

**THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
MONTANA CHAPTER**

March 3, 2005

Federal Lands Highway Associate Administrator
Federal Lands Highway Headquarters
Room 6311, HFL-1
400 7th Street, Southwest
Washington, DC 20590

Mr. Jim Lynch, Director
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Mr. Dale Bosworth, Chief
U.S. Forest Service
Sidney R Yates Federal Building
201 14th Street SW
Washington DC 20250
RE: Forest Highway Program

Dear Associate Administrator, Mr. Lynch, and Chief Bosworth,

I am writing on behalf of the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society to express our deep concerns regarding projects being proposed under the Forest Highways Program in Montana. The Wildlife Society (TWS) is an international professional society that was established in 1937 and has a membership of 9,000 wildlife professionals. The Montana Chapter of TWS is concerned about serious immediate and long-term detrimental impacts on wildlife populations and habitats as a result of the Forest Highway Program.

We do not believe the purpose and need for these projects have been adequately demonstrated. Further, we believe that the goals and objectives of the Forest Highway program on public lands run counter to our professional objectives to maintain habitat continuity and security to resident Montana wildlife populations.

Because the impacts of Forest Highways are permanent, if this risk intensive program is to continue, we believe quantitative information to demonstrate that there will NOT be serious detrimental consequences to wildlife and wildlife habitat must be revealed BEFORE any Forest Highway project is implemented, not the other way around.

We believe that proposed Forest Highway developments across Montana will not only increase vehicle-wildlife collisions, but also will result in additional and cascading consequences to other

federal, state, and private resources. The forest highway program will encourage rural subdivision and isolated tract home site developments that will in turn increase the demand for urban interface fire prevention and increase human-wildlife conflicts. Such activities will detrimentally influence wildlife populations and their ability to move through the landscape, and will result in serious habitat fragmentation across Montana.

We believe that the Forest Highway Program poses a grave risk to the ecological integrity of the public lands in Montana and to the wildlife so cherished by the people of our state. We urge you to reevaluate the designation of Forest Highways in Montana. Such a reevaluation should fully consider the ecological impacts of these projects. This reevaluation of the currently designated Forest Highways in Montana should be accomplished with open participation by agency wildlife biologists and the public.

The public needs to better understand the need, purpose, tradeoffs, and most importantly, the resulting long-term cumulative impacts of these projects while there is still time to modify or, more preferably, to eliminate them as Forest Highway Projects.

In summary we question the entire Forest Highway Program and believe it should undergo an overall comprehensive environmental review from the perspective of wildlife habitat impacts and fragmentation throughout the Montana landscape.

Sincerely,
Tom Carlsen, President
68 Lost Trail
Clancy, MT 59634

cc:

Senator Max Baucus, United States Senate
Senator Conrad Burns, United States Senate
Congressman Dennis Rehberg, United States House of Representatives
Governor Brian Schweitzer, Governor of Montana
Gail Kimbell, Region One Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service
Jeff Hagener, Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Don Childress, Wildlife Division Administrator, MFWP
Mark Wilson, Director, Helena Office Ecological Field Services, USFWS
John Wardell, Director, Helena Office, USEPA
Sandra Straehl, Administrator Intermodal Transportation Planning, MDT
Tom Pettigrew, Region 1 Forest Service Director of Engineering
Tom Franklin, Policy Director, The Wildlife Society