

**Back Country Horsemen of Montana  
P.O. Box 4864 Butte, MT 59701**

Jan. 24, 2009

Montana Congressional Delegation

Sen. Jon Tester

Sen. Max Baucus

Rep. Dennis Rehberg

Dear Sirs,

The Back Country Horsemen of Montana wishes to express our support for the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project proposed by a coalition of Montana conservation, timber, small business, and outdoor groups. We encourage you to pass legislation enacting this well-balanced pilot plan to actively manage forests in the Seeley Lake Ranger District, designate 87,000 acres of wilderness in the Bob Marshall country, and build a co-generation plant at Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake.

The Back Country Horsemen of Montana is part of the Back Country Horsemen of America and consists of 17 chapters throughout the state. Our mission is to perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in Montana's back country and wilderness; to work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use; to assist various agencies responsible for the maintenance and management of public lands; to educate, encourage, and solicit active participation in the wise and sustained use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public, commensurate with our heritage; and to foster and encourage formation of new Back Country Horsemen organizations.

The Back Country Horsemen of Montana has reviewed and discussed the various components of the proposal. The Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project would expand stewardship funding to actively manage the forest, restore watersheds and ecosystems, and improve fish and wildlife habitat. It would also assist in developing a co-generation plant to utilize woody fuels from the thinned forests. A final and key component is the designation of additional wilderness lands.

The goals of this project are very much in line with our mission. By permanently protecting lands that have been recommended wilderness for the past 25 years, the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project will ensure that these lands remain open to recreational stock use. Further, we believe this project will give the Seeley Lake Ranger District and the community of Seeley Lake the resources it needs to manage its forests appropriately. Finally, the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project would stimulate the economy in a critical time of need by creating 50 jobs while simultaneously providing a market for biomass that is currently burned in the field.

Thank you for your consideration of this important pilot project and the potential legislation that would implement it. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [staghornranch@gmail.com](mailto:staghornranch@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Charlie O'Leary, Chairman, Back Country Horsemen of Montana