# Helena - Lewis and Clark National Forest
# Plan Revision

**Resource Management Area Community Workshops**
**February/March 2016**
***Summary Report***

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# Overview

Nine public workshops were held in communities near the Helena - Lewis and Clark National Forest (HLC) in February and March 2016. Workshops were conducted in Townsend, White Sulphur Springs, Harlowton, Stanford, Great Falls, Browning, Choteau, Lincoln, and Helena. Approximately 329 people participated in the workshops.

Workshop goals were: (1) to share information about the current status of the revision process; (2) to solicit public input and feedback on the current stage of the planning process, focused on the suitability of specific geographic areas for particular uses or activities; (3) to provide an opportunity for the public to share their ideas with the Forest Service and with one another; and 4) to provide information about how to stay involved throughout the planning process.

A general overview of the information shared by the HLC at all 9 workshops is provided below, followed by a brief summary of the public comments received from each of the communities where they were conducted. This information is followed by community-specific descriptions that provide additional detail about the public comments received.

This summary captures what was said at the nine community workshops and does not represent the views of all citizens, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Rather, it reflects the specific issues, concerns, and interests of those who participated in the workshops. Some items heard from the public may be out of the scope of the HLC forest plan revision process. These concerns have been captured and passed on to the appropriate Forest Service (FS) staff.

This summary report was prepared by the Center for Natural Resources & Environmental Policy at the University of Montana (Center), which is providing facilitation and meeting management services for the HLC plan revision team. The Center is responsible for any errors or omissions in the report. Comments and corrections should be directed to Shawn Johnson at shawn.johnson@umontana.edu.

## *Information Shared*

<u>Where are we in the forest plan revision process?</u>

Erin Swiader, HLC Forest Plan Revision (FPR) Team Leader brought the public up to date on the current status of the forest plan revision process, beginning with a description of the forest plan as the "view from 30,000 feet." The plan provides guidance for forest management and activities for the next 10-30 years.

A forestwide assessment was released by the HLC in March of 2015. It describes current conditions and trends in 15 resource areas and it provides the foundation for understanding the current state of the forest resources. The assessment set the stage for the "What needs to change?" discussions that were held at ten community workshops in the late summer of 2015. The assessment can be found online at:
http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/helena/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprd3832458&width=full

Following the Assessment, a Draft Need to Change document was prepared and shared with the public. The document describes the need to change the existing forest plans and serves as a link between the assessment and the initial development of the revised forest plan. It identifies the current plan direction that needs to be revised to address the conditions, trends, and risks evident from the assessment analysis. The preliminary Need to Change document helps define the proposed action, purpose and need, and decision framework for the environmental analysis related to the planning process. It also establishes the framework for development of the plan. The Forest held a series of ten community workshops to solicit public input about "What needs to change" from the existing 1986 forest plan. A report of the Need to Change workshops can be found online at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd476090.pdf

The next step in the forest planning process was to determine the desired conditions forestwide and by geographic area (GA). A desired condition is a description of the specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources should be directed. A draft Desired Conditions (DC) document was prepared in November 2015. DCs essentially set forth the desired landscape of the future.

Ten public workshops were held in communities to solicit public input and feedback on desired conditions for the forest and its resources. A report of the Draft Desired Conditions workshops can be found online at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd492771.pdf

Two subjects will not be addressed in the forest plan revision process: travel planning and Inventory Roadless Area (IRA) boundaries. Travel planning has been accomplished within the HLC over the past several years. IRA boundaries will not change because the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule does not provide for boundary adjustment during the plan revision process.

How is public input used and how will it inform the next step and the overall plan development?

This set of public meetings invited the public to look at specific GAs, beginning with the GAs in closest proximity to each community workshop, and to provide input on use and desired management activities of the resources there. All feedback will be compiled, carefully reviewed by the forest staff, and used to inform the next steps in the forest planning process and overall plan development.

What specific planning information is being shared at these workshops?

Two processes required as part of the forest plan revision process were recently completed, and these were a focus for this series of workshops. These processes included: (1) identification of lands that may be suited for wilderness (the first step of a four-step wilderness evaluation required by planning regulations described in the following section); and (2) identification of lands that may be suitable for timber production. Both of these inventories represent the first step in a multi-step process that will eventually help inform a draft forest plan. Not all lands identified in these inventories will move forward through the process for further consideration.

Additional information on each of these topics was provided at the workshop to help orient participants, as provided below:

*Lands That May be Suitable for Wilderness*

Elizabeth Casselli, HLC Recreation Specialist for the Forest Plan Revision Team, highlighted that the 2012 Planning Rule directs the Forest Service during plan revision to "identify and evaluate lands that may be suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and to determine whether to recommend any such lands for wilderness designation." Lands that make it through the process are identified as "recommended wilderness" in the revised forest plan.

The process of making a determination to recommend wilderness involves four steps: inventory, evaluation, analysis, and recommendation. The HLC recently completed the first step: a wilderness inventory of qualified lands following criteria in the Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 Ch.70. Not all lands identified in the wilderness inventory will make it through the process to become recommended wilderness. The draft Wilderness Inventory can be found online at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd490509.pdf Public comments on the Wilderness Inventory were solicited through March 11, 2016.

The results of the wilderness inventory were shown on Geographic System (GIS) maps as one area of focus during the workshops. Workshop participants were asked to consider and give feedback in response to three questions regarding the inventory:

1. Which areas on a given GA map provide the best opportunities for wilderness and why?
2. Which areas on a given GA map do not provide the best opportunities for wilderness and why?
3. Which other uses should be considered, for example special recreation areas, geologically significant areas, cultural sites of special importance, etc.

The second step in wilderness identification is the evaluation step, in which the HLC evaluates the wilderness characteristics of lands in the inventory based on criteria in the 1964 Wilderness Act. Wilderness evaluation will be included as part of the proposed action, scheduled to be released to the public in the fall of 2016.

In the third step, analysis, the Forest Supervisor considers the areas evaluated and determines which areas to further analyze in alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Fourth, the Forest Supervisor decides which areas, if any, to recommend for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This decision will be included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision. Ultimately, Congress makes the final decision for wilderness designation.

*Lands That May be Suitable for Timber Production*

Amanda Milburn, Vegetation Specialist for the Forest Plan Revision team, provided additional information about lands that may be suitable for timber production to help orient participants to the maps to be used in small working groups.

The identification of lands as suitable for *timber production* (i.e. the purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of trees) involved several steps. The first step was preliminary designation to identify lands that *may be suited* based on legal and technical factors. Vegetation and soils maps were also utilized to show where timber could be produced.

If an area is deemed suitable for timber production it doesn't mean that every acre will necessarily be managed with intensive harvest. The designation of "suitable for timber production" simply means that the land is legally available, capable of growing timber, and managing for timber production is consistent with the objectives for the area. Conversely, *timber harvest* (i.e. the removal of trees for multiple-use purposes) may occur in some areas unsuitable for timber production to meet other resource objectives, including fuels reduction.

The results of the Timber Suitability identification were shown on Geographic System (GIS) maps as one area of focus during the workshops. Workshop participants were asked to consider and give feedback regarding which areas are or are not well suited for timber production.

## *Summary of Public Comment Received*

Workshop participants shared a wide variety of thoughts regarding wilderness, timber suitability, and other resource concerns/ideas. One distinguishing feature of this series of workshops was that individual participants were able to identify specific geographic areas of interest or concern to them. These areas were "mapped" electronically as polygons using a participatory mapping tool and saved as a part of the record of public feedback. Throughout the nine workshops, 386 polygons – and the associated comment, concern, or recommendation – were identified and captured.

This document provides a high-level summary of the comments received in each community as areas were being mapped and also provides a snapshot of the actual comments that were made. It provides a high-level overview of public comment data solicited in response to two draft inventories required as part of the forest plan revision process: 1) wilderness inventory—identification of lands that may be suited for wilderness; and 2)identification of lands that may be suited for timber production . In addition, this document provides summary details regarding key topics of interest in public comments received by Geographic Area (GA).

Public comments were received through several avenues: 45% were from 9 community workshops conducted in the HLC during February and March 2016. During that same period, 40% of the comments were received as emails; 12% were received via the online Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool (TPCMT); and 3% came by postal mail. In total, more than 1300 people submitted comments expressing their interests and concerns for forest resource management direction in the HLC.

## *Community Workshops Synopsis by Location*

This summary captures what was said at the nine community workshops and does not represent the views of all citizens, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Rather, it reflects the specific issues and concerns of those who participated in the workshops. Some of the issues discussed at the workshops are outside the scope of the HLC forest plan revision process. In those instances, participants' interests and concerns have been shared with the appropriate Forest Service specialist.

The following table displays the locations of the meetings, the GAs that were primarily discussed at those meetings, the number of attendees, and the key issues that were brought forward.

| Location, Date, & Focal GAs | Number in Attendance | Key Issues |
|---|---|---|
| Townsend, Feb. 29, 2016<br>• Big Belts<br>• Elkhorns<br>• Little Belts | 20 | • Wilderness— both for it and against<br>• Commercial timber harvest for restoration<br>• Sustain the Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) in the Elkhorns, and prepare it for congressional authorization<br>• Sustain existing motorized uses<br>• Sustain existing grazing permits<br>• Ensure access for fire protection on private and public lands<br>• Retain management flexibility |
| White Sulphur Springs, Feb. 29, 2016<br>• Big & Little Belts<br>• Castles<br>• Crazies<br>• Snowies | 23 | • Wilderness— both for and against<br>• Timber production and harvest<br>• Sustain current recreational use, especially snowmobiles and biking, and access<br>• Fuels management/fire protection in the Wildland Urban Interface and elsewhere<br>• Potential for recreational airstrip in Little Belts<br>• Mining |
| Harlowton, March 1, 2016<br>• Castles<br>• Crazies<br>• Little Belts<br>• Snowies | 24 | • Wilderness— both for and against<br>• Timber production & harvest<br>• Fire protection and fuels management<br>• Continue existing uses—especially grazing, motorized travel, hunting, fishing, etc.<br>• Weed management |
| Stanford, March 1, 2016<br>• Highwoods<br>• Little Belts<br>• Snowies | 24 | • Wilderness— primarily against<br>• Fire protection and fuels management<br>• Maintain existing uses—especially motorized travel, grazing, timber harvest<br>• Access |
| Great Falls, March 2, 2016<br>• Highwoods<br>• Little Belts<br>• Rocky Mountain Front<br>• Snowies | 93 | • Wilderness— both for and against<br>• Maintain existing recreational uses—particularly mountain biking and motorized travel<br>• Respect cultural value of the Badger Two Medicine<br>• Noxious weeds<br>• Timber production & timber harvest—for and against |
| Choteau, March 3, 2016<br>• Rocky Mountain Front | 27 | • Wilderness— both for and against<br>• Multiple use<br>• Water quality<br>• Historic and cultural values<br>• Designated area—ski area<br>• West Slope Cutthroat Trout |
| Browning, March 3, 2016 | 19 | • Badger Two Medicine—protect historical and cultural values<br>• Wilderness— both for and against |

| Location, Date, & Focal GAs | Number in Attendance | Key Issues |
|---|---|---|
| • Rocky Mountain Front | | • Wildlife connectivity<br>• Restoration of burned areas, e.g. Spotted Eagle<br>• Motorized and non-motorized uses—for and against<br>• Cattle grazing vs. bison introduction |
| Lincoln, March 4, 2016<br>• Divide<br>• Upper Blackfoot<br>• Elkhorns | 18 | • Wildlife connectivity—genetic and habitat<br>• Timber production<br>• Wilderness— both for and against<br>• Motorized and/or non-motorized uses—snowmobiling and mountain biking |
| Helena, March 7, 2016<br>• Big Belts<br>• Divide<br>• Elkhorns<br>• Upper Blackfoot | 81 | • Wilderness— both for and against<br>• Timber production<br>• Motorized and/or non-motorized recreation—snowmobiling, mountain biking<br>• Wildlife habitat and connectivity<br>• Need for designated recreation area<br>• Maintain Wilderness Management Unit (Elkhorns)<br>• Favor backcountry recreational airstrips<br>• Watershed protection for multiple uses—fisheries, agricultural water use, etc. |

# Details of Community Workshops

A great deal of public comment was received in the nine workshops. A summary of discussions in every community follows.

## *Workshop Formats*

The general format of each community workshop included the following:

- Participants were asked to sign in and then asked how they heard about the workshop. Each participant was given a copy of a handout providing an "Overview of Potential Forest Resource Areas on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest."
- The FS provided an overview of the plan revision process (see above). The FS and facilitators also provided an overview of recommended wilderness, timber suitability, and the mapping tool that was used at the meeting.
- The public was then given a 15-minute break – in which they could visit with agency personnel, review maps/documents, and/or get refreshment.
- Participants and agency personnel then broke into small groups around interactive mapping tables. Facilitators at each table solicited individual comments regarding areas of the forest mapped as part of the wilderness inventory and timber suitability processes as well as other forest use and management concerns. The public was able to identify specific areas of the forest on interactive maps, which were then drawn on the map by the table facilitator. All comments were documented by hand and captured electronically.

- Information about the NEPA phase of the revision process and how to stay involved in Forest Plan Revision process was then provided, including guidance on how to use the FPR website to comment online. Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool (TPCMT), available at the FPR website, was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens could comment and submit pictures.
- The meeting then adjourned.

Another distinguishing feature of all the community workshops was interactive communication between workshop participants and FS personnel. As participants shared their interests/concerns, FS staff took notes – and publics were able to hear the concerns of others. In addition, there were many opportunities for members of the public to discuss their interests and concerns with one another and with FS personnel away from the interactive table discussions.

A summary overview of each of the nine workshops is provided below.

## *Townsend, Feb. 29, 2016*

Corey Lewellen, Townsend District Ranger; Shawn Johnson, Facilitator; and Erin Swiader, FPR Team Leader introduced themselves and welcomed the 20 participants in attendance. The members of the FPR Team then introduced themselves. Following an update of the FPR process, participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the wilderness inventory, timber suitability, and/or other resource areas as time permitted.

Public comments were both general and specific. Many comments made geographic-specific reference to wilderness and timber data shown on GIS maps, primarily of the Elkhorn and Big Belt Mountains, the GAs that are closest to the Townsend community. In addition, other resource topics besides wilderness and timber, such as fire protection and the Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) in the Elkhorn Mountains, were also addressed. Comments were also collected that referred to the HLC Forests as a whole.

A sampling of Townsend participants' comments is presented below, with reference to the GA(s) for which the comment was specified. As noted previously, the comments reflect the interests and concerns of those who attended the workshops and do not necessarily reflect the views of the general public, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Each comment will be reviewed and considered by the FPR Team as it drafts a revised forest plan.

### Sample of Townsend Community Workshop Comments by Key Issue (with reference Geographic Area in parentheses)

**Wilderness Inventory**

- The Cave Gulch and Trout Creek areas are not good candidates for wilderness. Maintain current motorized uses. (Big Belts)
- Maintain the Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) in the Elkhorns. Wilderness won't add anything there. (Elkhorns)
- A currently active grazing allotment (approximately 400 head of cows, two permittees) makes the Cow Creek and Cedar Bar areas poor candidates for wilderness designation. (Big Belts)

- Maintain current motorized uses, such as motorized travel and the use of chainsaws, rather than ending these uses by wilderness designation. (Elkhorns)
- The Sierra Club will be recommending additional wilderness designations. (Forest-wide)
- There are lots of motorized trails in the northern end of the Big Belts so wilderness designation there is contraindicated. (Big Belts)
- With recommended wilderness, anywhere there is a road I would like to see a buffer one-half mile from the road to retain flexibility in management. (Elkhorns)

**Timber Suitability**

- Forestwide, exclude elk and mule deer winter range from timber production. Timber harvest, though, could be used as a tool for other resource benefits. (Forest-wide)
- Support commercial timber harvest for restoration. (Elkhorns)
- The areas identified on the maps for timber production should stand. (Elkhorns and Little Belts)
- Maintain suitable timber base; oppose wilderness designation. (Big Belts)

**Other Resource Areas**

- Ensure access to private and FS lands for fire protection. (Elkhorns)
- Support forest management activities (timber and fuels) on the Baldy Face road corridor where there are opportunities for collaboration with private landowners for forest/fuels management and protection of old power line and other towers. (Big Belts)
- Maintain as much management flexibility as possible. (Forest-wide)
- The revised Forest Plan should set the stage for the WMU to be designated by Congress. (Elkhorns)
- Lots of locked gates block access for hunters and handicapped citizens. (Elkhorns)
- Forest management activities should ensure wildlife connectivity from the Greater Yellowstone to the Continental Divide. (Forest-wide)

Before closing the workshop, Erin Swiader provided information about the NEPA phase of the revision process, which will begin in the Fall 2016, and shared information about how to stay involved in the Forest Plan Revision process. She walked participants through the FPR website, showing how and where general and GIS-specific comments could be made online for Wilderness Inventory, Timber Suitability, and other resource topics. (March 11 was the deadline for formal comment.) Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens can comment and submit pictures.

## *White Sulphur Springs, Feb. 29, 2016*

Shawn Johnson welcomed participants and introduced Bill Avey, HLC Forest Supervisor; Carol Hatfield, White Sulphur Springs District Ranger; and Erin Swiader, FPR Team Leader, who emphasized the importance of citizen participation and thanked the 23 participants for attending. Next, the members of the FPR Team introduced themselves. Following an update on the FPR process, participants were given the opportunity to share their general and specific thoughts and preferences on the wilderness inventory, timber suitability, and other resource areas as time permitted.

Public comments received were both general and specific. Many made geographic-specific reference to wilderness and timber data shown on GIS maps, primarily of the Big and Little

Belts, Castle and Crazy Mountains, the GAs that are closest to the White Sulphur Springs community. In addition, other resource topics besides wilderness and timber such as multiple use recreation (snowmobiling, camping, etc.), access, mining, and fuels management were also addressed.

A sampling of White Sulphur participants' comments is presented below, with reference to the GA(s) for which the comment was specified. As noted previously, the comments reflect the interests and concerns of those who attended the workshops and do not necessarily reflect the views of the general public, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Each comment will be reviewed and considered by the FPR Team as it drafts a revised forest plan.

## Sample of White Sulphur Springs Community Workshop Comments by Key Issue (with reference Geographic Area in parentheses)

**Wilderness Inventory**

- Don't allow wilderness to overlap suitable areas for logging to 40% grade. (Crazies)
- The Crazy Mountain Roadless area meets wilderness criteria. There are no conflicts with timber or motorized use.
- Why change management in the Crazies? Not needed as wilderness; could be managed better. Don't need another layer of restrictions with wilderness.
- Don't designate more wilderness. (Forest wide)
- Dead timber areas may not be suitable for wilderness. (Castles)
- Maynard Ridge and the "cherry stems" should be included in wilderness. (Snowies)
- Not wilderness—White Sulphur Springs' municipal watershed, motorized recreation, whitebark pine work that needs to be done. (Castles)
- I would like no wilderness. Maintain the existing 29 miles of motorized/mechanized trails. (Highwoods)
- There is lots of existing motorized use in the Little Belts. No wilderness.
- Make this recommended wilderness. (Little Belts)
- No wilderness additions. Want access for recreation, camping and other uses such as woodcutting. (Little Belts)
- Manage as "primitive motorized recreation." (Little Belts)
- Include Maynard Ridge and the cherry stems in the wilderness inventory. (Snowies)
- Wilderness study area—negotiated with snowmobilers for snowmobile play area. (Snowies)

### Timber Suitability

- Allow as much ground as possible available for timber management and do not overlap with wilderness and recreation. Contribute to the economy in the entire GA. (Little Belts, Crazies and forest wide)
- Suggest this area be moved forward as suitable for timber production because there is accessible timber; there is blowdown that warrants select harvest. (Big Belts)
- Agree with lands identified as suitable for timber production. (Castles and Crazies)
- Manage for timber harvest. (Little Belts)
- Timber production should occur here; it grows timber and the campground is already closed. (Little Belts)

**Other Resource Areas**

- There still needs to be fuels management activity along the boundary of the existing IRA. (Big Belts)
- Side roads are gated, closed and growing shut which limits opportunity for dispersed camping and recreation. Physically, I can't go into wilderness. I would like access for motorized use. An example is near Iron Mines and Lost Stove Road. (Big Belts)
- Keep grazing impacts outside wilderness areas. (Little Belts)
- Heavily used dispersed recreation area, Richardson. It is a district recreation area that gets the highest percent of use in the Castles.
- There are numerous mining claims in the Castles, so keep it open (non-wilderness) for mining potential.
- There is mining potential in the Crazies. There are numerous motorized trails. Do not make recommended wilderness.
- Forest Lake is a distinct recreation area with scenic value. It is used to get away from the public. High use for hunting and lots of camping during hunting season. (Crazies)
- Make no restrictions on snowmobiles in the Castles.
- Allow mountain biking, other off-road recreation in the Little Belts.
- Private landowners' access should not be limited by wilderness designation. (Crazies)
- Access for recreation, camping, woodcutting and other uses is needed.
- Manage for recreational mountain biking to avoid conflict with motorized uses to the west and manage to retain currently allowed uses. (Little Belts)
- Potential for recreational airstrip in the Little Belts.
- Reroute of the existing road/trial system is needed. Limit to 50 feet. There are fisheries impacts. (Little Belts)
- On the Tenderfoot Trail (#342) there is a lot of use conflict (motorized/non-motorized) along a section that is poorly marked. (Little Belts)
- This is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and needs to be managed for fuels. (Big Belts)

Before closing the workshop, Erin Swiader provided information about the NEPA phase of the revision process, which will begin in the Fall 2016, and shared information about how to stay involved in Forest Plan Revision process. She walked participants through the FPR website, showing how and where general and GIS-specific comments could be made online for the Wilderness Inventory, Timber Suitability, and other resource topics. (The deadline for formal comment on these processes was March 11.) Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens can comment and submit pictures.

## *Harlowton, March 1, 2016*

Shawn Johnson welcomed participants and introduced Tom Bennett, Wheatland County Commissioner; Bill Avey, HLC Forest Supervisor; Ron Wiseman, Judith/Musselshell District Ranger; and Erin Swiader, FPR Team Leader. Bill Avey emphasized the importance of citizen participation and thanked the 24 participants for attending. Next, the members of the FPR Team introduced themselves. Following an update on the FPR process, participants were given the opportunity to share their general and specific thoughts and preferences on the wilderness inventory, timber suitability, and other resource areas as time permitted.

Public comments received were both general and specific. Many made geographic-specific reference to wilderness and timber data shown on GIS maps, primarily of the Little Belts, Highwoods and Snowy Mountains. In addition, other resource topics besides wilderness and timber, such as grazing, fisheries, fire protection, multiple use recreation and wildlife habitat were also addressed.

A sampling of Harlowton participants' comments is presented below, with reference to the GA(s) for which the comment was specified. As noted previously, the comments reflect the interests and concerns of those who attended the workshops and do not necessarily reflect the views of the general public, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Each comment will be reviewed and considered by the FPR Team as it drafts a revised forest plan.

**Sample of Harlowton Community Workshop Comments by Key Issue (with reference Geographic Area in parentheses)**

### Wilderness Inventory

- The Castles are not suitable for wilderness designation.
- No wilderness in the Crazy Mountains; focus on range and recreation.
- Forest Lake (and drainage above) has a natural reproducing population of cutthroat trout, which need consideration during wilderness suitability. (Crazies)
- Doesn't fit wilderness designation—lots of access, trails, and high use. Provides access for elk management (FWP) and public hunting. (Little Belts)
- If more areas become wilderness, then there will be equipment use restrictions that would increase the probability of fire escape. No more wilderness. (Little Belts)
- Meets wilderness criteria. (Little Belts)
- Should consider the Snowies for wilderness designation.

### Timber Suitability

- Consider timber harvest in the Castles.
- Ettein Ridge timber sale is located in the wilderness inventory. That area should be suitable for timber production. (Little Belts)
- Support for timber suitability and responsible timber management as long as there is access. (Little Belts)
- BLM Red Hills area in the SE corner of the Snowies is affecting timber suitability of both the BLM and FS to use and harvest timber resources.
- Continue to maintain timber operations in the Little Snowies.
- Areas in the Snowies are not viable for timber production, but timber harvest could be done in certain areas.
- Increase timber production; no increased wilderness. (Forestwide)

### Other Resource Areas

- Access for firewood in the Castles needs to be expanded.
- Concerns regarding poor access and travel to Castle Lake. (Castles)
- Concern with loss of wildlife habitat with lack of work in past timbered areas—extreme conifer encroachment in parks and old units. (Castles)
- Concerns on the Middle Fork of the American River regarding hunting camps, weeds and litter. (Castles)

- Maintain existing uses. The multiple use concept works well in the Castle Mountains—grazing, recreation, disabled travel.
- There are signage and vandalism concerns in the Castles and Crazies.
- In Big Elk Canyon hunting camps aren't being picked up and there are weed concerns. (Crazies)
- There are streambank issues on Loco-Cottonwood Creek from overgrazing. Concerns that this will affect robust trout populations. (Crazies)
- Grazing allotment conflicts with recreation. Reduce or eliminate grazing use. (Little Belts)
- Continue grazing in Haymaker Canyon, Daisy Dean Creek, and Morrissey. (Little Belts)
- Potential special recreation area along the Smith River for fishing. (Little Belts)
- Prescribed fire in the Little Belts.
- Protect livestock grazing permits. (Little Belts)
- Rhoda Lake is special geologically and for fishing. (Little Belts)
- Maintain the Sawmill Creek area for existing multiple uses. (Little Belts)
- The Big Careless, Swimming Woman and Timber Creek areas are the heart of recreation and hunting. Allow motorized access. Not suitable for wilderness. (Snowies)
- Continue and expand biological control of noxious weeds. (Snowies)
- Keep grazing in the Snowies.
- More archeological survey in the Snowies.
- Maintain the westslope cutthroat trout population and conditions that sustain it in the Snowies.

Before closing the workshop, Erin Swiader provided information about the NEPA phase of the revision process, which will begin in the Fall 2016, and shared information about how to stay involved in Forest Plan Revision process. She walked participants through the FPR website, showing how and where general and GIS-specific comments could be made online for Wilderness Inventory, Timber Suitability, and other resource topics. (March 11 was the deadline for formal comment.) Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens can comment and submit pictures.

## *Stanford, March 1, 2016*

Judith Basin County Commissioner Tucker Hughes and facilitator Shawn Johnson welcomed the 24 participants. Erin Swiader, FPR Team Leader was then introduced and the members of the FPR Team introduced themselves. Following an update of the FPR process, participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the wilderness inventory, timber suitability, and/or other resource areas as time permitted.

The public comments received were often geographically specific and many made reference to wilderness and timber data shown on GIS maps, primarily of the Little Belts, Highwoods and Snowy Mountains. In addition, some comments were more general and forestwide in nature. Other resource topics besides wilderness and timber, such as multiple uses (grazing, motorized recreation, etc.), fire protection/fuels management, wildlife and fisheries, and access were also addressed.

A sampling of Stanford participants' comments is presented below, with reference to the GA(s) for which the comment was specified. As noted previously, the comments reflect the interests

and concerns of those who attended the workshops and do not necessarily reflect the views of the general public, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Each comment will be reviewed and considered by the FPR Team as it drafts a revised forest plan.

## Sample of Stanford Community Workshop Comments by Key Issue (with reference Geographic Area in parentheses)

### Wilderness Inventory

- Cell towers and other antenna on Highwood Baldy detract from possible wilderness character. (Highwoods)
- Concerns expressed that wilderness designation will prevent trails and equipment for fire prevention and control. (Highwoods)
- No more wilderness. Don't want to loose current ability for motorized access. (Highwoods)
- Lands adjacent to private land in the Little Belts are not suitable for wilderness.
- Any area with existing trails is not suitable for wilderness. (Little Belts)
- Roadless area west of Lone Tree should be managed as a special area because of roadless/wilderness characteristics. (Little Belts)
- Don't expand the Wilderness Study Area boundary; there is lots of winter recreation (snowmobiles). (Little Belts)
- Mining activity in the Little Belts is incompatible with wilderness.
- In the Snowies, keep areas with existing motorized use out of wilderness.
- No wilderness in the Snowies because of multiple use (grazing, recreation, etc.)
- Recommend area in the Snowies, outside of current snowmobile areas, for wilderness.

### Timber Suitability

- Include all timber suitable areas for timber harvest. (Little Belts)
- Conduct logging, thinning, and regrowth activities in the Little Belts.
- Old timber cuts in the Little Belts need to be thinned, if in sustainable harvest areas. These need to be proposed as new projects.
- Conduct timber production in the Snowies so as not to interfere with habitat values such as elk security.
- Follow WSA boundary for timber harvest/production. (Snowies)
- Timber production in the Snowies may benefit economics (timber mills) in Judith Gap, providing jobs and students for schools.
- Keep areas identified for timber production in the Snowies; no wilderness.

### Other Resource Areas

- Any existing roads of motorized trails should remain open. (Highwoods)
- Beetle kill trees in the Highwoods are a concern for a private ranch (Arrow Creek) and the fire risk they pose.
- Don't want county road to be closed due to wilderness designation. (Highwoods)
- Concerns that fuels management will be inhibited by wilderness designation. (Highwoods, Little Belts)
- Motorized trails above Thain Creek Campground should be left as is. (Highwoods)
- There is no system of trails on the South side of the Highwoods where there is a Westslope cutthroat fishery and mountain goats.

- The roadless area West of the county road, including Highwood Baldy, should be managed as a conservation/recreation area. Roadless but not wilderness.
- Include and protect grazing as a use in all areas. (Little Belts)
- Maintain access into private lands. (Little Belts)
- Need greater law enforcement presence. (Little Belts)
- No more trail or road closures. This is causing concentrated use. Maintain existing access and trails. (Little Belts)
- On the South Fork, Yogo, North Fork of the Smith and Sawmill Gulch people are camping and exceeding the limit. (Little Belts)
- Maintain existing multiple use (snowmobiling, grazing, hunting etc.) in the Snowies.
- Loss of freedom and snowmobile areas is a concern. (Snowies)

Before closing the workshop, Erin Swiader provided information about the NEPA phase of the revision process, which will begin in the Fall 2016, and shared information about how to stay involved in Forest Plan Revision process. She walked participants through the FPR website, showing how and where general and GIS-specific comments could be made online for Wilderness Inventory, Timber Suitability, and other resource topics. (March 11 was the deadline for formal comment.) Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens can comment and submit pictures.

## *Great Falls, March 2, 2016*

Shawn Johnson introduced Bill Avey, HLC Forest Supervisor and Cascade County Commissioner Jane Weber who welcomed the large crowd of 93 people in attendance and thanked them for coming. Erin Swiader, FPR Team Leader and the members of the FPR Team introduced themselves. Following an update of the FPR process, participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the wilderness inventory, timber suitability, and/or other resource areas as time permitted.

The public comments received were often geographically specific and many made reference to wilderness and timber data shown on GIS maps, primarily of the Little Belts, Highwoods, Rocky Mountain Range and the Snowy Mountains, the GAs closest to the Great Falls community. In addition, some comments were more general and forestwide in nature. Other resource topics besides wilderness and timber, such as multiple uses (motorized and non-motorized), pictographs, fire management, a recreational airstrip, wildlife, weeds and water quality for healthy fisheries were also addressed.

A sampling of Great Falls participants' comments is presented below, with reference to the GA(s) for which the comment was specified. As noted previously, the comments reflect the interests and concerns of those who attended the workshops and do not necessarily reflect the views of the general public, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Each comment will be reviewed and considered by the FPR Team as it drafts a revised forest plan.

**Sample of Great Falls Community Workshop Comments by Key Issue**
**(with reference Geographic Area in parentheses)**

## Wilderness Inventory

- Recommend Crazies for wilderness—no motorized uses, wildlife security, opportunities for solitude and quiet recreation.
- West side of the Crazies doesn't meet wilderness criteria.
- Rock climbing area with 200 routes in the Castles has published guides. No to recommended wilderness. (Castles)
- Highwoods deserve wilderness protection or other high level protection. There are rehabilitated West Slope Cutthroat Trout in the Northern portion. All is roadless. There are mountain goats, elk, deer, bear and moose.
- Yes to wilderness in higher altitudes in the Highwoods.
- No wilderness in the Highwoods; leave as is.
- Access and backcountry scenery in the Little Belts makes it good for wilderness.
- Arch Coulee Trail (Middle Fork of the Judith) is not suitable for wilderness. (Little Belts)
- Bender Creek area is popular for mountain bikes; prefer not wilderness. (Little Belts)
- Do not support wilderness in the Little Belts because it takes away opportunity to complete activities for wildfire suppression, protection of homes, harvest for insects and accessibility for management.
- Interested in designating the Middle Fork of the Judith as wilderness because of the scenery, undisturbed nature and pictographs there. Exclude private land. Move trail along river bottom. This has been a WSA, prime wilderness area. (Little Belts)
- Judith-Musselshell is not suitable for wilderness due to heavy motorized and mountain bike use. (E.g. Pilgrim Creek Trail, Jeff Peak to Yogo Trail)
- Badger Two Medicine (BTM) is not good wilderness area. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Conservation Management Area (CMA) should move forward as wilderness. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Protect wilderness character and cultural values of the BTM as special management area. Not wilderness.
- Gibson Reservoir/Blackleaf area is not suitable for wilderness. It is a good mountain biking area. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Areas not good for wilderness designation due to motorized travel include Home Gulch, Norwegian Gulch, French Gulch, and Pretty Crown areas. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- CMA not appropriate for wilderness. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Carry forward the areas identified in the wilderness inventory in the Snowies. No motorized provides wildlife security for summer areas. Outstanding opportunities for recreation and solitude. Except the road to the campground.
- Snowies not suitable for wilderness because of heavy mountain bike use and excellent mountain biking trails.

## Timber Suitability

- Have timber harvest be available across the forest for economic benefit to wood product communities and to minimize fire damage. (Little Belts)
- Favor timber production in the Little Belts. Please low-cut stumps.
- Retain management flexibility for fuels reduction, salvage harvest in the Highwoods.

- Questions suitability for timber due to legal WSA status and no access. Acknowledges that there is no land suitable for harvest. (Little Belts)
- Take into consideration time it takes to restock big trees when looking at timber suitability. (Little Belts)
- Do not consider Old Baer land for timber suitability. The South Fork Tenderfoot is difficult to maintain. Protect the drainage as a whole. Re-evaluate suitability due to soil and water concerns.
- Concerns about possible timber harvests in the Double Falls area reducing privacy and protection from the elements. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- North end of the BTM is not suitable for timber production because of cultural values and wilderness character.

### Other Resource Areas

- Mountain biking trail in the Elkhorns; no wilderness.
- Maintain current uses in the Crazies; yes to mountain biking.
- Keep Highwoods accessible for hiking, horses, bikes and motorized travel. (E.g. Windy Ridge Trail)
- Okay level of use now in the Highwoods, but concerns about trail maintenance costs. Bikers and horsemen could help.
- Area in Little Belts has lots of pictographs. It would be nice if it were mapped and easier to find.
- Keep popular mountain biking areas open—Bender Creek, Deep Creek, Pilgrim Creek Trail (Little Belts)
- Climbing area being developed in the Little Belts—leave as is. Use power tools to develop.
- Every road and trail is important in the Little Belts. Maintain existing uses. (Little Belts)
- Maintain grazing throughout the Little Belts as is.
- Motorized and non-motorized uses in the Little Belts works. They respect each other and know how to co-exist.
- Montana Snowmobile Association wants no new wilderness in the Little Belt Mountains.
- Multiple use needs to be more compatible with recreation. Cattle grazing can interfere.
- Put an airstrip in the Little Belts.
- Tenderfoot Creek provides clean water and critical habitat for the Smith River fishery.
- Designated winter recreation areas need to have the ability to harvest hazardous timber.
- Expanding area for climbing in the south fork of the Teton River. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- High-value mountain biking in Clary and Jones Creek. Also support for mountain biking in Smith Creek and Green and Reardon Coulees. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Motorized trail to Renshaw Lake—not suitable for wilderness. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Noxious weed infestation area on Reardon Creek. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Blackleaf Canyon and Teton Ridge climbing areas are great and under development. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Maintain all current uses in the Snowies. E.g. heavy mountain bike use, excellent trails
- Ice cave in the Snowies is a special area.

Before closing the workshop, Erin Swiader provided information about the NEPA phase of the revision process, which will begin in the Fall 2016, and shared information about how to stay involved in Forest Plan Revision process. She walked participants through the FPR website, showing how and where general and GIS-specific comments could be made online for Wilderness Inventory, Timber Suitability, and other resource topics. (March 11 was the deadline for formal comment.) Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens can comment and submit pictures.

## *Choteau, March 3, 2016*

Shawn Johnson and Erin Swiader introduced themselves and welcomed the 27 people in attendance. Then, the members of the FPR Team introduced themselves. Following an update of the FPR process, participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the wilderness inventory, timber suitability, and/or other resource areas as time permitted.

The public comments received were often geographically specific and many made reference to wilderness and timber data shown on GIS maps, primarily of the Rocky Mountain Range, the GA closest to the Choteau Community. Comments were also received for the Little Belts, Snowies and Upper Blackfoot. Some comments were more general and forestwide in nature. Other resource topics besides wilderness and timber, such as multiple uses, weeds, recreational use and trail maintenance, livestock grazing, and water quality for fisheries were also addressed.

A sampling of Choteau participants' comments is presented below, with reference to the GA(s) for which the comment was specified. As noted previously, the comments reflect the interests and concerns of those who attended the workshops and do not necessarily reflect the views of the general public, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Each comment will be reviewed and considered by the FPR Team as it drafts a revised forest plan.

**Sample of Choteau Community Workshop Comments by Key Issue**
**(with reference Geographic Area in parentheses)**

### Wilderness Inventory

- I don't want to see wilderness developed in the Little Belts. There area a number of private inholdings that are not compatible with wilderness.
- Wilderness is for the elite (health and finances) and is difficult for everyone to experience. (Little Belts)
- Concerned that large group cannot be taken into the Our Lake area if it is designated wilderness. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Wilderness is a burden to taxpayers. We don't have enough money to manage it. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- The Snowies are suitable for wilderness. There are a lot of opportunities for solitude and it is a special place meteorologically. You can feel the full force of weather and nature there.
- Upper Blackfoot area should not move through the wilderness process because it is not contiguous to existing wilderness and would not add wilderness value.

### Timber Suitability

- Address conifer encroachment in the Little Belts.
- Retain timber harvest as a tool, forestwide, where appropriate.

- When we look at timber harvest we should consider marketability and feasibility. If there are not local mills, would it be economic? (Rocky Mountain Range)

### Other Resource Areas

- Would like to see multiple use including multi-species (sheep) to address noxious weeds. (Little Belts)
- Like how the livestock grazing is currently being managed. (Little Belts)
- The Green Gulch/Riordan Gulch loop is now closed due to the CMA. Want opportunity to do something else in this area. Recreate the mountain bike opportunity. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Half-moon, Cottonwood, Sleeping Woman Creeks have Westslope Cutthroat Trout and also feed the aquifer. Multiple uses can occur but water quality and its importance to the aquifer should be noted. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- The ski hill would not be able to expand if it were surrounded by wilderness. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Like seeing the ski area a designated area. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Mills Falls Trail has not been maintained. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Maintain multiple uses. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Livestock grazing should continue to be available and the affects of wilderness on producers should be considered. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Snowmobile pullout area—maintain and enhance (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Think at a broader scale about overlapping uses, e.g. camping adjacent to permitted areas. Users are on top of each other. May need to think about separating out uses. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Trail 177 Classy Coulee is impassible to Trail 153. Either fix it or take it off the map. (Rocky Mountain Range)

Before closing the workshop, Erin Swiader provided information about the NEPA phase of the revision process, which will begin in the Fall 2016, and shared information about how to stay involved in Forest Plan Revision process. She walked participants through the FPR website, showing how and where general and GIS-specific comments could be made online for the Wilderness Inventory, Timber Suitability, and other resource topics. (March 11 was the deadline for formal comment.) Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens can comment and submit pictures.

## *Browning, March 3, 2016*

Shawn Johnson and Erin Swiader introduced themselves and welcomed the 19 participants. Then, the members of the FPR Team introduced themselves. Following an update of the FPR process, participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the wilderness inventory, timber suitability, and/or other resource areas as time permitted.

The public comments received were both general and specific. Some mentioned a given geographic location and/or made reference to wilderness and timber data shown on GIS maps of the Rocky Mountain Range. In addition, some comments were more general in nature. The participants also raised other resource topics besides wilderness and timber, for example wildlife, habitat connectivity, grazing, fire restoration, bison to replace cattle, and motorized use.

A sampling of Browning participants' comments, all made in reference to the Rocky Mountain Range, is presented below. As noted previously, the comments reflect the interests and concerns of those who attended the workshops and do not necessarily reflect the views of the general public, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Each comment will be reviewed and considered by the FPR Team as it drafts a revised forest plan.

**Sample of Browning Community Workshop Comments by Key Issue (with reference Geographic Area in parentheses)**

### Wilderness Inventory

- All of the Badger Two Medicine (BTM) should be taken out of the wilderness inventory.
- South of pipeline in BTM should be wilderness—roadless, quiet, scenic, all values of the Bob Marshall.
- Suitable for wilderness and Blackfeet cultural area. Any action other than this is incompatible.

### Timber Suitability

- No timber production/harvest in the entire Rocky Mountain Front.
- None of the area identified for timber production in the Badger should be carried forward. Want to protect cultural and wilderness values. Need to maintain the timber for mule deer and elk habitat.
- Concern that timber projects may violate guidelines for PCD delisting of grizzly bear.

### Other Resource Areas

- Any management direction regarding the BTM needs to be done in consultation with the Blackfeet Tribe
- The area Glacier Park south is important for connectivity for wildlife. Minimize habitat fragmentation for ungulates and carnivores. Need forest cover to facilitate wildlife movement.
- BTM is part of the Primary Conservation Area for delisting of grizzly bear. Need to make sure the area meets those habitat standards.
- Last piece of land available for motorized use, needs to be available for economic reasons; business closing because of lack of motorized use.
- Open entire BTM for snowmobiling.
- The BTM is a special area experiencing a sort of renaissance in wildlife. Also westslope cutthroat trout on the north end.
- The Spotted Eagle Fire area should be replanted and rehabilitated. All future fire areas should be. Create jobs for youth and tribal members.
- Totally against cattle grazing. Pull fences. Like to see bison replace cattle. Cattle grazing not compatible with elk winter range and westslope cutthroat trout.
- Wildlife habitat and connectivity with Glacier Park.

Before closing the workshop, Erin Swiader provided information about the NEPA phase of the revision process, which will begin in the Fall 2016, and shared information about how to stay involved in Forest Plan Revision process. She walked participants through the FPR website, showing how and where general and GIS-specific comments could be made online for Wilderness Inventory, Timber Suitability, and other resource topics. (March 11 was the deadline

for formal comment.) Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens can comment and submit pictures.

## *Lincoln, March 4, 2016*

Shawn Johnson, Erin Swiader, and Michael Stansberry introduced themselves and welcomed the 18 participants present. Then, the members of the FPR Team introduced themselves. Following an update of the FPR process, participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the wilderness inventory, timber suitability, and/or other resource areas as time permitted.

The public comments received were sometimes geographically specific and many made reference to wilderness and timber data shown on GIS maps, primarily of the Upper Blackfoot, Divide and Elkhorn Mountains. In addition, some comments were more general and forestwide in nature. Other resource topics besides wilderness and timber were also raised, including motorized and non-motorized recreation for local economic benefits (mountain biking and snowmobiling), wildlife and habitat connectivity.

A sampling of Lincoln participants' comments is presented below, with reference to the GA(s) for which the comment was specified. As noted previously, the comments reflect the interests and concerns of those who attended the workshops and do not necessarily reflect the views of the general public, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Each comment will be reviewed and considered by the FPR Team as it drafts a revised forest plan.

**Sample of Lincoln Community Workshop Comments by Key Issue**
**(with reference Geographic Area in parentheses)**

### Wilderness Inventory

- No wilderness in the Stonewall Project Area. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Not suitable for wilderness due to size, separation and location (Huckleberry Pass). (Upper Blackfoot)
- Wilderness in this area would preclude winter travel plan snowmobile area use. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Would like to see area considered for wilderness. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Nevada Mountain potentially suitable for wilderness. (Upper Blackfoot)

### Timber Suitability

- <50% slope is viable for timber production, even in IRAs. Above that not viable even with helicopters. Long line too expensive. Should not emphasize production in areas >50% slope. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Agree area is suitable for timber production. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Copper Bowl is an active snowmobile area.

### Other Resource Areas

- Connectivity between NCDE, genetic and habitat. (Divide, Elkhorns, Upper Blackfeet)
- Importance of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST)—e.g. where narrow, such as Mac Pass, Mullan in the Lincoln area. Importance of economics as it brings hikers from all over the country. (Divide, Upper Blackfeet)
- Keep the Elkhorns as a WMU.

- Develop focused recreation area (e.g. motorized). Doesn't need to be long, but family-oriented, to draw people to the Lincoln area and boost the local economy. (Upper Blackfoot)
- The Lincoln Restoration Committee is working on a collaborative proposal for the whole mix of recreation, timber, roadless/wilderness, etc. in the Lincoln area. Expect a proposal in ~ 2 months. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Mountain biking: identified by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) in the Mountain Bike Master Plan as mountain bike area--Sucker Stonewall, Rogers to Flesher Pass along the CDNST, etc. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Nevada Mountain important for wildlife. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Economic concerns about loss of snowmobiling if wilderness is created. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Snowmobile area—no wilderness. (Upper Blackfoot)

Before closing the workshop, Erin Swiader provided information about the NEPA phase of the revision process, which will begin in the Fall 2016, and shared information about how to stay involved in Forest Plan Revision process. She walked participants through the FPR website, showing how and where general and GIS-specific comments could be made online for Wilderness Inventory, Timber Suitability, and other resource topics. (March 11 was the deadline for formal comment.) Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens can comment and submit pictures.

## *Helena, March 7, 2016*

Shawn Johnson introduced Eric Bryson, Lewis & Clark County Administrator, who welcomed the 81 people in attendance. Bill Avey, HLC Forest Supervisor was introduced next and he thanked everyone for coming to provide input to the forest planning process. Heather DeGeest, Helena District Ranger was introduced, along with Erin Swiader, FPR Team Leader and the members of the FPR Team. Following an update of the FPR process, participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the wilderness inventory, timber suitability, and/or other resource areas as time permitted.

The public comments received were both specific and general. The input was frequently specific to a given geographic location and/or made reference to wilderness and timber data shown on GIS maps, primarily of the Big Belts, Divide, Elkhorns and Upper Blackfoot forests. Comments were also received for the Little Belts, Castles, Crazies, Highwoods, Snowies and Rocky Mountain Range. General comments were also received and some were forestwide. Other resource topics besides wilderness and timber were also raised including motorized and non-motorized recreation (e.g. snowmobiling, mountain biking), wildlife (grizzly, lynx, wolverine, elk, etc.) and habitat connectivity, recreational airstrips, fisheries and watershed protection.

A sampling of Helena participants' comments is presented below, with reference to the GA(s) for which the comment was specified. As noted previously, the comments reflect the interests and concerns of those who attended the workshops and do not necessarily reflect the views of the general public, the HLC, or the University of Montana. Each comment will be reviewed and considered by the FPR Team as it drafts a revised forest plan.

**Sample of Helena Community Workshop Comments by Key Issue**
**(with reference Geographic Area in parentheses)**

## Wilderness Inventory

- Propose the area around the Gates of the Mountains to be recommended wilderness (High Divide Trails)
- All other IRA's in the Big Belts should not be recommended for wilderness. (High Divide Trails)
- Baldy/Edith Lake, Camas Creek and Big Baldy proposed for wilderness on behalf of the High Divide. (Big Belts)
- Boulder Mountain area suitable for wilderness. (Big Belts)
- Entire Big Belts not suitable for wilderness. Keep open for multiple use, designated recreation area.
- Magpie to Confederate—not suitable for wilderness. (Big Belts)
- Wilderness designation would reduce access for handicapped. (Big Belts)
- The Needles area should be recommended for wilderness. (Big Belts)
- Agree with area becoming wilderness—particularly important for wildlife habitat, including the proposed area to the east. (Divide)
- Alice Creek to MacDonald Pass CDT not compatible with wilderness; lots of bike use. (Divide)
- Well-suited for wilderness—bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout populations there. (Divide)
- For wilderness but want a non-motorized bike path along the CDT. (Divide)
- Potential wilderness can affect the ability to manage fuels in close proximity to private lands. (Divide)
- Should be a designated recreation area; doesn't meet wilderness criteria. (Divide)
- Active forest management in the Elkhorns; do not recommend as wilderness.
- Casey Peak, Casey Meadows area all connected trails and motorized trails to the east decrease solitude. Don't designate this area as wilderness. Helena is visible. (Elkhorns)
- Maintain WMU. No new wilderness in the Elkhorns.
- In the Highwoods, changing needs and tourist uses in the Great Falls area preclude this from wilderness designation.
- Exclude the Deep Creek Trails in the Little Belts from wilderness.
- Recommend the Wilderness Study Area in the Little Belts become wilderness.
- No wilderness in the BTM; manage to remain eligible for Traditional Cultural District. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Recommend area in the Snowies for wilderness because it's not suitable for timber and is a special corridor area.
- CDT at Nevada Mountain is the best candidate for recommended wilderness—Specimen Creek, Anaconda Mountain, and Alice Creek Road area. (Upper Blackfoot)

## Timber Suitability

- Areas outside of IRA's that are suitable for timber should be managed as suitable. (High Divide Trails in the Big Belts)
- Divide area—do not include as suitable for timber.
- There is an elk nursery in the Divide area—remove from suitable timber base.
- Historically there have been flying squirrel in Divide area—remove from timber base.

- Timber harvest in the Elkhorns for objectives other than timber production.
- WMU in the Elkhorns is not suitable for timber production, but maintain timber harvest as a tool.
- Timber management needs to address wildlife issues; it can be compatible.
- There is readily accessible timber SE of Bear Creek (Elkhorns)
- BTM not suitable for timber production. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- In the Upper Blackfoot, timber management along the CDT needs to be sensitive to wildlife travel corridors (Nevada Mountain, Highway 200/Stemple Pass and Priest Pass) Remove from timber production management, but suitable to use timber management as a tool to achieve e other resource needs.

### Other Resource Areas

- In Refrigerator Canyon (Big Belts) protect semi-primitive non-motorized trails.
- Bear Trap, Hedges out of York is a mountain biking opportunity (non-motorized). (Big Belts)
- Confederate Gulch in the Big Belts is motorized use area.
- Grassy Mountain is non-motorized area. (Big Belts)
- Magpie, Hells Gate—snowmobile areas. Avalanche, Confederate, Hedges Mountain for motorized use. (Big Belts)
- Big Belts has a large amount of motorized use, which is a huge, asset for the economy.
- Keep the York Road—Baldy as motorized. (Big Belts)
- Maintain the Castle Mountains for wildlife security because it's one of the island ranges and a great corridor.
- Highest use of the Crazy Mountains is non-motorized and as a connector.
- Want to see open biking, non-motorized use in the Divide area.
- Divide is an important landscape linkage for wildlife between Yellowstone and the Continental Divide. Inventory roadless area is important because of fragmentation of the landscape.
- Divide—goshawk nests and flying squirrels
- Divide is important mule deer winter range.
- Keep the Divide corridor non-motorized; bicycles should be okay.
- Need to make more of the landscape to promote recreation and tourism (Divide)
- Nevada Mountain Range: Deadman north to Seller Gulch—wildlife emphasis area similar to the Elkhorns because of elk/ungulate winter range uses and predator use. Last area south of Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) with a population of grizzlies (sows/cubs)
- In Divide area there are over 100 miles of trail, several towers, Highway 12—should be a distinct recreation area (not wilderness).
- Network of mountain bike trails in the Blue Clouds area. (Divide)
- Sweeney Creek area of bike use; adventure cycle route. (Divide)
- There are mines in this area. (Divide)
- There is movement of wildlife between the Elkhorns and Divide.
- Protect the CDT for multiple uses. (Divide, Elkhorns, Upper Blackfoot)
- In the Elkhorns, address developing user-created trails and decide whether to keep or not. Do analysis. Non-motorized roads especially.
- Develop recreational opportunities in the Elkhorns.

- Recommend non-motorized backcountry area near Casey Peak, Casey Meadows. (Elkhorns)
- Eastern boundary of the Elkhorns should be reviewed due to proximity to heavily travelled motorized trails. Make sure boundaries protect backcountry setting and reduce potential user conflicts.
- Find an avenue to make the WMU in the Elkhorns win permanent designation by Congress.
- Important to maintain semi-primitive non-motorized characteristics and opportunities in the Elkhorns.
- Keep roadless as roadless. No more roads. Maintain the status quo. (Elkhorns)
- More law enforcement in the Elkhorns.
- Maintain motorized winter and summer recreation opportunities in the Elkhorns.
- Muskrat Creek Trail is important for mountain biking. (Elkhorns)
- Ponderosa pine/bitterbrush ecosystem is unique around Strawberry Butte to Warm Springs in the Elkhorns.
- Promote recreational opportunities that promote tourism and enhance local economies. (Elkhorns)
- Keep full-sized vehicles from the town of Elkhorn to Jefferson City.
- Forestwide—maintain all current motorized uses across all GAs.
- Multiple uses in the Highwoods—camping, hiking, and biking.
- In Highwoods, keep trails open to motorcycles.
- There is a potential recreational airstrip location in the Daisy Area southwest of Tenderfoot in the Little Belts. It would make an internal trailhead accessible by aircraft.
- Keep the Deep Creek trails in the Little Belts open to motorcycle use.
- Pilgrim Creek and Tobin's Trail are motorcycle routes on certain days. (Little Belts)
- Favor an airstrip in the BTM. Keep internal trailheads and airstrip for older folks' travels to get an opportunity to see these amazing places. Add more access points such as near the airstrip entrance to Bob Marshall. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- BTM should be a special cultural district for the Blackfeet Tribe.
- Believe it would be safe to land on the Gates Park airstrip now. It would be great to open to alleviate pressure up the West Fork of the Sun River. (Rocky Mountain Range)
- Existing trails around Crystal Lake in the Big Snowies should be preserved for non-motorized semi-primitive travel.
- The Upper Blackfoot is a high value watershed with fishing, agricultural water needs, and a high elevation snowpack area. This is not supportive of motorized uses.
- The Black Mountain/Lincoln Gulch areas are high security elk and big game areas. There is winter range on the east side of Baldy Mountain. Not trails there currently. Not supportive of wheeled vehicle (bike) use. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Everything evaluated as wilderness inventory in the Upper Blackfoot should stay non-motorized. No motorized use in the CDT-Nevada Mountain area for big game security. Maintain historic trail system. Area has high noxious weed introduction.
- Granite Butte –maintain current use management and access. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Integrity of the Nevada Roadless area is higher than when identified in the 1970s. Potential travel corridor for grizzlies and lynx.
- Kading Campground to Blackfoot Meadows is popular mountain bike access. Maintain as such. (Upper Blackfoot)

- High quality experience for mountain biking—the CDT from Nevada Mountain to Stemple Pass and Flesher Pass. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Nevada Creek and tributaries are important for Bull Trout. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Maintain all current motorized use and snowmobiling access in the Nevada Mountain area. (Upper Blackfoot)
- Ogden Mountain is lynx and wolverine habitat. (Upper Blackfoot)

Before closing the workshop, Erin Swiader provided information about the NEPA phase of the revision process, which will begin in the Fall 2016, and shared information about how to stay involved in Forest Plan Revision process. She walked participants through the FPR website, showing how and where general and GIS-specific comments could be made online for the Wilderness Inventory, Timber Suitability, and other resource topics. (March 11 was the deadline for formal comment.) Additionally, the Talking Points Collaborative Mapping Tool was described and demonstrated to illustrate how citizens can comment and submit pictures.