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Ravalli County Commissioners

Molly Kohler
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Ravalli County Commissioners

I am writing to express my concern for the re-opening of the Lost Horse Quarry. I am a resident of Hamilton, an educator at Hamilton Middle School, a member of the climbing community, an avid outdoor enthusiast as well as a horse-back rider. I use Lost Horse recreation area to fish, hike, ride, climb, cross-country ski, and camp on a weekly to bi-weekly basis year around. I am opposed to the re-opening of the quarry for the many reasons that will be outlined in this letter.

First, my concern is for the aesthetics value of Lost Horse. It is apparent that there will be irrevocable damage that will result from the re-opening of the quarry. I appreciate the beauty and tranquility of visiting the canyon and fear that the sight and sound of rock-crushers, large trucks and other equipment will interfere with the enjoyment of users. There will be damage that will never be reversed.

Second, I am concerned for the safety of the environment after re-opening the quarry. If one is to carefully look at the proposal, it would become apparent that the quarry will interfere with creek. Unfortunately, the quarry will actually go to the level of the stream undoubtedly resulting in contamination. Clearly, this proposal has not been carefully examined and therefore cannot be considered as a serious non-damaging endeavor.

Next, I feel concerned for the safety of the environment. Upon tedious research, I find no information stating that quarrying beneath a cliff used for rock-climbing is safe. There has been no study done to show the affects of the quarry on the rocks above. I fear that the vibrations alone will cause dangerous rock-fall for climbers and quarry workers alike. Additionally, I worry that taking the rock from below may result in unstable cliffs above. I have climbed in Lost Horse and know that, although the rock faces used for climbing are solid and safe, the rock above tends to be loose and fragile. I can only imagine the amount of rock-fall that may occur during and after quarrying from the loose rock above. I state with confidence that if the quarry is to re-open, I will never feel that is it safe to climb there again.

Additionally, I would like to remind the county commissioners of the funds that climbers in the area are attempting to secure. These funds would be used to restore much of the damage that has been done to the Lost Horse area by over-use. The funds would be used to install signs, outhouses, dumpsters, restore trails to preserve plants, inform users of the animals in the area and overall improve the condition and thus experience of Lost Horse. The climbers and likely any member of the outdoor community will be more that happy to donate time and even money beyond the funds to create an area that will be enjoyed by users for decades to come. It is true that some of the nature has been changed over the years by use, but with the help of the members of the outdoor community, and your help by saying "no" to the quarry, we can work together as a community to restore and preserve this chunk of paradise for generations.

Please consider the concerns of all the users of the Lost Horse area. We stand together to oppose this poorly designed project. We live in Montana for its beauty and access to the outdoors. As the population grows, access becomes more and more difficult. Please take part in the decision not only to stop this quarry, but ensure the future of Lost Horse as a well-maintained recreation area.

With Respect,
Molly Kohler