

**From:** Robin Matthews [mailto:Robin@CMPMontana.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, December 09, 2011 5:01 PM  
**To:** FS-comments-northern-helena  
**Subject:** Mike Horse Repository Site

Dear Ms. Bushnell and USFS/DEQ Decision Makers on the Mike Horse Repository Site:

My name is Robin Matthews. I am a Montana real estate Broker and have made my living selling real estate for the last 17 years in the Blackfoot River and Seeley-Swan Valleys. I am a graduate of the University of Montana with degrees in biology, botany, and zoology so have at least somewhat of an understanding of the potential consequences that can affect the environment—the water, air, land, and wildlife—when a project such as the proposed removal and re-placement of mine waste is implemented. In addition to that, my father and mother own property along the Blackfoot River directly across the highway from the proposed Section 35 Repository Site.

I attended the Upper Blackfoot Valley Community Council meeting in Lincoln on November 28<sup>th</sup> and listened intently to the information provided by the US Forest Service and DEQ representatives as well as their consultant. The presentation was informative, but I truly feel that the proposal of moving the Mike Horse Mine waste anywhere is a huge mistake. I also feel that the decision to move the waste to Section 35 is a decision that has basically already been made by you, the powers that be. This seems to be a decision that is being made to save a few million dollars—when the settlement that was reached allotted 39 million dollars to be spent to rectify the situation at the Mike Horse. The Section 35 Alternative is estimated at around 7 million dollars to accomplish, the Paymaster/First Gulch Alternative has an estimated cost of around 9 million dollars. Where is the remainder of the 39 million dollars and what has that been spent on? Why is the cheapest alternative the one that seems to be getting the most attention—so that the remainder of the money can be used somewhere else instead of at the Mike Horse where it was intended?

At the meeting there were several off hand comments made by the presenters about how the proposed Section 35 Alternative would “not really affect” the nearby landowners, or that it was “too bad” for the nearby landowners. These are not quotes, but definitely the gist of what was being said. It was said that the property values of nearby landowners would not be greatly affected. To these comments, I wholeheartedly disagree. My professional opinion based on 17 years in the real estate industry in the immediate area is that nearby properties will be basically deemed worthless if the Section 35 Alternative is chosen—for sure for the life of the project and to a somewhat lesser degree after the project is complete and the thousands of loads up and down both Highway 200 and 279 are completed. Even at present, the disclosure of the possibility of the project taking place on Section 35 impacts the value of properties in the vicinity significantly. It does not seem that any research has been done to identify the “cost” of the devaluing of these properties to the landowners in question. Have licensed appraisers been consulted on this issue so that those involved in the decision making process are aware of the **millions of dollars of loss in property value** to the people of the Upper Blackfoot Valley? If the thought is prevalent that this project will not affect property values in the area, then no one is thinking about the fact that Buyers of property in the Blackfoot Valley are looking for peace and quiet, clean water, little traffic, beautiful scenery, and wildlife. All of these amenities are at stake—not only during the life of the project but after as well. I cannot imagine where the herd of elk that is very frequently found on my family’s property will go to hide out from the noise and traffic that this will create—they will leave, along with an abundance of other species trying to get away from it all. The impact is HUGE, and I am begging you not to take that lightly.

You have been told stories of several of the landowners near to Section 35—their longevity in the area, the fact that what they have tied up in their real estate is all that they have, that these properties have been handed down thru generations and that the landowners of the valley are trying to do their best to be good stewards of their land for future generations. My father and mother are in the same boat—the land that they own next to Section 35 is the legacy they will leave to their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation native Montana family—and hopefully for the generations to come after us. The remainder of the year they have

left for enjoyment of their land will be significantly impacted by the traffic and noise that the Section 35 Alternative will force upon them.

The Blackfoot River is healing and we cannot take any more chances on spoiling it for the future. We cannot take chances with peoples' lives with the thousands and thousands of truck loads entering and exiting both Highway 200 and 279 during the proposed plan time frame. We should not make another "mess" when we have one on our hands already. Even though it was said at the meeting that a repository on Section 35 will "only be able to be seen from the highway for a few seconds coming from either direction"—that is too much! We already look at the Paymaster Repository. That is not going away and cannot be rectified—we cannot keep making these mistakes that future generations will have to deal with.

I am asking you to remove the Section 35 and Horsefly Alternatives from the viable list. I am asking you to revisit a way to contain the mine waste on site (even though I understand that may mean spending your 39 million dollar allowance), and I am asking that if that solution is truly not realistic, to consider more seriously the Paymaster/First Gulch Alternative that will eliminate the loads of waste from being transported on the highway, and thereby decrease the highway truck traffic—and noise, pollution, and accidents that will occur significantly.

Your decision will affect many, many lives—and some for future generations to come. Please take this into consider and act on common sense.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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