



Balance in Pryors means fewer ATVs

Posted: Wednesday, November 7, 2007 12:00 am

For over 20 years I have hiked, skied and occasionally used four-wheel-drive vehicles in the Pryor Mountains. If you have ever sat on a hillside blanketed with lupine and arrowleaf balsam root, discovered a petroglyph on a rock panel or chanced upon a vision quest site, you may have experienced the magic of the Pryors.

Sadly, this magical place 45 miles south of Billings is being damaged by increased and lawless use of all-terrain vehicles. During the last 30 years, and without authorization, the miles of "roads" in the Pryors have doubled to over 200 and growing - too many for this fragile and unique landscape!

The Forest Service is missing its opportunity to correct this disaster. In the recently released draft environmental impact statement for the Beartooth District Travel Plan, the "preferred" alternative B allows motorized access to two-thirds of the land in the Pryors.

This is not balanced, especially when you consider the Forest Service's own statistics that indicate 3.9 percent of the use in the Beartooth District is ATV use while 47.8 percent is hiking.

Alternate C, with half accessible to motorized use, is more reasonable and balanced. It provides for motorized use, as well as for traditional forms of quiet recreation, such as hiking, hunting and horse riding. Alternate C also provides for more secure wildlife habitat, easier law enforcement and would cost the Forest Service less.

Go to www.pryormountains.org for more details, and send your comments to the Forest Service supporting quiet recreation in the Pryors.

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