

CAPITAL TRAIL VEHICLE ASSOCIATION (CTVA)

**P.O. Box 5295
Helena, MT 59604-5295**

April 15, 2023

Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest
C/O Emily Platt
2880 Skyway Drive
Helena, MT 59601

Re: Forest-wide Prescribed Fire Project #63783

Dear Project Team,

We have assembled the following comments, information and issues from our members and other motorized recreationists for the project record. We appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments for the Forest-wide Prescribed Fire Project #63783. We enjoy riding our OHVs on primitive trails and roads in our public lands. All multiple-use land managed by the Helena National Forest provides a significant source of these OHV recreational opportunities. Moreover, the pandemic has reconnected visitors to our public lands as a critical way to counter the stresses of ever day life. Ninety-eight percent of these visitors are looking for multiple-use activities including OHV recreation. We are passionate about OHV recreation for the following reasons:

Enjoyment and Rewards of OHV Recreation

- Opportunity for a recreational experience for all types of people.
- Opportunity to strengthen family relationships.
- Opportunity to experience and respect the natural environment.
- Opportunity to participate in a healthy and enjoyable sport.
- Opportunity for relief from the pandemic.
- Opportunity to experience a variety of opportunities and challenges.
- Camaraderie and exchange of experiences.
- We like to build and maintain trails for use by everyone.
- We enjoy observing flora, fauna, and landscapes.
- For the adventure and “flow” of it.

Acknowledged Responsibilities of Motorized Visitors

- Responsibility to respect and preserve the natural environment. We are practical environmentalists who believe in a reasonable balance between the protection of the natural environment and the human environment.
- Responsibility to respect all visitors.
- Responsibility to use vehicles in a proper manner and in designated places.
- Responsibility to work with land, resource, and recreation managers. We are committed to resolving issues through problem solving and not closures.

We are a locally supported association whose purpose is to preserve trails for all recreationists through responsible environmental protection and education.

- Responsibility to educate the public on the responsible use of motorized vehicles on public lands.

Motorized recreation represents and supports many different visitor interests. Supporting motorized recreation is the best way to support diversity of uses and multiple-use. This over-arching fact should be adequately addressed in the purpose and need and adequately considered in the analysis and decision. We are representative of the needs of most visitors who recreate on public lands but may not be organized with a collective voice to comment on their needs during the public input process. These independent multiple-use recreationists include visitors who use motorized routes for family outings and camping trips, weekend drives, mountain biking, sightseeing, exploring, picnicking, hiking, ranching and grazing, rock climbing, skiing, camping, hunting, RVs, shooting targets, timber harvesting, fishing, viewing wildlife, snowmobiling, accessing patented mining claims, and collecting firewood, natural foods, rocks, etc. Mountain bikers have been observed to prefer OHV trails because we clear and maintain the trails and the trails have a desirable surface for biking.

Multiple-use also provides for the needs of physically challenged visitors including the elderly and veterans who must use wheeled vehicles to visit public lands. These multiple-use visitors use roads and motorized trails for their recreational purposes and the preferred alternative and decision should adequately consider motorized designations serve many recreation activities, not just recreational trail riding. We have observed and documented that 98% of the visitors to our public lands are represented by the activities discussed above. Ninety-eight percent of the visitors are there to enjoy activities associated with motorized access and motorized recreation.

1. We support the prescribed burning plan as proposed with the limited acres at each site and the limitations on the annual total acres to be processed so that recreational and air quality resources are not overly impacted.
2. We have one concern that should be adequately considered. In the past the public has experienced the loss of use of trails and routes due to natural and prescribed burns and timber harvests. This loss occurs when the burn or harvest obliterates the trail tread and destroys trees with blazes and trail signage such that the public cannot easily locate them.
 - a. We ask that the proposed plan include requirements to restore all recreational trails, roads, and routes following the prescribed burn so that the public can easily find and continue to use them.
 - b. This would also be an opportunity to educate the public on the value of prescribed burning process with some signage or information handouts posted at each area.

We are looking forward to your development of a project plan for the Forest-wide Prescribed Fire Project #63783 that protects all existing roads and trails.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

/s/ CTVA Action Committee on behalf of our 240 members and their families and friends
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¹ CTVA members also belong to Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association (mtvra.com), Blue Ribbon Coalition (sharetrails.org), New Mexico Off highway Vehicle Alliance (nmohva.org), American Motorcycle Association (ama-cycle.org), Citizens for Balanced Use (citizensforbalanceduse.com), Montana 4X4 Association, Inc. (m4x4a.org), Snowmobile Alliance of Western States (snowmobile-alliance.org), and United Four Wheel Drive Association (ufwda.org)