

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/30/2024 6:00:00 AM

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Comments: This statement is a response to your proposed Lolo Forest Plan for the Rattlesnake NRA.

My first experiences in the Rattlesnake occurred in the Fall of 1971.

I was deeply involved with efforts to protect and preserve the Rattlesnake through the 1970's and the 1980's.

In 1973, I became involved with a new group that we named The Friends of The Rattlesnake (FOR). We shared concerns about the future of the Rattlesnake and the motorcycle problems. The Rattlesnake was then under checkerboard ownership. The USFS, The Montana Power Co. and the BN RR. The ownership was imposing challenge

By 1975 FOR's Purpose was to find a way to get the entire area into Public Ownership and legally protected from any type of development. We needed to find a legal action that would preserve it in it's natural state. I quit my job, and we created the position of Executive Director, I was hired and I was paid a monthly income of \$170, that is all we could afford.

1975 through 1979 FOR organized a community education effort to make Missoula aware of the Rattlesnake, coordinated research and field study of the Rattlesnake with the University of Montana in the areas of wildlife, vegetation, geology, water, historical and recreational possibilities. FOR worked with all levels of government-Local, state, and federal. FOR gained formal support from the Missoula City Council and Mayor, the Missoula County Commissioners, the Montana State House and Senate, and the Governor of Montana for FOR's Legislative proposal that we presented to Congressman Pat Williams in 1979

The original legislation was significantly weakened as the USFS lobbied and pressured Williams. Most of today's problems that have made management more difficult to properly protect the Rattlesnake's values are related to these efforts by the USFS in 1980.

On October 19, 1980, The Rattlesnake Wilderness and National Recreation Area Act was signed by the President Jimmy Carter.

What I have just written is historical fact but there is another more important reality that is unknown to most. The Rattlesnake is a Sacred Area. This was and is recognized by the Salish Tribe. Hundreds of years ago the Salish would travel through the Rattlesnake to reach the Jocko, then on to Clearwater Area. The Rattlesnake was and is a place where the Salish would seek their Vision Quest to establish their Purpose and Path in their life.

The Salish Tribe recognized the Rattlesnake as Sacred. They Knew it had Special Energy and a Spiritual Presence; that if approached in the proper way would open the person seeking their Vision to the clear Truth of the World and the Universe and where their proper place is in it, with a clear Vision of their purpose.

I am sharing this information because it is of ultimate importance to how we manage and protect the NRA and Wilderness.

The USFS Rattlesnake proposals in the Lolo plan are misguided and would be very harmful to the Rattlesnake and what we are trying to protect. You (USFS) are attempting to manipulate and rearrange what does not need to change. The Rattlesnake does not need or want you to remodel or interfere with the natural processes that are occurring. Leave the Rattlesnake be as it is. The Rattlesnake is alive, it has been repairing itself and healing from the damage and interference of human activities for over one hundred years .

Management of the Rattlesnake should be quite simple, it should be primarily the management of people's actions and behavior. Mechanized (mt. bikes) and motorized uses should never be allowed. Humans should use their legs or ride a horse.

The Sacredness of the Rattlesnake is within the Water, the Geology, the Animals , the Birds, the Trees, and all the Vegetation.

The Power and the Spirit of the Rattlesnake will at times appear and under special conditions will appear as an Individual Wind when there is no wind.

Leave the Rattlesnake alone, do not tamper with it.

Let the people enter the Rattlesnake as it is, so they can experience the Truth of this World and the Universe.

Protect the Rattlesnake, give people a safe and Sacred place away from the stresses and untruths of present technological nightmare that is called the civilized world .

Protect the Water, Geology, the Animals, the Birds, the Trees and all Vegetations so they can teach us, heal our spirit, and reveal to us the Truth of this World and of the Universe.

Cass Chinske President Friends of the Rattlesnake