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**File Code:** 1510; 2730  
**Date:** October 2, 2015

Honorable Steve Daines  
Senator from Montana  
Attn: Dylan Klapmeier  
Field Representative | Education Liaison  
218 East Front Street, #103  
Missoula, MT 59802

Dear Senator Daines:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning Trail #136 in the Crazy Mountains. The Forest Service is aware of this illegally-blocked access point. Trail #136 is known as the East Trunk Trail (also historically referenced as Trail #115) and is designated as open to mountain bikes, hiking, stock, and cross country shoeing uses in the 2006 Gallatin National Forest Travel Plan and is a component of the popular "Lowline" trail system. The trail runs north from the Big Timber Canyon Picnic Area and crosses both public and private property until it reaches Sweet Grass Creek. The Sweet Grass Creek trail is also a disputed access route to National Forest System lands that remains unresolved.

The southern portion of Trail 136 provides one of the few access points to the east side of the Crazy Mountains. It is a historic trail that dates back a century or more. The Forest Service maintains that it holds unperfected prescriptive rights on this trail system as well as up Sweet Grass Creek to the north based on a history of maintenance with public funds and historic and continued public and administrative use. The process for resolving this and other comparable access disputes is expensive, lengthy and time consuming. With limited staff and budget, the Forest is unable to immediately address these complex property law issues and often times these disputes remain unresolved until brought before a court of law.

In the case of Trail 136, we are beginning the process of attempting to work amicably with the private landowner(s) to determine options for restoration of public access to this portion of the Crazy Mountains.

These access disputes are often quite complicated, and because they boil down to legal questions, the agency is rarely in a position to forcibly remove illegally placed barriers to access. Unfortunately, this resolution process can be quite lengthy and it is not likely to conclude prior to the end of this year's hunting season.



Access disputes across the Custer Gallatin Forest and the Northern Region have become increasingly common. There have been two new access disputes on the Yellowstone Ranger District in the last two months alone. There have been upwards of ten disputed or lost access points on the District in the last decade.

If you have additional questions or concerns please contact Alex Sienkiewicz, Yellowstone District Ranger at (406) 222-1892.

Sincerely,

*/s/Mary C. Erickson*

MARY C. ERICKSON  
Forest Supervisor

STEVE DAINES  
MONTANA

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# United States Senate

Due to the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974, (Title 5, Section 552A of the U.S. Code), permission in writing is required before making an inquiry on your behalf. Completing and signing this form authorizes U.S. Senator Steve Daines and those acting on his behalf to make inquiries to the appropriate federal agency on your behalf. Your signature also gives U.S. Senator Steve Daines and those acting on his behalf permission to send a copy of this form and any attached letters or supporting documentation to the appropriate federal agency. Then return this form to:

**U.S. Senator Steve Daines**  
**Attn: Constituent Services**  
**218 E Front ST, Suite #103**  
**Missoula, MT 59802**

**PH: (406) 549-8198**  
**FAX: (406) 549-0905**

(Joe) Johannes Rookhuizen 8/11/1979 United States  
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Johannes Rookhuizen III 9/24/15 jrookhuizen@icloud.com  
 Signature\* (Required) Date Email

Please list, if any, family members with whom my office may discuss your case?

My wife Amanda Rookhuizen

Please list the **Federal Agency** involved: Forest Service, Fish Wildlife & Parks

Explain your situation with the above Federal Agency. Use the back side if necessary:

I was looking for a place to hunt this year & I found a forest service trail marked on my map. Looking at the key on the map it said trail was open to bike, stock, & foot travel. The landowner has taken & put a padlock on the gate. I've called both Fish Wildlife & Parks & also Forest Service both agencies agreed that its illegal what the landowner is doing. But we

afraid of cutting the lock themselves saying they don't have support from their supervisors. I am very discouraged as our government agencies don't seem to even be able to do what they were created to do. The trail I'm referencing is trail # 136 in the Crazy Mountains it goes North beginning at Big Timber Canyon & ending at Sweet Grass, ~~Sweet~~ ~~Ranch~~ The Ranch that the forest service <sup>trail</sup> goes through is called Hailstone Ranch owned by the family Langhus. Also trailhead at Sweet Grass is also been shutdown we need help opening these accessors up. They continue to shut out more land every year.

Thanks for your attention  
Joe Rookhuizen