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Comments: In spite of the fact that residents in Montana's Yaak Valley and vicinity seek to re-route that portion of the Pacific Northwest Trail (PNT), I urge the USFS to retain the existing route. I've passed over much of the PNT in the Yaak region as a day-hiker on trails or while driving roads enroute to various Yaak destinations. My observation is that motorized activity (both legal and illegal) has more impact on wildlife and other resources than do the few hikers who pass through that area. (My understanding is that fewer than 300 PNT hikers now walk the route annually.)

As for the sections of the PNT that pass through the Tobacco Valley around Eureka, MT, there was a proposal to construct a new trail path along Lake Koocanusa between Mariners Haven Marina and Koocanusa Bridge so that hikers would not have to walk along Highway 37. I would like to see that project be completed. As a variation to the PNT route near to Eureka, I suggest constructing a small section of new trail from the junction of USFS trail 88 and USFS road 7077 to connect with USFS road 7124. The advantages of this alternate route are having a shorter and more direct route into Eureka for PNT hikers, and to also provide an option for travel emergencies. (Keep in mind that PNT hikers had to be re-routed this summer while the Weasel Fire burned.)

While there are a few historic fire lookouts along the PNT that are available for hikers to use, I would like to see some new or additional structures (such as huts, cabins, or even Adirondack shelters) be placed along the trail. Fully enclosed hard-sided shelters would provide safer camping sites for hikers at locations where bears are most active. Finally, I see a need for more metal food-storage boxes and food-hanging structures to be placed near camping sites in "bear country".