



Outfitting and Guest Ranch

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April 5, 2007

*Representative Dennis Rehberg
516 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515*

Dear Representative Rehberg,

I am writing this letter to thank you for your hard work on behalf of Montana - and ask for your continued support of our stewardship efforts in the Blackfoot and Swan Valleys of western Montana. Your success to date in directing Forest Legacy along with Land and Water Conservation funds to our valley has enabled us to prevent a large-scale development of corporate timberland into ranchettes and "trophy homes". Because of your efforts we still have the opportunity to continue a diverse and sustainable rural economy based on forest products, agriculture/ranching and tourism.

*We are also writing you 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, expand stewardship funding to restore watersheds, trout and wildlife habitat, maintain trails and other recreation access, and assist in developing a co-gen plant to utilize and reduce small fuels.

For nearly 50 years our family-owned guest ranch and outfitting business has 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 our 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. This income sustains rural businesses in Seeley Lake, Ovando and throughout the Blackfoot Valley.

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

The pilot project also benefits winter recreation. As a snowmobile tour operator, this is vital to us as well as other 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.

The Blackfoot Pilot Project is essential to the future of our business and beneficial to our neighbors who log, ranch, or work in the mill. These lands include significant economic and natural resource values that are important elements of our community. As stakeholders in national forest recreation, our family-owned business wholeheartedly endorses this proposal.

Thank you again for your support in helping to retain our rural way of life in the Blackfoot/Clearwater River Valley.

Sincerely,

Jack Rich

Established 1958
Over 45 years in the Blackfoot River Valley