

Live Closed Captioning Transcripts of Helena-Lewis and Clark NF Objections Con't – Access and Rec Wild

October 26, 2020 4:30-5:15 MDT
(Annotated with Participant Names)

Stand by for realtime captioning.

(Shawn Johnson Facilitator) I'm to go ahead and get started and go over the features of Zoom to make sure everyone understands the technology and quickly move into our discussion this afternoon. First of all, welcome to today's meeting. The add-on to our meetings held at the end of September, beginning of October. This opportunity was made available for those unable to join or change at the lesson. For those I haven't met yet, my name is Shawn Johnson with the University of Montana-helping with the national force facilitate several public engagement meetings and helping with these as well.

In terms of zoom features, you will see you are on your computer, there's a speaker view, gallery view toggle. If you would like to focus on one speaker at a time, you can click on speaker view. If you want a list of one on the meeting today, the gallery view provides you that opportunity. There's only a couple of other buttons we will use today to highlight those, they are your mute and video buttons on the lower left and I ask if you are not speaking, keep yourself on mute and I will invite here anyone who is an objective. The video button is important for those that have that status. I asked you keep your video off.

The participants tab is an important one as well. That gives a list of everyone on today's meeting. If you click on that it opens in a new field. It's important for me is it gives you an opportunity to raise your hand electronically. I will look for you to raise your hand physically as well. As we try to facilitate the conversation today, if you want to use that feature, that will put your hand up on screen and I'll make sure your voice is part of the conversation.

To rename yourself with your first and last name, and your resume screen. You hover over the three dots in the upper right-hand corner. Looks like several people are putting their organizational affiliation which is helpful as well. We have a couple of people on standby to help for technical assistance. Maybe you can drop your phone numbers in the chat box so people can see those.

I want to let you know that close captioning is available. It will be combined with meeting transcripts for our first couple of meetings.

With that, that's all the technical issues out there. For those just joining on phone today, I will do my best to watch for when you would like to be involved in the conversation but toggle for raising your hand it's star nine and I'll give me an electronic signal you would like to speak and store six is the toggle for mute and unmute. Those are important markers to pay attention to. Just a couple of ground rules and I'll introduce some key voices. Then we will jump right in.

The focus of today's meeting is on making sure the regional Forster and as the deciding understanding and can engage in conversations resolve those questions or work toward resolution of those issues brought forward. To facilitate that conversation, we ask that everyone listen and respect each other and the different points of view. Focus on understanding the issue. What is at stake, what's behind and to do that and ask questions of one another and seek clarity. Because we use this remote technology everything is a little slower, it's important to speak clearly and loudly. Hopefully everyone hears one another. If you have a problem with audio or visual, interrupt us and will make sure to go back and make sure everyone is following along. Because this is over zoom and not in person, please be patient and forgiving with each other. A lot of people work from home, have had Internet, is distractions those things. Just ask for your patience when we work through today's meeting. Just as we start, there's a small group today so I don't think this'll be a challenge for the first time you speak it would be helpful to introduce yourself and your affiliation and your hometown.

Our objectives are pretty straightforward. There are a few topics you have all brought forward that we would like to discuss so we will work through those. This is a chance for the reviewing officer to understand those are free to discuss possible solutions and hear each other and look for overriding concerns for all of us to build a better understanding of the process and next steps.

With that I would like to start by introducing the supervisor and her team I will introduce the reviewing officer and diapered in. Server, which like to introduce yourself and your team?

(Sara Mayben Acting Responsible Official) Yes. Good afternoon. I am the deputy forest supervisor and I'm sitting in for those not available today. I want to give a quick shout out to Deb Entwistle who is the team

leader, she can pop on and way. Elizabeth Caselli and Worley who are also on both to help answer questions and provide technical support. Welcome and good to see everybody.

Thanks to the planning team, took a lot of work to get to the stage and we appreciate the good work that has gone in. With that I would like to turn the floor over to you, if you want to briefly introduce yourself and dive in.

(Leanne Marten Reviewing Officer) Thank you. Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for joining us. I am Leanne Martin and for those I am the reviewing officer for plan. As Sean said, we have a couple topics we continue discussion with. I notice in the chat room they just put the link if you have not had an opportunity to the transcripts for the meetings about three weeks ago. If you're interested in and reading the dialogue for those meetings those all on the website to look at at your convenience.

Today, we want to look at a couple things. I need to add the continuation of dialogue around motorized, mechanized, suitability issue. That overlaps into the recommended wilderness and boundary topics from that standpoint. What I'm looking for, I have a couple questions.

This meeting is for me to listen and learn and try to see and make sure understand the context of your issues and objections through your lens. I don't need you to repeat what you put in writing. They are available in red. And all sorts of things on those lines. I want to focus in on clarifications I'm looking for and make sure I'm understanding what you see and how you see it to take into account as I work in my response. I'm going to do a real broad brush summary on these issues. And not get too into the weeds because I want to hear your voices. On the motorized mechanization, as you can expect, we have a whole spectrum. We want no more motorized mechanized, we don't want special areas anything in the wilderness and you should not have as much as you are allowing.

There are a lot of things that came up along the issue. A lot of it tied in to mechanize use as relates to bicycles. A lot of it tied into recommended wilderness areas and whether or not bicycles are not making our loud and recommendable his so the Rose changes Nash that's with those two issues came from.

I think if you are an object or or interested party and you have the capability, turn your cameras on, that be great, just have some spaces here. I saw Mr. White and I know I saw Mike Anderson earlier and a few others. I know that Yvonne has a chemist that's okay also. We can help you facilitates. I heard Greg on the phone. Gray, great to have you join us as well.

One of the things that came up in the last meeting but came up with some objections here, trying to get a feel and anyone can start this, trying to get a better feel on the broad brush objection around motorized mechanized use and is in enough areas to allow people to recreate or enjoy the public lands via motorized equipment. Anywhere from that mechanized for bicycles.

One of the things I struggle with this specific areas folks look for when they feel it needs to be opened up and is currently closed and geographical areas your King into, is it broad brush across the rest forest. We have certain proposals for the Grandview recreation area, with others, trying to look as best we can balancing out enjoyment. Curious if someone can help me understand more if there special areas you look for increased motorized. And the mechanize use.

Anyone help me out on that, they came up with the remedies I'm just wondering.

Greg, do you want to jump in on that?

Can you hear me?

(Greg Beardslee – lead objector Montana Mountain Bike Alliance) - To answer the question about specific places for bicycles, in the objection from the Montana mountain bike alliance, we noted several places. The big one at the end, at the north end is at Alex Creek and is an Alice Creek Loop around the basin. That was closed during the travel planning process at the last minute of the travel planning process. We were not able to object on that. That was a seldom used but much appreciated Loop that was good for the people that did travel. I think it could be opened in a managed manner with a concise schedule. Or summary strength that would not upset the horse outfitters using that access the scapegoat.

(Leanne Marten) Can I ask a question on that? It sounds like it provided a loop for enjoyments. Is that the main thing you see missing, is a loop connecting, is that the terrain or that exact location? Or if there was a loop or similar experience elsewhere, would that be probable or set location and what it offers?

(Greg Beardslee) It's that location. It's part of the CDT. Portion of that loop is part of the CDT and it was the final end of the CDT before going in to the wilderness complex and then on to glacier, they cannot travel in those areas. That was the final finish and now that finish has been taken away from bicyclists.

(Leanne Marten) Okay. That helps clarify what you are getting out there and why that specific location as well. Very helpful, thank you, I appreciate that.

(Shawn Johnson) We have a couple more hands if you're ready to move on. Do you want to jump in?

(Leanne Marten) Thank you.

(Kerry White – Lead objector Citizens for Balanced Use) This is Kerry White, I represent balanced use executive director and lead objector on this. I wear several hats. My family has been in holding since 1934. I muscle current legislator with the state of Montana, the Montana House representing District 64. Which about 80% of that district consists was located in the national forest. My question, I appreciate Leanne, you holding this meeting and I appreciate the letter you sent to me. I want to make a clarification, information was sent for the new contact. It was sent in an attachment. Not in an area where I could download an attachment. Stanley Idaho, Riggins, those small communities even though you have a nice cell phone in your pocket, and only works when it's connected to something. I spent the weekend reading 743 pages of transcript from the previous objection hearings. I am fully aware of the comments that were made. Objection is based around two points. First, verification that's not motorized recreation for balance use along mechanized. It's also horseback and stop. Also the agricultural community being able to manage your lease with mechanized, maintaining water facilities and diversion facilities, reservoirs through motorized the mechanize use. It's also in the mining industry to your patented mining claims, different things like that. Ice climbing, rock climbing, that's all mechanized. Steers, these mechanized things. We're moving in the path towards closure. In our comments in the objection of the new you're fully aware, there was a new directive by Purdue in 2020 to try to increase that. Our comments asked for service to increase in one of the alternatives. Increase the opportunity for notarizing mechanized use. In areas of the forest is Greg mentioned, the travel plans really reduced those opportunities out there. And now in the forest plan, we are further going to reduce those areas that will be open. I think it was a failure on the part of the Forest Service to provide an alternative to the public that would have increased motorized and mechanized use. The other thing in our objection I hope you will decide not to remove motorized and mechanize use recommended wilderness. When in fact that action would create defective wilderness without congressional action. Legislators do things in Montana and Congress does things in Washington DC. I think that authority should be left up to them. I would mention one other thing that I think you should consider when you do this forest plan. About 50% of your budget is spent on litigation. Another 40 or 50% is spent on fire. We're trying to reduce those fuel loads of money to do it by motor racing and mechanize has to be able to get in there to do that. Not only there but the entire force. You have a problem as well. There are things in this plan that you open the door, I believe for further litigation. And possible loss in litigation. There's also adaptable management. If there is a need for motorized mechanized use, whether it be agriculture, resource, timber, mining, recreation, if you close the door to those opportunities, I think you open the door to further litigation going forward. I would be happy to answer any questions and again I appreciate the opportunity.

(Leanne Marten) Thank you. I think I understand you coming from. Some of the things that may be proposed in the plan included for instance the Grandview recreation area and splitting the snowy. That's for motorized, mechanize use. I hear you saying is that's a good step in the right direction but that is not across the forest. That's the recreation sign and talk about access for other reasons as well. That was a very general one part.

(Kerry White) To make a comment, talk about Mary Erickson were here, we don't want to expand concentrated use out of those areas already concentrated. Received the Pipestone area reconstitute a lot of use, you have legible coming into that area. It's being maintained. Your critic some sort of hazardous, sometimes dangerous situations where you have 70 people in an area of so now you are getting collisions. Don't see a lot of horse backing in the Pipestone area. If you make that into a motorized recreation area mechanize recreation area, there's some talk about gravel fields some plan coming forward for extreme trails. There's some opposition around some of the neighbors. My thought is dispersed recreation across these, it lessens the impact to the resource and those trails provide, their recreational experience with a provide active management of the land. We are losing the war on weeds on public lands. Also, search and rescue, the ability to get in there and maintain water resources. And to management research benefit habitat. The fires are very detrimental in water quality, sedimentation, scarring the landscape. I just saw a special unity or birds are falling out of the air. That you read that to smaller capacity of the birds and bleeding the ash and smoke. It really benefits proper minutes.

(Leanne Marten) That helps put us more in context.

(Kerry White – Lead objector Citizens for Balanced Use) Thank you. You have an echo. I am having trouble hearing. You're probably on speakerphone in an empty room because of COVID-19. It's very echoey. Thank you.

(Shawn Johnson) Maybe speak a little close at your microphone and see if that helps. We have a couple additional voices to bring in. If you're ready to move on, I would like to see if we can hear from Zach and Bill. Does that work for you?

(Leanne Marten) Yes. Hope this is better.

(Zach Angstead – Lead Objector Montana Wilderness Association) That was incorporated in the travel plan because of diverse interests from Montana high divide trails, the Lincoln working group, the Blackfoot working group. Right now, that travel plan closed maybe seven miles of trail on the north end. I just want to give a little context. It was really closed because the wilderness portal trails. To prevent trespass into scapegoat wilderness, they were closed. I just wanted to provide context of this multiple groups to provide support for that decision to close those trails.

(Leanne Marten) I appreciate.

(Shawn Johnson) Thank you. Bill, your hand is raised.
You are on mute. I will unmute you.

(Leanne Marten) He is working on it.
Technology can be such a challenge.

(Bill Hallinan) My laptop Microsoft working so I played and then another.
I was on the high divide board and also part of the Montana high divide trails group for discussions going on I went echo what Zach said. Also as a bicyclist and someone who does backpacking, there's already a loop there that's available but going up and going south. It's a larger loop and is more interesting. I don't think anything is lost from a bicycle perspective. I think the argument was agreed to that the northern part is a buffer for the wildlife traveling along the continental divide and those walking in.

(Leanne Marten) Thank you, I appreciate it.
Did anyone else have a chance to jump in?

(Shawn Johnson) It looks like Greg had his hand up.
Do want to add additional context?

(Greg Beardslee) Besides Alice, I'm concerned about the continued fragmentation of the CDC. South of Helena, the Blackfoot Meadows portion and north of Helena, the Nevada mountain portion and one solution I see is identify that as a recreational corridor, 100 foot wide recreational corridor I know in the national wilderness preservation system, there are quite a few corridors. They often used for old Jeep trails, they could also be used for recreation. I know a few that are used to recreation, nonmotorized and motorized. I think the CDC is a national scenic Trail deserves that consideration in the desert be able to stay on the CDC instead of going through detour after detour. As they use it in Montana.

(Leanne Marten) Thank you, I appreciate that. I don't know if we have any other hands up.

(Shawn Johnson) Bill has his hand back up I you want to make sure, is that a new hand? You want to jump back in?

(Bill Hallinan) Thank you. To respond to Greg, they have their great divide trails mostly on roads and follows roughly, the Continental divide. Terms actual backpacking, that's a better route. They set the record on that one. This so many good roads to read the box on but it makes sense to do that.
The other thing about the area, the Montana high divide trail group spent \$50,000 developing and beginning an amazing trouble it goes up on top of the ridge and around a thunderbolt mountain. That in my mind is one of the most beautiful hikes and trails in the forest.

I don't really see the utility of trying to work just on the CDT when their other routes being used.

(Greg Beardslee) Am I still unmuted?

(Shawn Johnson) Yes, we can hear you, Greg.

(Greg Beardslee) The CDT is different than the high divide route and most know the difference the high divide route is not a national scenic Trail. The CDT is the national scenic Trail and it is the people's route and people to write it, if you write it from Mexico all the way as far as they can towards Canada. Further fragmentation is frankly a bit disrespectful. Without consideration of all of this possible solution.

(Leanne Marten) Couple things I am hearing it's having places are folks who recreate they want to do some mountain biking. It's more than just having a mile someplace, it's location, the tides, so other special places such as the continental divide trail. Is some of the previous meetings we captured and some are also attributing it to some other special places for other geographically special places. The same time were the clarifications as to why having a motorized and mechanized access in general not just motorized, that could be equestrian or what have you. For a variety of things across the board. And clearly having a dispersed, not just in some locations. That ties back to some other concerns raised about where you have found boundaries don't have boundaries on special areas. We had quite a conversation in some of those areas.

This helps put more context on some of the objections and the panel has been reviewing. Gives me more thought put into my response as I'm still processing still working through the process. From a timing standpoint, we look at having my letter go to her later this fall. We mentioned we have we are working through right now. I know many of you have brought that up and you're interested in both places across the region. We have those meetings coming up here in November and I think Shawn will help facilitates in similar avenues that will be more coming out on that to those interested as well. I'm trying, there is overlap on this topic for shore. But not hundred percent. That some of the things I take into account and tried ink through. The uniqueness and what makes sense for consistency on management as well. I appreciate that, I know you brought it up today and some have written objections as well. Those are good thought-provoking questions along those lines as well on that.

I don't know if there's any other hands. I didn't have any other questions. This helps me, I was reviewing the transcripts before this meeting to refresh my memory on some of the discussions of this topic and make sure I was focused in on the right perspective and objectives that came out. Go ahead I will let you facilitate as we honor people's time. I'm okay with going a few minutes longer with raised hands.

(Shawn Johnson) We have a couple of hands that have been raised again with Kerry and Zach I like to give a chance to respond to comments raised and any additional thoughts they want to share with you. Let's start with Kerry and then go over to Zach.

(Leanne Marten) Thank you.

(Kerry White) Thank you. There's a couple other objections included maybe you can take into consideration, one is statement in the plan that's not consistent with the local government plans. They will continue to work I didn't see anything in the forest plan that listed out all the inconsistencies and I believe that is required under the planning rule that if it's not consistent, with local plans, whether they be tribal or local government or state plans. That those inconsistencies be listed. So people know with the county or local governments is asking for in their local plans. With the be a growth policy or resource plan. All the counties in Montana except for one has a group policy and I think 2013 or 2015 I passed a law, or a law was passed, that said the growth policy could be used in coordinate with the federal agencies on the land planning actions.

Thing I mention that she didn't bring up was, I do not see any commutative effects analysis. That's also required under the President's Council on environmental quality, CEQ or whatever.

When you close, they did this on the tribal plans a lot, they said they were going to close Gallatin but you can go to the Helena or Helena-Lewis and Clark r wherever. With a closed Beaverhead and the others, they said you can go to these others. I don't think any cumulative effects analysis have been done on all the closures have occurred. He mentioned the 2015 study done by legislature that showed over 22,000 miles of road have been closed and the Forest Service just in Montana . For motorized you since 1995. Yet they use has quadrupled according to the study of the parks. And snowmobile use has tripled. The desire for access is

out there. I've not seen action looking at this cumulative effects closures across multiple forests and the effector having. A lot of people if you went around to the RV lots like Brett and down here. They were sold out when this hit. If you went out on the force you couldn't find a campground or campsite to go camping. There was a real desire to get out, get away because of the COVID-19 but the desire to go out on public lands is growing. On the backside of hell gate and Canyon mother hasn't been an increase in some of those will be on the Lake. Which look for opportunities to increase those camping opportunities so that families and the elderly and small children can get out into the woods. I'm just not seeing an approved campsite for 50 years. My family's been here since 1864, we still live on the same ranch. I have not seen the increase to give people more opportunity other. Take your bicycle with you, there could be other things you can do. It has to do with addressing out there and access those public lands.

(Leanne Marten) I appreciate that.

(Shawn Johnson), you had your hand up?

(Zach Angstead) I want to say thank you for hosting these meetings. In the making sure it was voices were heard today. I'm really impressed by that I want to close with a parting thoughts will know the forest has response ability to manage multiple use but it's important to realize wilderness is one of those multiple uses needs to be managed for. Thank you again.

(Leanne Marten) Thank you, I appreciate it. Looks like Mike.

(Shawn Johnson) Mike was trying to get on earlier and I didn't see he was unneeded but he has his hand up now.

(Mike Anderson, Lead Objector The Wilderness Society) Thank you. Wondering if there's any opportunity for further written feedback. A couple of areas came up today which I wasn't expecting about Alice and Nevada mountain and I know some of our wilderness Society staff people are interested in developing those particular areas. I just want to feel like I can confer with them before I represent our organization on those two particular areas, is our chance for us for any written further information?

(Leanne Marten) Yes. During the process, there isn't an opportunity for further written comments or that standpoint. I would say, a lot of the information shared today when I read through the objections, you will see the instructions in my response that there are instructions for supervisor to see from that perspective. The challenge with the process now is if I say yes you can Catherine, have to open it up for everybody and that puts us in a bind. What I was hearing today, that is more information or context. You're very familiar not making a decision and not going one way or the other, this will all in the big picture taken into consideration.

(Mike Anderson) I think that since our views well. I will even with that. Thank you.

(Leanne Marten) Thank you, I appreciate the question.

I appreciate everyone taking the time, not just the forest service but all of you, members of the public showing up and being here to help think about the issues and think about potential resolution to some of these challenges before this gets finalized. I don't see any other hands. Maybe ask you to close things out. I know you shared the next steps but the guy see anyone else.

I appreciate everyone in the room and your patience and flexibility because we have a technical glitch and understand where they come from. They could plug it all the time not just for meetings but I know an attachment you can always look at these wishes will want to hostess today make sure everyone had an opportunity on that. Look forward to continuing to visit and work through this on. Many of you are very interested and I appreciate your passion. Something tells me we'll see more of you on screen about three weeks. Thanks everyone, have a great evening, thank you for joining us and helping facilitates and more to come. We will keep you posted.

Thank you, enjoy your evenings.

[Event Concluded]