alternatives 1 and 2 from 5/15-12/1. A large portion of the cross country ski trail behind Skidway Campground is within the Grassy Mtn. roadless area. This trail was constructed 3 years ago and one of the agreements/mitigation measures in the decision for this trail is that it would not be maintained using motorized means or opened to motorized use.</p> <p>Routes submitted by CTVA are those mentioned in letters #2, #25 and #80. See also response to CTVA #58.</p> <p>Dual use consideration involves a technical engineering review for physical suitability of the route for mixed full size vehicles and ATVs and motorcycles, but not NEPA environmental analysis. Therefore, it was not included within the scope of the analysis. Dual Use evaluations will be conducted following issuance of the project decision, likely in 2008-9. The EA describes the available loop routes on pages 18 and 32 for motorized use in each of the Alternatives.</p>
13	12-3-2007	Fredrick F. Terry	Email letter Same comments as Bliss letter #12.	See response to letter #12 above.

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14	12-3-07	Tom Stark, PLS	Email Against Alt 2 as a motorcycle user and hunter because it pushes motorized users into fewer routes and public land areas. Too many routes given up.	Displacement of motorized users is analyzed in Chapter 3 in the recreation section. There are currently no designated single track motorized routes in the South Belts area. Alternative 2 results in 1.7 miles of designated single-track motorized routes. See also response to letters #2 and #12 above.
15	12-3-07	Judy Rue	Letter Similar comments to Bliss letter #12 above.  Impact of closures warrants an EIS and mitigation plan.	See response to letters #2 and #12 above.  The effects of Alternative 2 are described in Chapter 3 of the EA. The total amount of road closures has been determined to be environmentally insignificant based on the effects described in Chapter 3 and as summarized in Table 2.4 on pages 17-20 in the EA. Note that a good portion of the closures are roads accessed only through private land where there is no public easement.
16	12/3/07	Keith Yancy	Email Keep public lands public and open.	Thank you for your comment.
17	12-4-07	Ted Snow	Email Provide more access and promote more use, rather than discourage use and close access. Manage the forests instead of close people out of them.  Closing roads and putting up gates hurts the economy.	The purpose and need for this project (See EA chapter 1) specifically identifies the reasons for pursuing this project. There is currently no information collected by the Helena Forest or other entities that suggests public use has decreased in areas where travel plans have been completed. To the contrary, the anecdotal information we receive from adjacent landowners and public users is that there has been an increase in use in places such as the Elkhorns which has had a travel plan in place since 1995.  The economic analysis in the EA (pages 88-91) identifies that the proposed changes in travel management under Alternative 2 is unlikely to have a noticeable effect on the area economy.
18	12-4-07	MDFWP, Ron Spoon	Letter Are the miles of road within 100 feet of streams only perennial portions?  Roads in this area appear to be delivering a significant amount of sediment and any stream crossings that can be eliminated is positive. Alternative 2 better than Alt 1 in this regard.  Encouraging agency to pursue the closure methods so that improvements in sedimentation can be	In the hydrologist's specialist report, miles of road within 100 feet of a stream included ephemeral and perennial streams. The rationale for including ephemeral channels in the analysis is that sediment delivered to ephemeral channels is susceptible to entrainment when the stream is flowing, and thus represents a source of sediment in downstream, perennial sections.  Roads in the analysis area are a predominant source of management-related sediment delivered to streams. We agree that reducing the number of road-stream crossings is an important measure in reducing the amount of sediment delivered to streams. Towards this end, Alternative 2 of the South Belts Travel Plan would institute a closure for motorized use on 33.4 miles of existing roads compared to the No Action Alternative (EA page 16).  The Helena National Forest will actively pursue the evaluation of road closure methods, including environmental analysis and public involvement, following implementation and

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			realized.	monitoring of this travel plan decision.
19	12-5-07	Eric Grove Great Divide Cyclery	Letter Non-motorized, single tracker users (bicyclists) have few opportunities in the South Belts.  Designation of road 124 as a nonmotorized trail would provide an opportunity for looped rides in a single track, non-motorized setting.	Evaluating and enhancing nonmotorized uses in the South Belts travel plan area was not identified in the purpose and need and scope for this project. Refer to the EA pages 1, 4-6. Nonetheless, there are currently numerous miles of motorized routes (open and closed), and nonmotorized routes that bicyclists have access to in the South Belts travel plan area. See also response to letter #12 above.  See responses to #9 and #35 regarding road 124.
20	12-5-07	Troy Hendrickson	Office visit General discussion about travel plan. Dislikes reduced opportunity for motorcyclists on the Stovecamp trail.	The Stovecamp trail (139-F1/118) is within a popular backcountry area that includes the Boulder Lakes and Camas Lakes. It is also within the Camas Creek Inventoried Roadless Area. Traditional uses such as horseback riding and hiking remain popular in this area. Past ATV/motorcycle use has resulted in off route travel that is difficult and costly to enforce and repair.
21	12-5-07	Tim Ravndal, MMUA	Email Public comments on forest plan revision of Flathead Forest reflect an increasing demand for motorized recreational opportunities.	We received many similar public comments regarding maintaining/increasing motorized recreation opportunities in the South Belts Travel Plan area (See EA Appendix B). As described in Chapter 1 of the EA, delivery of a designated system of motorized routes on public lands is subject to regulations, laws and policies that have to be adhered to while integrating the public's varied demands for motorized access. See also response to letters #2, 12.
22	12-7-07	Dennis Milburn	Email Maintain integrity of roadless areas and Alt 2 does a good job of that.  Agrees that roads with no public access that originate from private land are closed in Alt 2.  Plan does not address mechanized use in Mt. Baldy proposed wilderness area. Mountain bike use is increasing and NF direction dictates no activity in proposed wilderness should occur that is not permitted in designated wilderness. Eliminate this now before it becomes established.	Thank you for your comment.  Thank you for your comment.  Designation of nonmotorized routes is outside the scope of this project. Refer to the EA page 5 for the decisions to be made for this project.
23	12-7-07	Gordon E. Thompson	Letter Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to letters #9, #95. Thank you for your comment.

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24	12-7-07	Marty Faulkner	Letter Support for Alt 2 as a nonmotorized user	Thank you for your comment.
25	12-7-07	Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Association, Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association, Ramona Ehnes	<p>Letter Removing motorized trails from inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) does not follow applicable law governing IRAs. There should be opportunities for singletrack motorized use in the IRAs.</p> <p>Lack of direction on travel planning by Regional Team has resulted in predecisional direction for IRAs without the required EIS or EA.</p> <p>Support for 1.7 miles of motorized singletrack in Alt 2 motorized trail routes in Camas Creek area.</p> <p>What happened to the motorized singletrack routes in Grassy Mountain area? Can these and other possible routes be evaluated for future inclusion on the Motor Vehicle Use Maps?</p> <p>Need to see commitment for Dual Use evaluations following the project decision.</p> <p>Consider additional conversion of closed roads to trails as per 36CFR212.5(b)(2).</p> <p>Simply closing roads is not the intent or responsive to</p>	<p>The EA identifies that this travel plan area currently has few miles (2.6 miles) of designated motorized trails areawide in Alternative 1, the existing condition. The existing designated trail miles are almost entirely in the Camas Creek IRA. Of these miles, none are designated singletrack motorized trails. Alternative 2 includes 10.2 miles of motorized trails which includes 1.7 miles of motorized singletrack trail (Trail 118). Alternative 2 modified includes designation of about 4 miles of motorized trail in the Grassy Mountain area (a portion which are inside the IRA) south of the microwave tower site. Appendix A on pages 93-97 of the EA identifies the rationale for these proposed changes which includes providing motorized opportunity, open road density, soil and water protection, reduce motorized use in traditional backcountry, as well as inventoried roadless/Forest Plan recommended wilderness areas as well as others.</p> <p>Regional direction for travel planning for inventoried roadless areas was clarified in an August 29, 2007 letter from the Regional Forester to the Montana Multiple Use Association. The letter states, "It is not the purpose of this project to add motorized routes in IRAs; it is to designate certain routes for motorized use." This project has resulted in preparation of an EA.</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>There are currently no inventoried motorized singletrack routes in the Grassy Mountain area (see Alternative 1 map). There are nonmotorized trails in the Grassy Mountain area including Carl Creek Trail 123 and Cedar Bar Trail 105. These routes were not considered for motorized single track use as they are not constructed for such use and are popular with nonmotorized users. Proposals for new single track routes could be considered at a future date, however, monitoring of the designated singletrack routes included in the North Belts Travel decision in 2005 indicates that these trails (Little Hellgate, Nary Time, Doolittle) have received little or no use since the Record of Decision in 2005 making it difficult to justify the time and expense of more singletrack trail proposals. See also response to Letter # 58.</p> <p>See response to Letter #12 above.</p> <p>See response to Letter #2 above.</p> <p>See response to Letters #2 and 12 above.</p>

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			former Chief Bosworths' identification of unmanaged outdoor recreation as a top issue. His message was to manage, not close.	
26	12-7-07	Brad Borst, Jill Forseth	Letter Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
27	12-8-07	John P. Jones	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
28	12-8-07	Sandra Rachlis	Email Do not allow motorized use of Trail 124. Expand the non-motorized use of Camas Lakes and Baldy-Edith proposed wilderness	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Designation of nonmotorized routes is outside the scope of this project. Refer to the EA, page 5 for a description of the decisions to be made in this project.
29	12-9-07	George Holton	Letter Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
30	12-9-2007	Jim Emerson	Email Support for 124 as a quiet trail Enforce ATV use.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Part of the purpose of this project is designation of the motorized transportation system for this part of the Big Belt Mountains and simplification of seasonal closure dates so that the motorized use map is easier to understand and more enforceable. Refer to the EA pages 4-5 for more information on the purpose and need for the project.
31	12-10-07	Len Tunnison	Telephone call New address. Wants copy of EA.	A copy of the EA was mailed in December, 2007 prior to the closure of the public comments. The new address has been added to the project mailing list.
32	12-10-07	Adam Grove MDFWP	Letter Recommends leaving 139-F2 open for ATVs and motorcycles from Route 139-F1 to jct of 483 in Section 30. Recommends it be open until 12/1 rather than 10/15.  Recommends the dead end spurs off 483 (483-B1, 483-B2) be kept closed from 5/15-12/1 for summer habitat effectiveness and elk security and to reduce unauthorized ATV routes.  Recommends leaving 139-H2 open for ATV and motorcycle use from current closure east of NS3 to its junction with 483 for loop opportunity and hunter access.	Route 139-F2 is closed 5/15-12/1 and was not evaluated as open in either Alternative 1 or 2 in the EA. We are incorporating an adaptive management approach where changes to this travel plan could result based on the results of monitoring following full implementation.  Spurs 483-B1 and 483-B2 were discussed as possible modifications to Alternative 2. These modifications were not incorporated because summer habitat effectiveness for Alternative 2 is well within the recommendation of 50% or greater in this herd unit and elk security habitat is well over the recommended percentage for this elk analysis area. Gates have proven to be an effective implementation measure in most cases.  This route is open in Alternative 2 and has an error on the map distributed to the public in the EA. The resources analyses and conclusions incorporated this route as open to vehicles 50 inches or less from 5/15-10/15 which provides for motorized bow hunter opportunity. Rifle season hunters would see no increase in opportunity. Thank you for bringing this error to our attention.

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33	12-10-2007	David Barcroft	Email Support for 124 as a nonmotorized trail.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).
34	12-10-07	Tom Kilmer	Christmas Card Support for 124 as a quiet trail.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).
35	12-10-07	Pete Strazdas	Email Support for Alternative 2 overall including Edith-Baldy roadless area changes.  Motorized use on Grassy Mtn 124 is a mistake and rewards unlawful behavior.  Resource damage in this route should be rehabilitated and changed to a nonmotorized trail.	Thank you for your comment.  Road 124 is one of many motorized travel routes that are found within inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) on the Helena Forest. The travel plan map that was in place in 1984 and when the Forest Plan was adopted in 1986 shows the northern portion of this route as a dashed line to the top of Grassy in an area open to unrestricted motor vehicle use. At that time, motorized vehicles were allowed to use any road or trail and travel cross country unless there was a specific route or area restriction. The Grassy Mountain area had no specific route or area restrictions or closure orders until the 1999 South Belts Winter Travel Plan. That decision includes the 12/2-5/15 period. The 2001 OHV Record of Decision (See summary discussion in the EA page 1) and associated Helena Forest Closure Order/Forest Plan Amendment #20 prohibited motorized cross country travel on the Helena National Forest and provided for motorized wheeled vehicle travel where there was visible, clearly evident two-track or single track routes. This included routes that had been inventoried by the forest as well as routes that had not been inventoried (nonsystem) Field observations by long time Townsend Ranger District staff, livestock grazing permittees and other recreation users indicates that motorized wheeled vehicle use has occurred on the Grassy ridgetop routes for at least 20 years.  See also response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).  Road 124 both north and south of the Grassy Mountain microwave tower is an existing full sized vehicle two-track. Part of it was utilized for a dozer made contingency line during the 2000 Maudlow Toston fire. The contingency line portion was rehabilitated back to a two-track in 2001 as part of post-fire rehabilitation.
36	12-10-07	Gregg and Wendy Wheeler	Email Support for 124 as a quiet trail. Support for Alt 2 for the Camas Lakes and Mt. Baldy roadless areas.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
37	12-11-07	Ralph Boland	Email Area of Grassy Mountain is prime elk, moose, blue grouse habitat. This area is not the place for motorized traffic as in Alt 2.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).
38	12-11-07	Eliza Frazer, Barry and	Email Support for 124 as a nonmotorized trail.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
		Jack Hood		
39	12-11-07	Bob Adams	Email Remove 124 from motorized routes. Support for Alt 2 for the Camas Lakes and Mt. Baldy roadless areas.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
40	12-11-07	Heidi Annau NOHVCC	Email Do a better job of planning for motorized recreation and get away from strictly closure plans. Popularity of motorized use is increasing. Not enough motorized trails, especially singletrack, utilize existing singletrack trails in Grassy Mountain area in Alt 2.  Support for motorized trails in Little Camas area.	Alternative 2 was developed in part to provide for additional motorized trail opportunity (10.2 total miles) and 1.7 single track motorized trail miles are incorporated, whereas Alternative 1 has no designated singletrack motorized trail miles and a total of 2.6 designated motorized trail miles. The existing singletrack trails west of Grassy Mountain were constructed for foot and horseback use and are popular backcountry trails in an IRA. Thus these were not considered for designation as motorized trails. See also response to Letter #25 above.  Thank you for your comment.
41	12-11-2007	Monique Mandali	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
42	12-11-2007	Paul and Naomi Miller	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
43	12-11-07	Donna Deutsch	Letter Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
44	12-11-07	Donald Riordan	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.  Also wants FS to work with Helena mountain bike community to provide quiet, singletrack bike routes outside proposed wilderness.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.  Designation of nonmotorized trails is outside the scope of this project. See response to letter #22 above.
45	12-11-2007	Cedron Jones	Email Proposed wilderness boundary for Mt. Baldy area should extend west and south off crest.  Close trail 152 and 107 to bicycles.  Move trailhead for 152 to the area in Section 36 that provides for turnaround. Could also help stop ATV trespass in the area.	Designation of proposed wilderness areas is outside the scope of this project. Refer to the EA page 5 for the decisions to be made with this project analysis.  Designation of bicycle closures on nonmotorized trails is outside the scope of this project. See also response to letter #22 above.  The trailhead for trail 152 is not changing with Alternative 2. The change between Alternative 1 and 2 is the extent to which motorized vehicles may travel. Alternative 2 closes about ¾ mile of the existing road beyond the trailhead location to motorized use. The interdisciplinary team considered closing the road beyond the trailhead in Section 36. It was

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			Grassy Mountain should be a mountain bike and nonmotorized area. Close 124 and 104 to motorized use, at least close 124 south of the microwave tower along the summit. This would still provide a motorized loop from Skidway to 583. Keep 104, 105, 123 and 124 quiet.	<p>not incorporated into Alternative 2 because of recurring motorized needs by the permittee, because it would increase the hiking distance to get to a popular backcountry lake making it more difficult for older and younger hikers to enjoy this experience, and because there were no other driving resources concerns.</p> <p>See also response to comment letters #9, #35 and #95. Route 104 is currently a road open 5/15-12/1 as shown on the Alternative 1 map in the EA. This route was proposed as a motorized trail in the March 2007 Proposed Action based on public requests for additional motorized trails in this area. We received little feedback specific to this route during scoping, thus, we did not keep the proposed change as we developed Alternative 2.</p> <p>Route 105 from the ridgetop of Grassy Mountain west to the junction of trail 123 has a distinguishable full size two track but is an inventoried nonmotorized trail in the existing condition. It was identified as a change in Alternative 2 of the EA as open to motorized use based on public comments provided on the March 2007 proposed action. Route 105 from the ridgetop of Grassy to the junction of 123 has been changed to closed to motorized use 5/15-12/1 as a modification to Alternative 2. The modification to 105 was made primarily to remove a motorized route that courses into the core of the Grassy Mountain roadless area. The remaining portion of 105 remains a nonmotorized trail and unchanged with this project. Trail 123 remains a nonmotorized trail and unchanged with this project.</p>
46	12-11-07	Clyde Angove	<p>Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p> <p>How did 124 get to be motorized in a roadless area?</p> <p>Is there potential for conflicts in Grassy area by having motorized and nonmotorized so close together?</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>See response to Letter #35, #45 above.</p> <p>We have no documented complaints regarding conflicts between the nonmotorized and motorized uses in this area. These activities have occurred together for at least 20 years.</p>
47	12-11-07	John Kuglin	<p>Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.</p>
48	12-11-07	Dave Stagliano	<p>Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.</p>
49	12-11-2007	Jane Horton and Doug Holly	<p>Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p> <p>Not convinced enforcement is going to be around or sufficient to prevent motorized abuses.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Part of the need for this project is to reduce complexity of the route system for easier understanding by the public and better enforcement (EA pages4-5).</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
50	12-11-07	Darlene Horne	Email No mountain bikes in recommended wilderness area.	See response to letter #22 above.
51	12-11-07	Linda and Merlyn Huso	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
52	12-11-07	Tim Meloy family	Email. Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
53	12-11-07	Sara Toubman	Letter Grassy Mtn should be left vehicle free in commemoration of Ivan Doig's and other lives who were there before vehicles, great wildflower area, excellent hiking and skiing and birding.  Keep 118 nonmotorized.	See response to comment letters #9, #35, #95 (Grassy 124).  A portion of trail 118 is identified as a singletrack motorized trail in Alternative 2. This change was proposed to provide for motorized opportunity as this travel plan area currently has no designated singletrack motorized trails.
54	12-11-07	Scott Blum	Letter Support for closing 124 to motorized use as it would legitimize illegal motorized use.  Stop making more roads.  Support for Alt 2 for Camas Lakes and Mt. Baldy areas	See response to comment letters #9, #35, #95 (Grassy 124).  Construction of new roads is outside the scope of this project (EA, page 5). Identification of which nonsystem routes will or will not be part of the designated route system is part of the purpose and need for this project (EA pages 1-5).  Thank you for your comment.
55	12-11-2007	Tom Kilmer	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
56	12-11-07	Janet Grinde	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.  Need more nonwilderness mountain bike trails.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.  See response to letter #22.
57	12-12-07	John Lambing	Letter Support for 124 as nonmotorized.  Real Estate developers advertising NFS lands open for ATVs for adjacent private land buyers.	See response to comment letter #9, #95 (Grassy 124).  Responding to advertising of Forest Service lands for ATV use by private landowners, whether accurate or not, is not within the scope of this project nor the agency's stated mission.

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
58	12-12-07	Capital Trail Vehicle Association	<p>Letter See comments in letter # 12.</p> <p>Asking for an opportunity to work with the FS to develop a multiple use alternative</p>	<p>See response to Letter # 12.</p> <p>The Forest Service attempted to work with Capital Trail Vehicle Association and Montana Multiple Use Association in the spring of 2007 following issuance of the Proposed Action to develop a multiple use alternative within the sideboards of the scope and purpose and need of this project. A draft alternative map was prepared by the FS in response to an alternative prepared by the groups and distributed to the groups as a response to their attempt to develop a Multiple Use alternative. As described in the EA on pages 11-12, the Forest Service draft alternative was rejected completely by the groups and no subsequent workable alternative was submitted to the Forest Service by the groups. Thus, the Helena Forest considers that a good faith effort was made on the part of both parties to include a third alternative but no consensus on moving forward was reached by the time the EA was being printed.</p> <p>Several specific motorized routes were provided for FS consideration at a May 2007 meeting with CTVA. A response to each route was provided to CTVA in a letter from District Ranger Mike Cole dated May 31, 2007. Of the route suggestions identified by CTVA, one is incorporated into Alternative 2 (139-H2) and two routes are in the Little Camas area of which five miles of motorized trails are open 5/15-12/1 in Alternative 2. Several of the suggested routes (483 area, 423-J2 connector, 423-L1 connector, 4194-A1 connector) would require construction which is outside the scope of this project. Several of the suggested routes including the Baldy Face road 4179, 423-C1 and A1, and the 583-E1 area roads are currently closed or identified to be closed in Alternative 2. The Baldy Face road was not included to be opened in Alternative 2 because of its popularity as a walk in hunting and day use area. The 423 routes are within the Cabin Gulch vegetation project area which already has a high open road density and an ongoing vegetation treatment analysis. The 583-E1 area routes are identified to be closed in Alternative 2 due to high open road densities and impacts to riparian areas.</p>
59	12-12-07	Harlan Coverdell	<p>Letter Support for Alternative 2 generally.</p> <p>Agrees with road 124 open but thinks road in Section 32 going to the finger ridges (105) should be closed.</p> <p>Close road to Edith Lake trail at the main trail/turnaround area in Section 36.</p> <p>Would like to see more roads open from 5/15-10/15</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>This change has been made in the Decision Notice for this project. Route 105 from the top of Grassy Mountain to the junction of trails 105 and 123 to the west in Section 32 is the only modification to Alternative 2 that is incorporated into the Decision Notice. See Attachment A Alternative 2 Modified map that is incorporated into the Decision.</p> <p>See response to letter #45.</p> <p>See response to letters #2, #25</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			for ATV riding, such as 383 (483? Since 383 is open during this period in Alternative 2).	
60	12-12-2007	Bob Adams	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
61	12-12-07	Terry Copenhaver	Letter Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
62	12-12-07	Jay Mattfeldt	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. 124 is an illegal motorized route and should not be legitimized Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).  Thank you for your comment.
63	12-12-07	Gayle Joslin	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
64	12-12-07	Kathy Lloyd	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. 124 is an illegal motorized route and should not be legitimized. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #35, #95 (Grassy 124).  Thank you for your comment.
65	12-12-07; 12-13-07	Kurt Borge	Email Share the trails Mountain bikes should be allowed in Mt. Baldy area since it is not wilderness. Does not advocate mountain bikes in wilderness. Support for mountain bike use.	Designation of nonmotorized trails for mountain bike use is outside the scope of this project. Refer to the EA page 5 for the Decisions to be Made with this project.
66	12-12-07	Ted Van Alstyne	Letter Support for Grassy Mountain 124 nonmotorized	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).
67	12-12-07	Jay Van Alstyne	Letter Support for Grassy Mountain 124 nonmotorized.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).
68	12-12-07	Mark Van Alstyne	Letter Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
69	12-12-07	Jill Sundby Van Alstyne	Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
70	12-12-07	Chuck Hedrick	Phone Call Does analysis road miles include county roads and Highway 12 in summary totals?	The project route mileages as displayed in the EA on pages 16-17 does not include county roads and U.S. Highway 12. The county roads and U.S. Highway 12 are included on the alternative maps for clarity.
71	12-12-07	Mary Clark	Letter Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
72	12-12-07	Glenda Bradshaw	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
73	12-13-07	Katheen Wanner	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
74	12-13-07	Patricia Kemp	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
75	12-13-07	Jeff Schuller	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
76	12-13-07	Chris Deveny	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.  FS needs to consider impacts of travel plan decisions on global warming.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.  Impacts of this project on global warming were not identified as an issue by the public or by the agency during scoping of the proposed action. It is also outside the scope of the project and not part of the Purpose and Need as described in Chapter 1 of the EA (see Findings Required by Other Laws, Rules and Regulations in the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact).
77	12-13-07	Beverly Magley	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.  Mountain bikes do not belong in wilderness or WSAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.  Designation of nonmotorized bicycle trails is outside the scope of this project. Refer to the EA page 5 for the Decisions to be Made with this project. There are no designated wilderness areas or wilderness study areas within the South Big Belt Travel Plan Area. A portion of the Mount Baldy IRA was recommended for wilderness in the Helena Forest Plan (1986), however, it is not a congressionally designated wilderness area.
78	12-13-07	Greg Beardslee	Email The travel plan did not address bicycles and this will result in more loss of bicycling opportunity. Bicycling management needs to be considered during planning, and recommended wilderness should not be closed to bicycles since they are not wilderness. Alpine areas are important to bicyclists. Concern about bicycles being closed out of Mt. Edith basin in this travel plan.	Designation of nonmotorized bicycle trails is outside the scope of this project. Refer to the EA page 5 for the Decisions to be Made with this project. See response to letter #22, #77 above.

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
79	12-13-07	Mark Van Alstyne	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.
80	12-13-07; 12-14-07 addition	Kerry White Citizens for Balanced Use	<p>Email/Letter Complete inventory of routes not done and that is not in compliance with 2001 OHV rule.</p> <p>EA did not include ground data from businesses and individuals that use public lands. No local data re: economic and social impact.</p> <p>Wildlife data did not use best available science-data shows big game more disturbed by nonmotorized users than motorized.</p> <p>Nonmotorized users take pets with them that disturb game and other animals, motorized users do not.</p> <p>No adverse impacts to lynx from snowmobiles</p>	<p>Routes that were not currently in the Forest Service roads GIS layer were incorporated into the project during collaboration meetings with the public, adjacent landowners, groups and permittees during development of the proposed action for this project. This effort led to the identification of all of the routes labeled "NS" on the alternative maps, which included 38 miles of routes. See the EA page 3-4 and 7-9 for a description of the efforts conducted with the public on this project.</p> <p>The economic analysis for the EA (EA pages 88-91, and Economics Specialists report, Project File) identifies the information and references used to describe the probable economic impacts of this project. Local statistics for Broadwater and Meagher Counties are incorporated into this analysis. Social impacts are described in the EA by type including recreation users (EA pages 28-36); Forest Vegetation/Fire/Fuels users (EA pages 77-80; Range users (EA pages 80-82); Special Uses (EA pages 84-85) and Minerals users (EA pages 86-88). We did not receive letters of comment on the EA from any local businesses.</p> <p>Some studies have indicated that elk become more agitated—in terms of increased heart rate, etc.—when they view hikers on foot than when they see ATVs or bikes. They don't necessarily flee or abandon the area more often, but they do become more uneasy. On the other hand, numerous studies have shown that motorized recreation in National Forest settings displaces elk from areas they would otherwise use. The noise factor and ability to drive much greater distances in a given time with ATVs and motor bikes than people on foot results in a considerably greater zone of disturbance. The average ATV generates disturbance over a significantly larger area and displaces considerably more animals in the course of a day than the average hiker. An additional factor is the ease and frequency with which ATVs and bikes are establishing new routes that are then taken up by other users. So, while disturbance by non-motorized users needs to be accounted for, motorized use has been shown to be the primary human activity displacing elk from areas of otherwise favorable habitat (See Wildlife Specialists report in the project file for references).</p> <p>The size of the daily disturbance zone and the potential for methodically expanding the range of disturbance via new user-created routes is substantially greater for ATVs and trail bikes than for hikers with dogs.</p> <p>Snowmobile use and impacts to lynx from snowmobiles is outside the scope of this project as described in the EA pages 3-5. The project planning period is 5/15-12/1. Winter use for this area was decided in the South Belts Winter Travel Plan decision in 1999.</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>Disregard road density guidelines for grizzly bears as recent data disproves them</p> <p>Poor air quality in summer is due to burning forests. Plan for removing trees, not close roads. Forest management is vital now more than ever and taxpayers are paying for fire suppression instead of being paid for tree harvest.</p> <p>Wilderness use is low (3% on B-D). Creating defacto wilderness thru travel plans makes more areas inaccessible and makes timber unavailable.</p> <p>If FS can't maintain roads and trails, they need to form partnerships with industries and groups to do it- timber, etc.</p> <p>FS signs or lack thereof are too confusing and cause more problems between users than the users cause for each other. Improve the sign system.</p> <p>Baby boomers getting old and using more motorized methods to get around on public lands- closures impact this aging population segment.</p> <p>Congress designates wilderness. 'Wildland' designation inappropriate.</p> <p>Cumulative effects on communities and motorized users from this and past actions that have closed roads on the Helena and adjacent forests have not been evaluated.</p> <p>Request for a programmatic EIS in Region 1 to evaluate these impacts.</p>	<p>There is no resident grizzly bear population in the Big Belts, and grizzly bear road density guidelines were not a factor in alternative design (see Wildlife Specialist Report, page 4, in the project file).</p> <p>Vegetation management activities are outside the scope of this project. Roads closed as part of this decision will remain available for future vegetation work as no physical changes would be made to roadbeds within the scope of this project (EA pages 3-5).</p> <p>There are no wilderness areas or wilderness study areas within this project area. This project also will not result in the physical removal of any roads as described in the project scope in the EA, Chapter 1.</p> <p>Motorized route maintenance was not part of the purpose and need for this project –see EA pages 1-5. The analysis considered the results of the Helena Forest Roads Analysis (2004) during development of the proposed action (See EA Chapter 3, Transportation)</p> <p>We agree that a complex sign system can result in conflicts between users and uncertainty by the general public user. Thus, one of the purposes of this travel project is to reduce the complexity of the maps, thus signs, for this area (EA, page 4).</p> <p>Within the EA Chapter 3 under the section Recreation, Environmental Consequences the following impact is acknowledged, "in some areas, the lack of motorized access limits hunting opportunities for persons with disabilities, limited mobility, or the elderly." Attempting to respond to all of the items in the Purpose and Need for this project requires balancing human opportunities with the needs of the natural resources of the area. The summary of the effects between the alternatives in Chapter 2 Table 2-4 presents our attempt at finding this balance which includes a modest amount of road closures. All users will have the same opportunity for motorized access on open routes.</p> <p>We agree. Wildland designation is not included within the scope of this project.</p> <p>The EA in Chapter 3, Recreation describes the cumulative effects of travel plans on and near the Helena National Forest. The economic impacts of the alternatives on the communities of Broadwater and Meagher counties are described in Chapter 3, pages 88-90. See also Table 2.4 in the EA on page 18 for a summary of impacts by alternative.</p> <p>This comment has been forwarded to recreation staff at the Region 1 office in Missoula.</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>Plan does not use recent elk data and numbers. FWP supports motorized access for hunting and reducing elk numbers. Need to address this issue with this plan.</p> <p>EIS needs to be prepared due to the PA being substantial in content and deserves more complete study.</p>	<p>This issue was considered and evaluated in the EA alternatives. Refer to the wildlife section of the EA pages 61-64 and 65-71, as well as the wildlife specialists report in the Project file. Data used in the elk analysis are from 2006: Of the 3 local hunting districts, one was below target levels, one was about on-target, and one was above (see wildlife specialists report, page 15, in the project file). In 2007, post-harvest elk numbers are higher—exceeding population goals for all 3 local EMU's. Over the past several decades, elk numbers have fluctuated from year to year, depending primarily on weather conditions and hunter success. HNF travel restrictions are designed to produce fall security areas for elk that allow MFWP population targets to be met in most years (wildlife specialist report, p. 12-13, 18-19). In years when elk are in excess, numbers can be reduced most effectively by increasing permits, extending seasons, and providing hunting access to private land, which are increasingly becoming a refuge for elk during the hunting season.</p> <p>No substantive environmental issues have been identified as a result of the interdisciplinary evaluation of the alternatives and public comments on the EA.</p>
81	12-13-07	Bill Maloit Last Chance Backcountry Horseman	<p>Letter Analysis biased in favor of motorized use.</p> <p>Agrees with restricting vehicles to designated routes and simplifying travel restrictions and seasons. Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p> <p>Motorized use by permitted allotment users is getting out of hand-their tracks lead to other users following-go back to using horses.</p> <p>NFMA of 1976 identifies FS has a responsibility to lead in maintaining natural resources conservation for people in perpetuity</p>	<p>See response to letter #2, #9 above,</p> <p>Thank you for your comments</p> <p>Allotment administration and their motorized access needs are handled on a case by case basis based on the allotment area and improvement administration needs.</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
82	12-13-07	Mark Good	<p>Letter Use of vehicles within 300 feet of an open route will create 600 foot swath of disturbance and is inconsistent with Lewis and Clark travel plan.</p>	<p>Refer to response to Letter #9 above.</p>
83	12-13-07	Don Shearer	<p>Letter Support for Alt 2 although more roads need to be closed.</p> <p>More motorized use and users including off road use since he started ranching in 1950's, has resulted in</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>See responses in letter #80 above regarding big game.</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>displacement of big game onto private land, shortage of big game on public land is significant.</p> <p>Recommends closure of all roads to public use in the south of Deep Creek highway area except 583, Ridge Road, Sulphur Bar and a portion of Blacktail.</p> <p>Eliminate 4 wheelers use as they carry weed seed and cause erosion and other damage.</p>	<p>This proposal was not offered during scoping of the Proposed Action and thus has not been developed and analyzed in detail in the EA. It does not meet the purpose and need for this project.</p> <p>We agree that weed seeds can be spread via 4-wheelers. However, we also know that there are many other mechanisms for weed seed spread including full size vehicles, livestock, game animals and humans as well as the wind. The Forest Service has been directed through the 2005 Travel Rule to designate those roads, trails and areas that are open to motor vehicle use on NFS lands, including ATVs.</p>
84	12/13/07	Janis Horan	Letter Support for 124 as a quiet trail	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).
85	12-14-07	Bob Decker	Letter Keep Grassy Mountain crest nonmotorized.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).
86	12-14-07	William A. Hooper	Letter Support for Alt 2, although biologist information on open road densities suggests FS could keep open more roads and trails during hunting season.	With elk populations as they are this year, more open roads would probably have produced a higher harvest. In other years when numbers are lower, higher open road density in the fall would be a problem.
			More roads could be left open for motorcycles and ATVs because they cause less road damage than full size vehicles.	We agree that smaller vehicles have reduced potential for road damage. The EA and alternatives incorporates additional concerns that drive whether or not a change was proposed (see EA, chapters 1 and 2).
87	12-14-07	Sharon D. Hooper	Letter Support for Alt 2.	Thank you for your comment.
88	12-14-07	Carla Harmon	Letter Support for Alt 2.	Thank you for your comment.
89	12-14-07	Montana DEQ , Robert Ray	Letter Limited scope and focus of this project is less effective for watershed health than the systematic Travel Management practices of adjacent forests. Forest should reexamine the decisions in this EA as part of the upcoming Helena Forest plan revision effort so that travel management is part of the Forests' program for achieving water quality standards.	The scope of this project was defined by the portion of the 2005 Travel Rule which requires National Forests to designate those roads, trails and areas that are open to motor vehicle use on NFS lands (EA, page 1). While previous travel planning efforts (North Belts Travel, 2005) included road decommissioning methods for closed roads, this project scope was reduced in consideration of completion timelines and available budgets. Watershed improvement measures are not included as part of the road closure alternatives in the South Belts Travel Plan EA.
			Travel plan should reduce overall road/trail miles to meet minimum forest road system, achieve water quality standards, minimize roads in riparian areas,	Compared to Alternative 1, Alternative 2 would result in the closure of 3.8 miles on sensitive soils and 2.6 miles within 100 feet of perennial streams (EA page 18) which would lead to a reduction in open roads affecting watershed resources. As identified in Appendix A of the

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>reduce road stream crossings, road reclamation, upgrade roads with BMPs and effectively limit OHV use to achieve standards. EA should include a timeline for progress. Proposed route changes lack effective travel analysis and implementation of watershed level decisions on road priorities and route maintenance schedules that will achieve Forest resource objectives.</p> <p>Project scope does not address the need to eliminate deferred maintenance backlog (drainage and culvert replacements). Roads of concern include Duck Creek-Gipsy Cr area, Cabin Creek area, Sulphur Bar area etc.. EA recognizes backlog of road maintenance and neither alternative makes a significant reduction in expected future road maintenance backlog.</p> <p>Roads Analysis (2004) guided changes needed to achieve minimum road system. EA accomplishes this</p>	<p>EA, some of the routes are proposed for closure to address watershed resource issues, effects to Westslope Cutthroat Trout streams or soil and water protection.</p> <p>The hydrology resources analysis in the EA (page 41) identifies that the main benefit to water quality in this decision lies in the fact that a road system will be designated and nonsystem route proliferation can be eliminated. Roads that are designated for year-round closure can eventually be evaluated for road closure methods which may include restoration (Hydrology specialists report). Alternative 2 would result in closure of several segments of road within a 100 foot buffer along stream and segments of roads that cross streams. The information for roads closed within the 100-foot buffer is displayed in Tables 3.10 and 3.12 (EA pages 44-45). The information for roads closed with stream crossings is displayed in Tables 3.11 and 3.13 (EA pages 44-45). Alternative 2 results in closed roads which include 35 stream crossings. The project scope did not include upgrading roads with BMPS beyond typical road maintenance measures as this would require additional ground disturbing activities (EA, page 41).</p> <p>Limiting use of OHVs was not identified as part of the purpose and need for the project, however, designation of the motorized transportation system in Alternative 2 would result in closure of about 34 miles of road to full size vehicles and preclude proliferation of nonsystem routes.</p> <p>This decision closes several segments of road within a 100 foot buffer along streams which serves as a proxy for riparian areas and segments of roads that cross streams. Alternative 2 would close 2.6 miles of roads within the 100 foot buffer along streams. This project would meet State water quality standards for B1 streams for sediment if all reasonable land, soil and water conservation practices are implemented those practices protect present and reasonably anticipated beneficial uses. Since no ground disturbance would result from selection of either of the project alternatives, water quality as an issue was not directly addressed. Any changes to water yield with Alternative 2 are identified to be below any TMDL thresholds.</p> <p>As stated in the EA (page 26) there is a recognized backlog of deferred maintenance on the roads in this area. Also as stated in the EA (pages 21-28) most of the major roads in the area are in fair condition and the forest does not get enough funding to fully maintain all of the roads in the area. The primary purpose of the project is to designate the motorized transportation system and deferred maintenance is outside of the project scope. However, closure of 34 miles of road into maintenance level 1 will help reduce maintenance needs over time.</p> <p>The purpose of the Helena National Forest Roads Analysis (RA) (2004) was to identify a potential minimum road system for the forest. That analysis was developed using a concern</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>in part although there is no indication of the remaining changes needed to achieve the minimum road system. EA needs to include a cost estimate for the South Belts road maintenance backlog and forests' schedule for achieving the Forest Plan road standards as part of the final EA.</p> <p>EA must include measures for instream water quality monitoring to assess watershed trends for streams functioning at risk and include a program that is effective at achieving resources outcomes.</p>	<p>and value rating system developed for each road under Forest Service jurisdiction as described on pages 81-87 of the RA. The concern and value rating system was used as baseline information for the South Belts Travel plan (see page 7 of the EA). Many of the roads proposed to be closed in Alternative 2 were identified in the roads analysis as having low or moderate value, thus moving the Forest towards its potential minimum road system.</p> <p>The RA discusses the deferred maintenance backlog for the Forest and the amount of funding needed to eliminate this backlog (RA pages 88-92). Because this decision is about designating the motorized route system it is beyond the scope of this analysis to go into detail about the maintenance needs for individual routes. The EA did discuss recent efforts in the area to mitigate resource problems caused by the transportation system (page 25). There will be continued efforts in the future to reduce the maintenance backlog as funds become available and as other site specific projects are planned and implemented.</p> <p>Currently the Helena Forest operates water quality monitoring stations on Deep Creek and Sulphur Bar Creek. Stations where data have been collected in the recent past include Cabin Creek, Dry Creek, and Big Camas Creek. In 2001 a comprehensive watershed assessment was conducted on private and federal land in the Dry Creek, Greyson Creek, Sixmile and Dry Hollow drainages following the 2000 Maudlow-Toston fire. Existing water quality data, along with data from additional sites will assist the HNF in a variety of future projects to continue to improve water quality.</p>
90	12-14-07	Jay Lane	<p>Letter</p> <p>1. Agrees with having 'Skidway to Grassy road' (124) open as access for hunting and sightseeing. Its truly a 4x4 route and one of the few in the South Belts. Agrees with 104 open to full size vehicles for 4x4 opportunity and loop.</p> <p>Also wants to retain 4178-A3 as open because it has a great dispersed campsite and good hunting.</p> <p>2. Reconsider having 583-D1, NS42, NS 41 open for hunting due to easy terrain for younger and older people.</p> <p>3. Leave 423-L1 and 423-F1, and NS 82 open as true 4x4 routes. These types of routes have been the most impacted by Alt 2.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>4178-A3 would not be changed from the current condition which is open to motorized use 5/15-12/1.</p> <p>Road 583-D1 was closed at the proposed location in Alternative 2 due to the steep hill climb area (with multiple/parallel ruts) on this route. Roads NS41 and NS42 were closed because of their connection with 583-D1. Closing these routes during general hunting season also enhances the non-motorized recreation experience in this area, particularly for hunting as the Forest has a difficult time holding elk on the National Forest along the eastern portion of Grassy Mountain given the amount of open roads and minimal cover.</p> <p>Road 423-L1 is open from 5/15 to 12/1 to full sized vehicles. Motorized use on road 423-F1 was pulled back to the proposed location in Alternative 2 to reduce motorized vehicle use into the traditionally backcountry Mt. Baldy area. However, the motorized route remains</p>

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				open about 1 mile north of the trailhead in Section 36 to give nonmotorized users a shorter hike to Edith Lakes, and provide for permittee needs. The portion of NS82 that extends from the Duck Creek Microwave tower south was closed in Alt. 2 as it courses into an area recommended for wilderness in the Helena Forest Plan (1986).
91	12-14-2007	Jack Sautter	<p>Telephone</p> <p>His comments are same as on proposed action this spring. He supports keeping 124 open for motorized use and the road going to the finger ridges to the west off Grassy, as well as 104. These routes provide good public land hunting opportunity for older hunters. Hunting has been great with the routes open so why close.</p> <p>Reconsider several other routes to open in Alt 2 for the same reason including Crazy Bastard Hill 583-D1, and others southeast of Grassy Mountain, and the route past the Duck Creek microwave tower site (NS82).</p>	<p>Roads 124 and 104 are identified as open 5/15-12/1 to motorized use in both alternatives. The spur ridge route (extension of 105) west from the microwave tower to the finger ridges in Section 32 at the junction of trails 105 and 123 is closed to motorized use from 5/15-12/1 as a modification to Alternative 2 in the Decision. This route modification is being made to Alternative 2 because it courses into the core area of the Grassy Mountain IRA. See DN and FONSI for more explanation for this change to Alternative 2.</p> <p>Road 583-D1 was closed at the base of the hill in Alt. 2 because of its steep grade and associated soil erosion problems and big game security. Several other roads in the area southeast of Grassy Mountain are proposed for closure in Alternative 2 for the same reasons. The route past the Duck Creek repeater, site NS 82 , was proposed for closure in Alt. 2 because it is within the portion of the Mt. Baldy Roadless Area that is recommended for wilderness in the Helena Forest plan.</p>
92	12-14-07	Patrick Cole	<p>Letter</p> <p>Support for Grassy 124 as nonmotorized</p>	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).
93	12-14-07	Kelly Ingalls, Round Grove Ranch	<p>Comment Sheet</p> <p>Roads they need open to administer their sheep allotment: NS34 and NS37, trail going to Edith Lake in Section 26, roads to the east of Cabin Gulch road to do fence maintenance and construction (NS 95, 423-F4, 423-L1, L3), roads in Sections 1, 2, 3 and 35 that service their sheep camps, roads in sections 36, 1, 13 and 19 for maintenance, roads going into Little Fork of Deep Creek and Castle Fork of Deep Creek are access to their private lands. Travel variances for every time they need to use a closed road for maintenance are cumbersome and they can't always plan ahead, can these be incorporated into allotment permits?</p>	These routes and the need for motorized use on them is fairly exclusive to the administration of the allotment. Motorized use will be determined through individual discussions with the permittee and incorporation of the needed route into the Allotment Management Plan or Annual Operating Instructions. Administrative use is a feature identified as common to both alternatives in the EA on page 13.
94	12-14-07	John Ascheman	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for Alternative 1. More closures puts pressure on the remaining roads and areas that are not closed.</p>	The EA at Chapter 3 Transportation on page 26 identifies that the existing transportation system is more than adequate for the traffic service levels occurring and expected in the future. See also response to letters #2, #12, #25, #80.

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>There is enough roadless already.</p> <p>Road closures for wildlife does not appear to be supported by evidence that most big game reside on private land now.</p> <p>Including NS routes on same plan with legitimate Forest roads is wrong.</p> <p>Use proper harvest techniques and BMPs to protect wsct fisheries, not road closures. This reduces opportunity to harvest dead and dying and insect threatened trees and for wood cutters.</p>	<p>This project does not include creation of roadless areas as part of the purpose and need. Refer to EA pages 1-5.</p> <p>Displacement of elk onto private land is a frequent phenomenon in the Big Belt Range due to its elongate and narrow public land configuration. In recent years, displacement has been generated primarily by weather (usually snow depth), changes in vegetation (from livestock grazing, fire, hot summers, etc.), hunter activity, and motorized recreation. However, most elk are up on the forest from mid spring through mid fall in areas away from human activity—and a number of them remain through the hunting season as long as snow depths allow. Opening up closed road and trail systems would displace even more elk to private lands.</p> <p>The 2005 Travel Rule identifies that the Forest Service must work with accurate route inventories to the extent practicable as these routes may be integral to a functioning transportation system. Sometimes NS routes reflect data errors for routes that have been in existence for many years but failed to show up during an inventory.</p> <p>There are few route miles identified for closure in Alternative 2 for westslope cutthroat trout. These include a portion of road 1810 that crosses upper Duck Creek and a group of short, nonsystem routes on upper Ray Creek in Section 32. The Forest Service has administrative flexibility to temporarily open closed routes to access good woodcutting areas for the public via permit.</p>
95	12-14-07	<p>Montana Wilderness Association, Wild Divide Chapter (Mike Brown)</p> <p>Letter attached to email from John Gatchell</p>	<p>Letter Boulder Baldy(Camas Creek)/ IRA– Support for Alt 2.</p> <p>Suggest improvements to trailhead and signs include stockramp.</p> <p>Mt. Baldy IRA/recommended wilderness – Move the parking area to the southern location in Section 36 where 423-F1 intersects with 423-F2. Proposed Alt 2 location will be difficult to enforce. Include stockramps, signs.</p> <p>Close NS82 at Duck Creek pass camp area instead of at Microwave tower.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>This scope of this project addresses opening or closing travel routes for motorized vehicle use as indicated in Chapter 1 of the EA under Purpose and Need For Action. Additional improvements, such as stock ramps, can be addressed later in a separate analysis and the Forest Service appreciates the support of volunteer partners. Appropriate signs would be installed as part of travel plan implementation.</p> <p>See response to #35 and #45 above.</p> <p>Recurring motorized access to repair and maintain electronic site results in vehicle tracks that would be seen by others. Microwave tower is outside IRA. This route reduces the need for access special use permit, provides a 4x4 motorized opportunity.</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>Grassy Mountain IRA – Convert 124 to a nonmotorized trail. 124 was formerly a single track trail as shown on the map attached to comments.</p> <p>Convert 104 to a nonmotorized trail.</p> <p>Utilize 583 instead of 124 as they are parallel routes and 583 is more established. 124 was identified as closed in the 2003 proposed action for the South Belts during that travel planning effort.</p> <p>Florida based developer is advertising numerous lots near Grassy Mountain for sale which will increase pressure on Grassy Mountain area.</p> <p>Open ridgetop of Grassy will result in off route violations.</p> <p>300 foot use on either side of an open road will result in impacts along a wider area</p> <p>Drivers utilizing route 124 will reduce hunting opportunity</p>	<p>See also response to letter #9, #35 and #45 above. Based on Forest records, Route 124 has not been included in any area or route closure orders or in area closures on transportation maps until issuance of the 1999 South Belts Winter Travel DN and FONSI where it was closed 12/1-5/15 for wildlife winter range and to retain roadless integrity. Route 124 was designated in these early travel maps as a motorized trail open to vehicles 40 inches or less in width, then 48 inches or less, however, this motorized trail was located within an area open to motorized vehicle use until the 2001 OHV decision.</p> <p>See response above and response to #45 above.</p> <p>See response to #9, #35 and #45 above. This effort was initiated as a new travel planning project under the 2005 Travel Rule with a compressed timeframe and reduced budgets. The 2003 effort was rescinded through publication of a notice in the Federal Register in June, 2007. The development of the Proposed Action was focused on needed changes to the motorized transportation system. Route 124 was identified as an open road on the Proposed Action and map of March, 2007. We received one comment in support of 124 as a road route and one comment concerned about the proposed ATV portion of the route south of the microwave tower.</p> <p>The Grassy Mountain subdivision by Blue-Green Corporation/Yellowstone Basin Properties was approved by the Meagher County Commission in 1995. Since that time approximately 25 year round or part year residences have been constructed. There have been no new subdivision proposals submitted to the Commission for this area (Meagher County Commission, personal communication with Beth Ihle, January 2008)</p> <p>Part of the purpose of this travel plan is designation of routes and preparation of a simpler map to provide for better understanding and compliance. Observations following implementation measures for Elkhorn and North Belts Travel Plans is that implementation measures and free maps are effective in reducing off route incursions and increasing overall compliance. See also response to #9 above.</p> <p>See also response to #9 above. 2005 travel rule is prescriptive with off route use and different from the language of North Belts travel plan. Routes to dispersed campsites are designated with this project and will be incorporated into the MVUM map. There are no identified campsites in these ridgetop areas of Grassy Mountain, thus, no designated routes to campsites.</p> <p>Hunting opportunity is a subjective concept depending on individual hunters and their preferences. Elk vulnerability during hunting season under Helena Forest Plan standards (1986) is measured relative to hiding cover and open road densities. The Battle Mountain Elk Analysis Area, which is located in the Grassy Mountain area, would see a modest</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>Grassy Mountain is a small but critical wildlife corridor link between the Bridgers, Gallatin and Big Belts.</p> <p>MWA acres for Grassy Mountain IRA are less than Forest Service acres for Grassy Mountain.</p>	<p>decrease in open road density (18% decrease) in Alternative 2 . See also responses to #2, #94, and #96.</p> <p>Within the Big Belts mountain range, there was an inherently fragmented landscape of alternating grasslands and forest with riparian areas serving as primary migration corridors. While there is no empirical evidence to support the concept of corridors, many conceptual models have been built to project connectivity across landscapes. Given that this is an open/closed decision, on the large scale there is no difference in the ability of the landscape to provide travel corridors. Thus, wildlife corridors are discussed in the Wildlife Specialists Report in relation to secure areas.</p> <p>FS acres for the Grassy Mountain IRA identified in the Helena Forest Plan (6,453 acres) are based on mapping done in the early 1980's without the benefit of GIS. The EA identifies 7,041 acres, including private land, which is accounted for in the increased accuracy of GIS (EA, Appendix C).</p>
96	12-14-07	Eldon O'Neil	<p>Letter Older user doesn't see need to keep 124 motorized.</p> <p>Wildlife security more important as hunting equipment and technology changes.</p> <p>ATV tracks on winter range areas, vandalism is out of control.</p>	<p>See response to Letter #9, #35, #95 above.</p> <p>See also response to #95 above. Route 124 traverses the Battle Mountain elk herd unit, which under Alt. 2 maintains summer habitat effectiveness well above the desired 50% level. Hunting season elk security is well below the target level of 30% and is 13% in Alternative 1 and 16% in Alternative 2. Alternative 2 slightly improves the situation over Alternative 1 for elk security (EA, page 66) and reduces the open road density of this area by about 18% (EA, page 67). Whether the closures incorporated into Alternative 2 would contribute meaningfully to MFWP elk objectives remains to be seen. See also response to letter # 2, #25 above.</p> <p>Law enforcement officials with the Forest Service generally note that there is a certain level of vandalism at any use level. One of the stated purposes of this travel planning process is to result in a simpler, more enforceable travel plan map to reduce the inadvertent violations.</p>
97	12-14-07	Jeff Van Tine	<p>Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs. Cross country skiers patronize local Townsend businesses. Long time supporter and user of the nonmotorized trails in Skidway and Grassy area.</p> <p>There used to be a locked gate and sign on the road to the Grassy Microwave tower and when the lock disappeared, motorized use started occurring. Need to relock the gate.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>The road to the Grassy Mountain microwave tower used to have a locked gate where it crossed private land. This occurred prior to the current landowner who has owned the property since the mid 1990's and has not maintained a locked gate. Based on a search of decision documents and the Special use permit file for the microwave tower, this road has</p>

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			<p>Used to be Kelly humps on temp timber roads. These have also disappeared and motorized uses going on these routes. Use something substantial to close roads like big rocks to go with signs.</p> <p>Klondike jeep trail used to be overgrown and unrecognizable. Need to close Klondike pass to motorized use.</p> <p>Keep summer use on Grassy consistent with winter use-nonmotorized-manage it as a roadless area.</p>	<p>not been closed to public motorized use in the past. See also response to Letter # 9, #95, #35 above.</p> <p>A separate NEPA analysis and public involvement would be required to use any types of closures other than gates or signs.</p> <p>The Klondike jeep trail has been and currently is an unimproved 4x4 route that provides a desirable experience for 4x4 enthusiasts. No resources concerns were identified with this route during scoping of the Proposed Action and development of the alternatives, thus it was not proposed to be changed. In general, Alternative 2 greatly reduces the amount of open, motorized routes in the Klondike Pass area, particularly in Section 17, which was recently acquired by the Forest Service through a land exchange.</p> <p>See responses to Letter # 9, #95 above.</p>
98	12-14-07	Lee Travis	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for 124 as quiet trail.</p> <p>Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
99	12-14-07	Bob Allen	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for maintaining mountain bike opportunity in South Belts</p> <p>Support for retaining mountain bike use in Mt. Edith/Baldy area.</p>	<p>See response to #22 above.</p>
100	12-14-07	Corey Biggers	<p>Email</p> <p>Concern about recommending wilderness in Mt. Edith area. Need to look at alternative designations for these areas that are in limbo that provides protection from motorized use and allows for bicyclists.</p> <p>Provided a table of land preservation designations. Suggests recommended wilderness that is not resolved be considered "National Protection Area" or "National Conservation Area" which would allow for bicycle use (description of use in table).</p>	<p>See response to letters #22 and #45 above.</p> <p>Designation of land use allocations is outside the scope of this project which is described in Chapter 1 of the EA.</p>
101	12-14-07	Kerry Pottruff	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for Alternative 1 though choices are limited. Does not support wilderness in this area.</p> <p>Disagrees with roads left open to provide access only</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>We generally agree. This travel planning project included a review of the routes through</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>to private land. The public should not provide landowner access where no reciprocity from the landowner is given.</p> <p>Consider reopening Baldy Face road for woodcutters and hunting.</p>	<p>private land where a public access was desirable and follow-up discussions with those landowners prior to development of Alternative 2. Where agreement with a landowner for public use could not be reached, we did not show that route on Alternative 2. Some routes to private land were identified to remain open if they also provided a public benefit and some were identified as closed in Alternative 2 where they did not provide a public benefit.</p> <p>The interdisciplinary team discussed the possibility of reopening the Baldy Face road in whole or part as part of the development of the proposed action for this project. This road closure appears to have public support as numerous camps are found near the road during bow season and during the summer so no change was proposed.</p>
102	12-14-07	Peter Funk	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for 124 as quiet trail.</p> <p>Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
103	12-14-07	Charles Doeny	<p>Letter</p> <p>Support for 124 as quiet trail.</p> <p>Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
104	12-14-07	Franklin Slifka	<p>Letter</p> <p>Support for 124 as quiet trail.</p> <p>Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
105	12-14-07	Bill Bucher	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for 124 as quiet trail.</p> <p>Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
106	12-14-07	Ed Medej	<p>Email</p> <p>Alt 2 will provide for Skidway Campground becoming a racetrack. ATV users take over quiet campgrounds and make them noisy. E.G. Cave Gulch area and other campgrounds on HNF.</p>	<p>See response to letter # 9 above. Road 124 has been motorized for many years and the stated impact at Skidway Campground has not occurred. Monitoring of camping use of Skidway Campground has shown to be very light.</p>
107	12-14-07	Andy Kukolax	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for 124 as quiet trail.</p> <p>Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
108	12-14-07	George Parisot	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for 124 as quiet trail.</p> <p>Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
109	12-14-07	Joan/Don Bishop	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for 124 as quiet trail.</p> <p>Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
110	12-14-07	Janet Tatz	<p>Email</p> <p>Support for 124 as quiet trail.</p> <p>Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).</p> <p>Thank you for your comment.</p>

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
111	12-14-07	David Scrimm	Email Keep Grassy mountain 124 quiet as an opportunity for older hikers to have a quiet place that is accessible to them.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124).
112	12-14-07	Kathy and Mike Jeffords	Email Enjoy OHV riding and are looking for rides up to 70 miles. Short rides are not worth traveling long distances with their equipment. Unreasonable to close roads and crowd these uses. Willing to share use with hikers. Responsible riders do not leave the problems described by others.	Loop travel opportunities were identified in each alternative as indicated in the recreation section of the EA. These loops generally include full size vehicle routes as there are no constructed motorized trails in this travel area. The physical situation with the South Belts area precludes 70 miles of motorized trails unless extensive construction programs were to be initiated. Most of the routes in this area were constructed for timber access or are unimproved allotment management roads used by full size vehicles. Though the South Belts area may not meet your needs for longer ATV loops, there are other places you can go that have more of an emphasis on ATV use, such as the North Belts area.
113	12-14-07	Jan Novy	Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.	See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.

-----THE FOLLOWING LETTERS WERE RECEIVED AFTER THE DUE DATE-----

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
114	12-15-07	David Rusoff	Email Support overall for Alt 2. Support for eliminating the Multiple Use Alternative.  Close all roads in IRAs to motorized use.  Do not designate for motorized use nonsystem routes other than those that access dispersed campsites and those that don't unreasonably damage forest resources.  Don't allow motorized travel on constructed foot 'trails'.	Thank you for your comments.  A portion of the open motorized routes within the three IRA's in this project area are proposed closed in Alternative 2. Complete removal of roads in IRA's was not part of the purpose and need or stated scope of this project (See EA, Chapter 1). Thus, no alternative was developed, analyzed or scoped that incorporates this concept.  Similar to the response to roads in IRAs above, we did not develop, analyze or scope an alternative that included closure of the nonsystem routes as described in the comment. Many NS routes were identified as access to private property, access to the power line towers near Greyson Creek, or roads GIS layer omissions. For example, the road to the Gipsy Lake Day Use Area is still described in the Forest roads GIS layer as an NS route even though it was evaluated and a decision made many years ago.  Alternative 2 does not include designation of motorized travel on constructed foot trails with the exception of a portion of trail 118 (1.7 miles) between Duck Creek Pass and the Stovecamp trailhead that is proposed to be a motorcycle trail. This trail segment would not be closed to nonmotorized uses.

#	Date	Name	Comment	Comment Response
			<p>Travel plans should emphasize the value of quiet areas and displacement of nonmotorized recreationists by off road motor vehicle traffic.</p> <p>Motorized access violates spirit of fair chase in hunting.</p> <p>Travel planning needs to envision and be responsive to the projected increase in motorized users and regulate so that forest resources are protected.</p> <p>Concerned about elimination of spring breakup closure. Users don't pay attention to soft roads and use them anyway. Please reconsider this closure.</p>	<p>This travel planning effort was initiated in response to the increased motorized recreational activity nation wide and its current and anticipated effects.</p> <p>Thank you for your comment. Ethical hunting requires hunters to obey the laws that govern hunting itself and access game areas. One of the stated purposes of this travel plan (EA, Chapter 1) is to provide for less complex maps so that inadvertent travel violations are minimized.</p> <p>The purpose and need for this project is described in the EA in Chapter 1.</p> <p>Spring break-up closures will still occur as necessary each year via locking gates during soft road conditions, however, the schedule for closures will be flexible to provide for expanded use during dry years.</p>
115	12-16-07	Jerry Grebenec	<p>Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p> <p>FWP area biologist has indicated that if 124 is motorized, elk will be displaced onto private lands.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>See also response to #95, 96 above. Displacement of elk onto private land is a frequent phenomenon in the Big Belt Range. In recent years, this displacement has been generated primarily by weather (usually snow depth), changes in vegetation (from livestock grazing, fire, etc.), hunter activity, and motorized recreation. So, it may be true that non-motorized status for Route #124 would retain more elk on the Forest. But, at present we have no comprehensive data as to how many elk frequent this area and to what degree they are being displaced by vehicle traffic along this route. Displacement probably occurs in summer—preventing elk from frequenting the upper reaches of Grassy Mountain. But during the hunting season, elk are unlikely to be there whether Route #124 is motorized or not. Hunters use the #124 corridor as a viewing area, and then proceed on foot downslope to where the elk are likely to be.</p>
116	12-16-07	Eric Strub	<p>Email Support for 124 as quiet trail. Support for Alt2 for Camas and Mt. Baldy IRAs.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.</p>
117	12/18/07	Will Boland	<p>Email Motorized use on Grassy Mountain is established Support for 124 as a quiet trail.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.</p>
118	12/19/07	LeRoy H. Schramm	<p>Email Support for 124 as a quiet trail.</p>	<p>See response to comment letters #9, #95 (Grassy 124). Thank you for your comment.</p>