

CAPITAL TRAIL VEHICLE ASSOCIATION (CTVA)

P.O. Box 5295

Helena, MT 59604-5295

December 8, 2025

Madison Ranger District

Attn: Josh Connors

Greenhorn Vegetation Project # 51053

5 Forest Service Road

Ennis, MT 59729.

<https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=51053>

Re: Greenhorn Vegetation Project # 51053

Dear Project Team,

Assembled by our members and fellow motorized multiple-use recreationists, the following comments, information, and issues are submitted for the project record. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspectives regarding the Greenhorn Vegetation Project.

The Value of Motorized Multiple-Use Recreation

We derive great enjoyment from riding our off-highway vehicles (OHVs) on primitive trails and roads across public lands. The land managed by the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest, including the Greenhorn Vegetation Project area, is a vital source of motorized multiple-use recreational opportunities. The recent pandemic has underscored the importance of access to public lands as a crucial means of relieving everyday stress. Our observations indicate that ninety-eight percent of visitors seek motorized multiple-use activities, including OHV recreation.

Reasons for Our Passion

- Recreational experiences accessible to all individuals
- Strengthening of family relationships
- Opportunities to experience and respect the natural environment
- Participation in a healthy and enjoyable sport
- Relief from pandemic-related and other stresses
- Exposure to diverse opportunities and challenges
- Camaraderie and sharing of experiences
- Trail building and maintenance for universal use
- Enjoyment in observing flora, fauna, and landscapes
- Adventure and the pursuit of “flow”

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Acknowledged Responsibilities of Motorized Visitors

- Respect and preserve the natural environment, balancing environmental protection with human needs
- Share and coexist respectfully with all visitors
- Use vehicles properly and only in designated locations
- Collaborate with land, resource, and recreation managers to resolve issues through problem solving, rather than closures
- Educate the public on responsible motorized vehicle use on public lands

Supporting Diverse Interests

Motorized multiple-use recreation encompasses a wide variety of visitor interests. By supporting motorized multiple-use, we promote diversity and access for all. Many visitors to the project area participate in family outings, camping, weekend drives, mountain biking, sightseeing, exploring, picnicking, hiking, ranching, grazing, rock climbing, skiing, camping, hunting, RV trips, target shooting, timber harvesting, fishing, wildlife viewing, snowmobiling, accessing patented mining claims, and collecting resources such as firewood, natural foods, and rocks.

Motorized multiple-use recreation is essential for physically challenged visitors, including the elderly and veterans, who rely on wheeled vehicles for access. These individuals use existing roads and motorized trails to enjoy recreation within the project area. Based on 24 years of observation, we have documented that 98% of visitors engage in activities associated with motorized access and recreation.

Benefits to Individuals and Communities

Recreation opportunities improve individual health by promoting physical fitness, enhancing mental well-being, reducing stress, building social connections, and supporting personal growth. Communities benefit through increased social cohesion, reduced healthcare burdens, enhanced environments that lower crime rates, and a strengthened commitment to environmental stewardship. Access to diverse recreational activities helps create balanced and fulfilling lives for people of all ages.

Significant Issues That Need to be Adequately Considered

- We are very concerned about the Greenhorn Vegetation Project because of the lack of adequate consideration for recreation assets on past vegetation projects including:
 - Obliteration of routes which are open under travel management planning.
 - Conversion of high-quality narrow forest routes in natural settings to 12-foot-wide or wider logging roads with wide swaths of clear cutting on either side.
 - Routes left in conditions rendering them unusable by motorized recreationists.
 - Routes left with a much lesser quality of motorized experience.
 - The obliteration of the start, intermediate, and ending sections of motorized routes rendering them unusable.
 - Leaving stumps, trees, limbs, brush and other obstacles that prevent the use of that route.

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- Inability to find routes due to the lack of any signage at disturbed sections of motorized routes including start, intermediate, and ending sections to locate them and/or reconstruction of a connection.
 - Significant loss of recreation and motorized route use within the project for a lengthy period without any mitigation for that loss.
 - Significant cumulative impact of all vegetation project impacts on recreation without adequate consideration and mitigation of that significant cumulative impact.
- The project area is exceptionally popular with motorized recreationists from all of southwest Montana including the Ennis, Bozeman, Boulder, Helena, Butte, and Whitehall areas. These recreationists enjoy all of the activities outlined above. We have been recording visitor observations since 1999, and this area has a high number of motorized recreationists.
 - The number of motorized recreationists visiting the project area has a significant positive economic and tourism impact on southwest Montana towns surrounding the project area. We have seen license plates from all over Montana and out-of-state.
 - Given the high quality of the current motorized recreation experience in the project area, we are concerned about the possibility of a lesser quality of motorized recreation experience during and after the project.
 - We are concerned that the impact analysis of the proposed project during the 5-year project period on recreation including motorized recreation does not adequately consider the potential negative impact.
 - We are concerned that the impact analysis of the proposed project on the human environment during both the 5-year project period and after including socio-economic impacts on the project area and surrounding areas is not adequate.
 - The roads in the project area are heavily used by summer tourists from Montana and out-of-state. These roads could be heavily damaged during the project. We are concerned that there is no commitment to maintain motorized routes during the project and no commitment to rehabilitate them after the project.
 - Since the pandemic, campsites are in short supply and extremely valuable to the public. The project area contains campgrounds and many dispersed campsites. We ask that the project not disrupt any existing camp sites.
 - We are concerned that the use of logging equipment and trucks in the Greenhorn Vegetation Project area could negatively impact the safety of the public enjoying driving for pleasure on the MVUM routes in the project area, OHV recreationists, campers, children and pets.

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- The existing motorized recreation opportunities in southwestern Montana are limited and overcrowded. The project area is popular because there are so few motorized recreation opportunities available. Therefore, motorized recreationists currently visiting the Greenhorn Vegetation Project area do not have recreation opportunities to replace any temporary loss of the project area. The public would be significantly impacted by any temporary or long-term loss of recreation use and access.
- Recreation opportunities are important because they enhance individual health by improving physical fitness, mental well-being, and stress reduction, while also building social connections and fostering personal growth through skill development. Communities benefit from recreation through increased social cohesion, a reduced burden on healthcare systems, and the creation of positive environments that reduce crime and support environmental stewardship. Access to diverse motorized multiple-use activities promotes a balanced, more fulfilling life for people of all ages.
- President Trump has directed federal agencies to increase recreation.
 - President Trump established the "President's Make America Beautiful Again Commission" through a separate executive order on July 3, 2025. This commission, chaired by the Secretary of the Interior, is tasked with:
 - Expanding access to public lands and waters for various recreational activities like hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, skiing, climbing, boating, off-roading, and wildlife viewing.
 - These actions build on earlier efforts during the Trump administration, such as the Great American Outdoors Act, signed into law on August 4, 2020. This act provided significant funding for maintenance backlogs in national parks and public lands and permanently funded the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
 - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/07/establishing-the-presidents-make-america-beautiful-again-commission/>
 - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/07/making-america-beautiful-again-by-improving-our-national-parks/>
- From our visits to the project area, it appears that most of the white pine bark trees are dead.
- Existing motorized recreation assets should be protected and/or restored following the project including:
 - All MVUM routes should be cleared of any downfall or obstructions.
 - All MVUM routes should include adequate signing to locate and identify the routes.
 - The road and trail tread for all MVUM routes should be maintained during the project to pre-project or better conditions so that the public can continue to use them.

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- The road and trail tread for all MVUM routes should be restored to pre-project or better conditions following the project.
- All existing dispersed campsites should be protected from project activity and include a buffer zone from project activity. Post project conditions should be comparable to pre-project conditions.
- Enhancements to existing routes should be considered and could include:
 - Curvilinear treatment to provide a rewarding experience and control speed and water drainage/erosion,
 - Drainage swales/rolling dips to control runoff and speed,
 - Use of short connectors to create loop opportunities,
 - Use of spurs to interesting destinations and,
 - Erosion control improvements to provide long-lasting recreation resources and protect the environment.
- We ask that the Greenhorn Vegetation Project protect and enhance current motorized recreation opportunities in the project area as mitigation for significant negative cumulative impacts that all motorized closures in Montana have had on the public's recreation assets.
- With adequate consideration of our comments and issues CTVA and other motorized recreationists would be willing to partner with the Forest Service on the Greenhorn Vegetation Project and work towards an outcome that meets the needs and goals of motorized recreationists and the vegetation project.

Summary:

- The Greenhorn Vegetation Project area is a very popular area for motorized recreationists and dispersed camping.
- Motorized Multiple-Use recreation and dispersed camping opportunities provided by the Greenhorn Vegetation Project area are in short supply and opportunities to add recreation assets should be considered.
- Existing opportunities in the project area could be impacted by changing existing primitive routes to improved haul routes, and/or long-term damage to existing routes by haul activity.
- Existing dispersed camping opportunities in the project area could be impacted by destruction of valuable dispersed campsites.
- The proposed project could significantly impact public safety on shared routes.
- The motorized multiple-use recreation assets in the project area need to be adequately protected and perpetuated by the project.

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- Reasonable opportunities to enhance recreation assets and provide environmental protection should be implemented as part of the project.

We look forward to your consideration of these significant issues and comments. We would greatly appreciate your use of our comments to protect and enhance motorized recreation in the Greenhorn Vegetation Project area.

CTVA and other motorized recreationists also look forward to working with the Forest Service to ensure that motorized recreation and dispersed camping are not impacted by the proposed project and enhanced wherever reasonable.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and issues.

Sincerely,

/s/ CTVA Action Committee on behalf of our members, families, friends and social media groups

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