



Letter: Don't let Pryor Mountains get chewed up by ATVs

Posted: Thursday, November 15, 2007 11:00 pm

The comment period for the Beartooth District Travel Plan's draft environmental impact statement ends Monday. In addition to submitting a comment, I feel it is important to publicly remind the Forest Service that not every supporter of quiet recreation in the Pryor Mountains is a retired bird-watcher. I am a 23-year-old undergraduate who went out of state for college but returned to Montana - a decision based largely on a yearning to return to the open spaces of my youth, particularly the raw and lovely Pryors.

However, upon returning, I was disturbed to find the Pryors seriously damaged by illegal ATV use. The alpine meadows near Inferno Canyon are badly scarred with ATV tracks, and the trees in Bear Canyon are being mutilated to make room for illegal ATV trails.

In a state struggling to retain its young people, the Forest Service should make every effort to protect the natural resources. The Forest Service's preferred alternative allows motorized use in two-thirds of the Pryors. This designation makes little ecological sense and is flawed statistically. The Forest Service's own numbers show that hiking accounts for nearly half of the use in the Beartooth District.

If Montana's beautiful places begin to look like the South Hills of Billings, I can assure the Forest Service that young people will leave Montana and take their earning potential with them.

Go to www.pryormountains.org for more details and send your comments to the Forest Service supporting Alternative C.

Marian Lyman

Billings