



WILDERNESS WATCH

Keeping Wilderness Wild

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2833 43rd Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55406

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P.O. Box 9765
Moscow, ID 83843

June 4, 2020

Leanne Marten
Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service, Region One
26 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, MT 59804

RE: Helicopter landing in the Bob Marshall Wilderness

Dear Regional Forester Marten:

We are writing regarding recent media reports of a helicopter landing in the Bob Marshall Wilderness along the South Fork Flathead River. The pilot and passenger apparently landed to go fishing. I'm sure you're aware of the incident.

The purpose of this letter is to urge you to pursue the strongest possible penalties against the pilot, and passenger of the helicopter and that includes—if the law allows—confiscating the helicopter and, working with the FAA, revoking the pilot's license. The egregiousness of the action, the disdain it shows for the sanctity of Wilderness, and the sense of privilege and entitlement displayed by the helicoptering couple argues for the strongest possible punishment. A thousand dollar fine would be like no more than a parking ticket to these lawbreakers. The penalty must serve as a deterrent to others who would contemplate a similar escapade in the Bob or other Wildernesses in the Northern Rockies.

We understand the Forest Service is investigating this violation. The investigation ought to also include coordination with the FAA and encouraging that agency to take whatever action is available against the perpetrators as well. Finally, we encourage the Forest Service to be as forthcoming as is appropriate with the public throughout the investigation and any subsequent prosecution.

The American people, and Montanans in particular, are incredibly proud and protective of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. We expect the Forest

Service will prosecute the perpetrators to the greatest extent possible, because it's deserved and it may deter others who feel entitled from embarking on such obnoxious behavior.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Nickas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

George Nickas
Executive Director

Cc: Kurt Steele, Forest Supervisor, Flathead National Forest