

Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

389 Rick Oshay Road
Whitefish, Montana 59937
amyclint@montanasky.us
29 March 2005

Jane Kollmeyer
Helena National Forest
2880 Skyway Drive
Helena, MT 59602

Dear Ms. Kollmeyer:

The Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (MCAFS) appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the U.S. Forest Service's Helena National Forest Travel Plan and its wording regarding off road travel in the forest.

The American Fisheries Society (AFS) was established in 1870 and is the oldest professional organization dedicated to the conservation and sustainability of our nation's fisheries resources. The MCAFS is a subsidiary of the national chapter and was formed in 1967 to focus on the conservation of fisheries resources within Montana. Our organization is composed of more than 300 members from federal and state agencies, universities, and the private sector.

We do not support the proposed Alternative 6, which allows the fording of streams along paralleling routes, because this practice would be detrimental to stream and riparian habitats of the Helena National Forest. Specifically, habitats important to threatened bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and other aquatic species would be degraded due to destruction of riparian vegetation, erosion of streambanks, and increased sediment loads to streams naturally low in turbidity.

We support Alternative 5, which restricts off road travel to areas within 300 feet of designated roads and prohibits fording of streams. The language in Alternative 5 more clearly and appropriately protects aquatic habitat. We also recommend prohibiting all motorized use within 300 feet of streams, except on designated roads.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this issue and look forward to your consideration and decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Clint Muhlfeld". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Clint Muhlfeld, President MCAF