338 Cooper Lane
Hamilton, MT 59840

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JUL 25 2007

Ravalli County Commissioners

July 20, 2007

County Commissioners
Ravalli County Commissioner's Office
215 S. 4th St.
Hamilton, MT. 59840

RE: Lost Horse Road Rock Quarry

Dear Commissioners:

I would like to share some thoughts on the proposed re-opening of the rock quarry on Lost Horse. The situation in Lost Horse is far different than it was when the quarry was last operated. The following are some of my concerns:

The road is narrow and has substantial traffic year-round from a whole variety of visitors and residents. Gravel trucks are big, heavy and hard to stop. I shudder at the specter of them careening down the road. I think the potential for a very serious accident is high. Gravel hauling would certainly change the experience of driving, biking, or walking along the road in terms of safety and feel. I also think the trucks would damage the road. I doubt if this cost has been factored into the analysis. I know UPS trucks have damaged roads in my area and they are far lighter than gravel trucks.

I often take my 88 year old Mother up Lost Horse on a drive. I hike there in the shoulder seasons of spring and fall and go there skiing in the winter. I know many people haul horse trailers on the road to access Coyote Coulee. It is a favorite of bicyclists. Of course, traffic is especially heavy during hunting season when the potential is high for slick spots. Additionally, Lost Horse is a major access to one of the premiere wildernesses in the nation. I think mining and hauling would degrade these activities and not provide the feeling the FS has worked so hard to maintain in that drainage.

The feel in the vicinity of the quarry would change drastically. It does not have an "industrial" feel to it now. Wildlife, including nesting raptors would be disturbed and displaced. Camping, hunting, and hiking nearby would all be impacted by noise, dust and congestion. There is no way someone would want to climb in the quarry or recreate in any way in the vicinity with crushing machines and trucks carrying on their activities. I know enough about climbing to recognize that the rock is excellent and the approach to the climbs unusually short. The area is accessible without making a major all day sojourn. I also know that the ticks in the spring, when everyone is anxious to get out, are far fewer in Lost Horse than they are in other climbing areas in Blodgett or Mill Creek.

All and all, taking a long term perspective, I don't think it's worth jeopardizing safety, losing or diminishing a broad spectrum of recreation opportunities, impacting wildlife and a number of private residents just for some "inexpensive" high quality gravel.

After all the effort that has gone into improving and maintaining a quality experience in the Lost Horse drainage, I don't think this project makes sense. This project is the classic case of a short-term, narrow perspective. There are other places to get gravel. Please do not compromise so much for so many on the questionable premise that it might save a bit of money. Money can't buy what Lost Horse has.

Sincerely,

Judith Fraser

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