

City of Clark Fork

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February 21, 2017

Senator James E. Risch
610 Hubbard Ave # 213,
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

RE: Senate Bill #3531, Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act of 2016

Dear Senator Risch,

We are writing this letter to update you on several concerns and issues brought to the City of Clark Fork during the 02/13/2017 Council meeting regarding the proposed Scotchman Peaks Wilderness.

The Council feels we have been left out of the conversations over the proposed designation and according to Section 36CFR293.5 the USFS is required to hold local public meetings in the area mostly affected by the proposal. We can assure you the City had never been contacted for input.

The Council is concerned that over the past dozen years, the Friends of Scotchman Peak Wilderness (FSPW) and the USFS may have had numerous meetings regarding the proposal without local community involvement. Clark Fork is the closest community to the proposed wilderness yet none of the meetings were held here or in any nearby communities. Furthermore, the City had never been approached by either group for input or collaboration on this controversial issue. In spite of this complete lack of direct communication with the nearby local communities, on March 24, 2015, the Bonner County Commissioners published a Memorandum citing there was "broad public support among the residents of Bonner County".

On January 11, 2017, at the request of local concerned residents, a public informational meeting was held at Clark Fork to discuss the proposal and the process. Representatives of FSPW, the former Bonner County Commissioner, Carey Kelly, the USFS Sandpoint District Ranger, Erick Walker and your northern Idaho representative, Sid Smith, were in attendance. There were about 160 local residents who came to the meeting and the comments indicated no such broad public support as earlier mentioned.

Other issues we feel need to be addressed before any further legislative action is made includes future forest management by the USFS and future wildlife management by IDFG, if a wilderness designation is made and current USFS policies that have resulted in road decommissioning, road closures and lack of road maintenance in nearby areas, which appear to be creating a buffer zone to the proposed wilderness. Another serious issue is the USFS policy of currently managing the proposed Scotchman area as a wilderness, but with no obvious public communication of the restrictions, including no signs or maps that show these restrictions. This is causing continual confusion and conflict with users, such as snowmobilers, snowbikers and elderly or disabled hunters using wheeled game carriers.

Another concern is: We also feel the designation to Wilderness is an overreach to the future generations who will use this area and for this, we recommend against this designation or, at least, to minimize the acreage of Wilderness and recommend returning the surrounding areas to multiple use management.

We understand many of these issues may be brought up at later meetings before a new bill is introduced or before it becomes law, but are dismayed by the lack of notification for local community involvement to get it to this level.

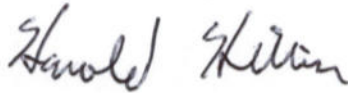
In conclusion, the City Council cannot support the current proposed wilderness designation and we request that you hold off on any further action regarding this bill. The Council invites you to come to our city to talk and listen to the residents and discuss the matters that we feel are detrimental to this area and those who live here.

We look forward to your assistance and support of our concerns,

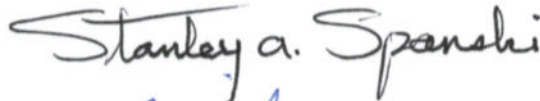
Russell W Schenck, Mayor



Harold Hilton, Council President



Stan Spanski, Councilman



Blaine Williams, Councilman



Shari Jones, Councilwoman

