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First name: Mike

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Organization: Montana Senate District 1

Title: Senator

Comments: COMPREHENSIVE PNT PLAN OBJECTION

I wish to object to The PNT advisory committee recommendation for restrictions on the corridor one half mile each side of the PNT. I didn't understand that commercial uses each side of the PNT could be eliminated. This would be creating de facto new wilderness area, and I object. If used only for planning purposed to allow the trail to pass around obstacles, that is a different matter. But at the last meeting, I heard discussion about providing viewing conditions and not allowing extraction industries including logging for a half mile each side, and I repeat, I object to that. Let us remember, a half mile each side and a mile in length amounts to 640 acres, and that makes 6,400 acres per every 10 miles.

About 80 percent of my Montana Senate District 1 is federal land, and the lineal miles covered by PNT is considerable; consequently, the number of sections, or parcels of 640 acres stretched in a line is huge. The management plan for the Kootenai National Forest shouldn't be restricted by the Pacific National Trail.

I also object to trail location decisions based on faulty grizzly bear recovery statements. I have heard three well respected grizzly experts say they don't believe the route as originally planned would be a problem. These three include Chris Servheen, USFWS Grizzly recovery leader for Montana, who stated it wouldn't be a problem at a recorded meeting of a committee appointed by former MT Gov. Steve Bullock. The meeting was held at the Ponderosa Meeting Room at Libby City Hall several years ago, and the statement was made directly in response to a question from a Yaak Valley resident. Other experts I have heard include the recovery zone director Wayne Casworm, and Kate Kendall, USGS grizzly expert who conducted a grizzly DNA hair sampling in the Cabinet/Yaak Grizzly Recovery zone.

I have followed grizzly bear recovery/delisting very closely for decades, and I worked with county commissioners to plan and fund the DNA study conducted by Kate Kendall. I also successfully carried grizzly bear management legislation with "proactive-preventive" measures to reduce conflicts between livestock, grizzlies and humans. My legislative work has helped to bring serious discussions on delisting.

PS: I have discussed this matter with Mark Peck, who was formerly appointed to the commission, and he feels the same way I do.

Thank you,

Senator Mike Cuffe

Montana Senate District 1,

Eureka, Montana