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To Montana Congressional Delegation
through Blackfoot Stewardship Work Group
c/o Tina Bernd-Cohen
729 Power Street
Helena, MT 59601

March 29, 2007

Montana Outfitters and Guides write to express our strong support for the Blackfoot Landscape Stewardship Pilot Project proposed by a coalition of Montana conservation, timber, small business and outdoor groups.

We hope Montana's congressional delegation will agree to co-sponsor legislation to enact this well-balanced pilot plan for the Seeley Lake Ranger District.

The Blackfoot Stewardship Pilot Project proposes to designate wilderness tracts to be included in the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat and Mission Mountains Wilderness. It will also expand stewardship funding to restore watersheds, trout and wildlife habitat, maintain trails and other access, and assist in developing a co-gen plant to utilize and reduce small fuels.

For generations, family-owned outfitting businesses and guest ranches have relied on Monture as an essential, landscape component of Montana's famed Bob Marshall Country ("the Bob") to provide the big Montana wilderness experience that keeps guests coming back.

Monture Creek is true western wilderness, traversed by packstrings, wranglers, hikers and hunters on 110 miles of traditional pack trails including eight major passes and trail portals into the Bob Marshall-Scapegoat Wilderness ("the Bob"). The entire area is dotted with waterfalls, streams and glacial lakes and provides unsurpassed fishing, hunting and wildlife habitats.

Travel and tourism is one of Montana's fastest-growing economic sectors. Research by the Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation shows that wilderness and wildland-based activities account for nearly half of all income produced by non-resident travel, generating \$736 million dollars annually in Montana communities.¹ This income sustains rural businesses in Seeley Lake, Ovando and throughout the Blackfoot Valley.

¹ Moisey and Yuan, "Economic Significance of Wildland-Attracted Visitors to Montana," May 1991, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, University of Montana School of Forestry

Our livelihood, the jobs and revenue we produce are directly dependent on maintaining the integrity of unspoiled backcountry areas such as Monture, North Fork Blackfoot and Grizzly Basin in their untrammelled wilderness condition.

The pilot project also benefits winter recreation which is vital to local Blackfoot businesses. The project would preserve existing snowmobile trails on the Seeley Lake Ranger District while adding 2000 acres in Lake Creek for winter snowmobiling. At the same time MOGA believes wilderness tracts such as Monture are ideal locations for guiding backcountry ski, snowboard, snowshoe and dogsled trips.

The Blackfoot Pilot Project is essential to the future of our businesses and beneficial to neighbors who log ranch or work in the mill. As stakeholders in national forest recreation, Montana's outfitters and guides wholeheartedly endorse this proposal.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mac Minard', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mac Minard, Executive Director