

The Lolo National Forest is revising its operating plan for the Rattlesnake National Education and Recreation Area and I am concerned that the proposed changes would be a significant departure from established and successful management practices and the language of my bill HR 5898.

In 1980, as Western Montana's Congressional Representative, I introduced HR 5898, creating the Rattlesnake National Education and Recreation Area and Wilderness. and carried it to passage in the House of Representatives prior to its passage by the US Senate. The intent of that legislation is clearly documented in the report of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs (Report 96-1340) that accompanied passage by the full House.

Several of the proposed Forrest Service changes are not consistent with my Congressional report that established the Rattlesnake. In the report, Section 2 of the Statement of Findings and Policy addresses the value of and rational for a non-wilderness National Education and Recreation Area "to promote the watershed, recreational, wildlife and educational values of the remainder of these lands" (meaning the non-wilderness areas). Reading the Committee report should make it clear that Congress intended the creation of an area where learning and recreation could occur, within lands unaltered by logging, roading, and motorized access. It was, after all, logging and further road development within the Rattlesnake drainage that stirred the public and me to lead the creation of this unique protected area.

The law that applies to the areas of Blue Mountain and Snowbowl do not apply in the Rattlesnake.

The proposed Forrest Service changes call into question the single management area crafted for the specific purposes of the Rattlesnake National Education and Recreation Area. Popularity and affection for the Rattlesnake have only grown in the 44 years since I created its current status. I continue to believe, as I have since 1980, that this area is unique to Montana, our local communities and our shared love of what the Rattlesnake has become.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Williams". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Congressman Pat Williams (1978-1997)