



Appendix A: Consultation and Coordination, Public involvement

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The matrix below contains a summary of the comments received during the Draft Corridor Study Document comment period and includes a response when clarification is required. Comments are shown in their entirety on the CD.

Comment #	First Name	Last Name	Summary of Comments Received	Response
1	Richard	Andersen	Why is the NFFR is even being considered when so much of Flathead County is far more densely populated and served by unpaved roads? Wildlife would be severely negatively impacted; traffic speed and development will increase. Pg. 15 para. 3 should be expanded in order to reflect the rapid change of conditions and suggest some key points to outline in regards to MOU, Senate Bill 3075, international context of the watershed and high priority of BC (see letter). Preserve the NF.	The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction. More information on the MOU has been added to the final document. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
2	Kaleigh	Barks	Restart the study process and include all county roads. I do not favor any road improvement options that would lead to more traffic, subdivisions, loss of wild and scenic values of the valley, and loss to wildlife and wildlife habitat.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
3	Doug	Barnes	Leave the road unpaved; detrimental to wildlife; monstrous cost to maintain asphalt road	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
4*	Doug	Barnes	Favor the plan to maintain the road, oil it, take care of dust, make it as safe as we can, but I'm no way in favor of paving; don't believe there is evidence dust is a real hazard; paving would harm wildlife, increase speeds, increased crime. Very happy with improvements they have made to the road-the county has done more than an adequate job.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
5*	Roger	Beck	Concerned about water quality in the river; in favor of paving with a bike path	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
6	Robert	Bigler	The goal for the NF Road should be the 24 foot paved road, option 6b; 45 mph speed limit; it makes no sense to pave part of the NF but not the entire corridor-it should all be paved	Thank you for your comments. The 13-mile section of the NFFR is currently under Flathead County's jurisdiction. The request for a study along this specific corridor came from the county, who maintains this section of the NFFR.
7	Gilbert	Bissell	supports paving; Could funding be acquired from Border Patrol, Forest Service or National Park? In the past, magnesium chloride has worked well for dust control - the dust is very bad	National Parks funding cannot be spent outside the boundary of the park. National Forest Service would typically look to the Forest Highway funds noted in the corridor study. Border Patrol prioritizes funds for active (fully operated) stations; the station at the north end of the North Fork Rd is not active. Funding eligibility may be dependent on the type of improvement. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
8	Becky	Braunig	I do not favor paving the road; I do favor the county keeping it maintained. The same treatment that has been given to the stretch of road between Polebridge and Camas could be done to the lower stretch. It is smoother than the paved part of the road in Home Ranch Bottoms.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
9	Ray	Brown	Need to verify the actual number of property owners along the study corridor. Correct the statements and include in the final document. Did the study mention any EPA mandated Haze and Visibility Program information? GNP is one of 156 in the nation part of this program. Request a full copy of the study document.	There are approximately 6 private landowners adjacent to the roadway and a total of 36 owners within .6 miles of the roadway. GNP is a Class 1 Airshed and Flathead County is following a mandated Administrative Order on Consent from DEQ which requires the county to implement its Fugitive Dust Reasonable Precautions Action Plan -the County has complied. Concerning the comment on Haze - the PM2.5 regulations have not been finalized. This issue would have to be re-evaluated once the PM 2.5 regulations have been finalized. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
10*	Dee	Brown	I believe that paving the road will be a real boom for the economy in CF. I also believe it will be a great alternate route to get into GNP. I don't believe there is a real issue with development, because the land is made of federal lands and private owners. Paving will be the best thing for the economy	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.

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11*	Raymond	Brown	Reviewed the Draft CSD; I would like the study people to add a second photo that shows the actual conditions (cover photo not accurate of what the area looks like - all covered in dust); On pg 3, it states that GNP is part owner of the roadway. That is untrue. They don't own any of the road. The park boundary ends in the river; statement about dust abatement misleading; P. 22 - misleading. The land is not developable-only 3 or 4 private properties and rest federal; pg. 25-bulltrout - issue is mysis shrimp. (several other comments - please see CR Report) Mr. Brown also submitted a flyer on dust's effects on glaciers along with his testimony.	The study team was open to adding another photo to the cover if provided - none was provided. Thank you for your comment concerning bull trout, this information does not require a change to the document as bull trout remain on the Threatened & Endangered Species list. Thank you for your opinion on GNP's management strategies. Thank you for your information on dust and effects on glaciers - the document does not reference melting glaciers. Your comment concerning the taxpayer dollars on the Estimated Costs (table 5.2) - the study team was looking at overall costs, impacts to taxpayer dollars would be dependent on funding sources (private, local, state, federal). The Highway Safety Improvement Program prioritizes projects on a statewide basis. North Fork Road does not rise to the top when compared to statewide data. The Tony Ward report is part of the record.
12	Don	Burgard	Strongly opposed to paving; NF should not be changed-stay rugged; do not need more traffic; leave road alone and maintain it according to established gravel road standards.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
13	Mitchell	Burgard	Would love to see improvements to the road, but adamantly opposed to paving. Concerned with more development, traffic and amenities that will destroy the character of this unique area. Several questions and comments on the Draft CSD.	Thank you for your comments. If any improvement is forwarded additional environmental review including cumulative effects would be necessary if state or federal funds are used. The corridor study uses a high-level scan to determine potential areas of concern or impact. It does not include field analysis other than a drive-through review. Additional photos could have been included in the document, but photos were not provided to the study team. Your comment concerning historical context is noted; this study is looking toward future improvement options for the roadway. This corridor study was undertaken to assist the County in determining if any improvement option(s) for the roadway has public consensus. Your comment concerning "Framing the Problem" - we've added language to clarify the concerns and recommendations in the Executive Summary and Conclusion of the study.
14	Don	Burgard	Cited July 26 report by UNESCO World Heritage Committee calling for conservation and wildlife management plan that give priority to natural ecological values and wildlife conservation. Strongly support preserving NFFR in its current position. No paving or other road improvements.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
15*	Alice	Caldwell	Had a vet emergency and took the NF road; issues with washboard roads and excessive dust; traffic is heavy, causing the dust to be really bad; I would like to see them pave it. It's not bad just in the summertime. It is the winter time as well.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
16	Fowler	Cary, Jr.	Preserve and protect the NF as our Canadian neighbors have done; leave it the way it is.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
17	Douglas	Chadwick	A faster and more efficient road will only degrade wildlife and human communities and threaten the integrity of GNP/Whitefish Range/Canadian Headwaters Ecosystem; why pave NFFR when so many other roads need it more?	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
18	Allen	Chrisman	Support paving of the road between Canyon Creek and Camas Creek; I believe it is the most feasible solution to accommodate level of traffic and dust and high level of rafters; recommend a speed limit of 45 mph if it were paved; support gravel improvements north of Camas Creek, including narrowing, crushed surfacing, and dust abatement.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.

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19	Patricia	Cole	One driving source of the study is dust. There are no homes in the study corridor and impact of dust would be limited to those travelling in vehicles and only is a problem 3 months out of the year. Stricter speed enforcement and more posted speed limit signs would help to discourage speeding. Why focus on this uninhabited road when there are 700 miles of unpaved road in the County? In favor of Maintenance treatment 2A; preserve the NFFR	Thank you for your comments. The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction
20	Jon	Cole	I am supportive of any efforts to improve and maintain the entire NF Road, except for paving; there is already an alternative from CF to Camas Creek Road that can be used to avoid the bumps and dust. I would urge to concentrate efforts on options for funding more grading to the entire road all of the way to the border.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
21	John	Collins	Strongly oppose paving; will lead to increased speed, pressure to relax zoning restrictions to increase development, and will result in the loss of the qualities that make the NF unique; opposed to further study of the pavement option - focus efforts on other options.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
22	Del	Coolidge	Emphatically opposed to improvements to S486 over any portion of the highway; any improvement will result in the further degregation of the NF valley; waste of money, will lead to rural subdivisions and adversely effect thousands of square miles of semi-wilderness that should be preserved.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
23	Jackie	Corday	Comments on the Draft CSD: cost of wildlife management; need more information on surface options; why was narrowing the road dropped; Environmental Scan Appendix comments	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records. Cost table (was table 5.2 in Draft, now Table 4.2 in Final CSD) now notes the costs do not include mitigation. A corridor study did not go into detailed analysis of driving behavior on different surfaces. "narrowing the road" was dropped as an improvement option because it did not really address the main issue of roadway users - dust . The Environmental Scan is part of the record and is a reference of this study.
24	Lee	Downes	Enough money has been wasted on dust abatement. Paving would be the answer	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
25*	Lee	Downes	With all of the money wasted dust coating the road, you could have paved it. The piece of pavement up there now north of Coal Creek to Hay Creek was money appropriated by the loggers and was designated for paving. I am all for the paving because that is the only way it is going to solve the problem.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
26	Paul	Edwards	Is there any basis or practicality for spending money to study or ask the public to finance an absurd highway that is a road to nowhere with all of the other developed and commercially active network of badly kept, poorly maintained roads?	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
27*	Tom	Edwards	Needs to be paved for health and safety	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
28	Pat	Estenson	I am all in favor or paving the road to Polebridge. I don't want to be pushy, but fix the road.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
29	Rayna and Erryl	Eyster	Opposed to study and any improvements to the North Fork Road; main objection is to the spoiling of the pristine, rustic character; waste of taxpayer dollars studying a road to nowhere when there are over 700 miles of dusty, heavily used county roads; paving will cause development, higher traffic speeds, loss of wild and scenic values.	The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.

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Comment #	First Name	Last Name	Summary of Comments Received	Response
30	Edwin	Fields	Jeopardy Opinion on Grizzly bears still stands, so I caution against any undertaking that could lead to greater Grizzly mortality. Any improvements will increase speed and lead to more accidents. I am not apposed to limited width alteration and an improved gravel surface with dust abatement additive.	The reference to the 1980 Biological Opinion from the US Fish Wildlife Service (USFWS) is noted. If the improvement option(s) is forwarded, consultation would need to occur with the USFWS to determine the potential impacts upon federally listed threatened and endangered species. Improvement option(s) would need to be evaluated in the context of the existing conditions, and the potential effects on federally-listed and proposed species, and designated and proposed critical habitat. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
31	Mark	Fleming	Would love to see more improvement than the magnesium solution; need to fund a paving solution to Camas Road area - it is in the best interest of all in the long run.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
32	Mayre	Flowers	Please consider the studies on the potential impacts of paving the NFFR on further development and associated costs that may result; should consider the paving needs of other areas of Flathead County and provide justification for why this road will be given priority of other roads. the Road treatment to the Talley Lake Rd should be considered.	The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
33	Jim	Foster	Six comments on Draft CSD: biggest concern is that our position on management of the NF area has been reworded or diminished; MOU between BC and State of Montana should be included in mgmt section	#1 - Thank you for your comments. Should an improvement option be forwarded the appropriate coordination with all effected land management plans will need to be undertaken. #2 - The study team modified text in the study document and environmental scan. Response #3 - Text added to study document. Response #4 - There is no data on direct vehicular-caused wildlife mortality for the study corridor. Response #5 - The bentonite option was forwarded or advanced (reconsidered and placed back in the table with others) as a possible future improvement option. Response #6 - Please reference the Earthjustice response for cumulative effects, comment #79.
34	John	Frederick	Proposed bumper sticker by the NFPA to hopefully slow down traffic on the gravel road: WHAT IS THE NORTH FORKING HURRY? SLOW THE TRUCK DOWN.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
35*	John	Frederick	Important to maintain the existing character of the area; Against paving - the decision should be mag chloride	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
36	David	Gallard	Comments on CSD: The NF is the single most important basin for carnivores in the Rocky Mountains; we urge that whatever decision is made not only maintains but capitalizes on values of the region. It is important the project honors conservation measures and be fully consistent with them. We strongly oppose paving or other improvements to the road.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
37	Richard	Garlough	Leave road as it is; especially do not use salt - it is corrosive to metal and fiber and toxic to plants, trees and grasses; the State should help with maintenance since they promote tourism in the area.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
38	Marion	Gerrish	Look at all roads in the county for upgrades, not just the NF that goes nowhere. Get your priorities straight.	The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
39	Steve	Gniadek	Consider adding more culverts, up-sizing existing culverts and adding crossing structures for wildlife	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.

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Comment #	First Name	Last Name	Summary of Comments Received	Response
40	Steve	Gniadek	Clarifications on comments from 7/27. Clarifying that I am not for paving; Adding culverts or even larger wildlife structures will not mitigate for the impacts caused by paving the road; paving will be the most costly to taxpayers; content to drive road in current condition	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
41	Joe	Grabowski	Pave - the road is not safe to drive, regardless of the time of year; the road is far enough from the river to not pollute it; paving will not compromise the primitive nature of the valley; there is very little private land available for development and too far away from decent jobs.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
42	Robert	Graham	Pave it! I own a home there and will soon retire there. I'm a local.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
43	Robert	Grimaldi	Comments on Draft CSD: disagrees with - Improvement Option 2b states there are no lacking appropriate guardrail installations - there are two locations; Section 2.5 Recreation Use should be expanded and more detailed.	Option 2b response - This comment will be forwarded to appropriate County and MDT staff. Section 2.5 - This was added text to the Environmental Scan document. Other comments were addressed in responses to previously submitted comments.
44	Robert	Grimaldi	Gave website information to obtain information on the number of vehicles entering the Polebridge Ranger Station entrance to GNP; the number is greater than 4,000	Thank you for your comment. This has been addressed in the Final Corridor Study Document.
45	Robert	Grimaldi	It seems that the study seems to be headed for the filing cabinets. It seems a shame to see the money wasted on something doomed from the start. All challenges could be overcome by a proactive county commission. The public misunderstands the scope of the study and no effort has been made to change the misunderstandings.	Thank you for your comments. Text has been added for clarification of the study purpose.
46*	Robert	Grimaldi	Very good report; I hope this project leads to a paved road, which will free up money for the county to focus on other roads; only weakness in the report was about guardrails. I also had a question about the number of vehicles entering the Polebridge Ranger station	In addition to above guardrail comment, the study team addressed the question about the number of cars at Polebridge Ranger station in the study document - See Grimaldi responses above
47*	Dennis	Groebe	Request clarification on information in the CSD. Overall numbers for mile marker 0 through 22.7 and from marker 9 through 22.7, but doesn't have information to show where the difference is. There are 755 vehicles in downtown CF, but where are they turning off the road? I hope the county will take the information from the study and make it the highest priority to fix the road issues and get rid of this problem, so they don't have to fight it anymore.	Thank you for your comments. Traffic data indicates majority of vehicles turn off the North Fork Rd at the Blankenship Road.
48	Dave	Hadden	Need to conserve the NF; improvements to NFFR have a direct bearing on the transboundary effort and will affect wildlife and increase traffic and settlement; attached two letters to Pres. Obama and local senators	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.

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49	Dave	Hadden	Comments on Draft CSD: various comments provided on the document - see letter for more information	Thank you for your comments. The study was conducted utilizing Statewide Planning and Research funds, under the authority of SAFETEA-LU and 23 CFR 450. Additional language has been added to the Final Study document for clarification on why the study was conducted and provides recommendations for decision makers to consider. Concerning a possible countywide study versus this NFFR study - this study was undertaken at the request of the County. Environmental Conditions - text has been modified. Zoning - thank you for your comment. Improvement Options: Development - thank you for your comment. Speed - references to driving too fast on the roadway cannot be correlated to exceeding the speed limit but driving too fast for the conditions of the roadway surface (ice, snow, mud, dust, etc.) Section 5.3 (now Section 4.3) The study only looked at the noted section of roadway at the request of the County and because of eligibility, as the secondary roadway designation ends at the Camas Rd intersection. Table 5.2 (now Table 4.2 in Final) has been updated for clarification and the Improvement Options Appendix has been revised. Screening matrix - this is not a MEPA/NEPA document; any improvement option forwarded must meet MEPA/NEPA review requirements. Funding - Study was conducted at the request of the County to the Director of MDT. There are processes for prioritization when utilizing other federal funds which include a public involvement component. 4(f)/6(f) – please refer to comment response to the Earthjustice letter comment response, #79. Recreational use - text updated in environmental scan document, thank you for clarification. NF Valley Overview - language concerning the MOU is in Paragraph 4. Text concerning the MOU was added to the study document.
50*	Gary	Hall	In favor of paving; concerned about the plumes of dust going into GNP and floating on the river; health and safety concerns; paving would open up recreation possibilities (biking, hiking, walking). The absurdity is that many of the opponents of paving are people that don't even live here, so do not experience the dust on a daily basis. It is time to pave.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
51	Keith	Hammer	Do not pave the NF Road - instead invest more time and study prioritizing other gravel roads in Flathead County that are in far greater need of paving	The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
52	Wayne	Hammer	Request to include all county roads for improvement; it would be improper to pave the NF road while leaving the greater population with air that at times violates clean air standards. It is a waste of taxpayer dollars that should be spent on roads in the valley instead.	The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction.
53	Will	Hammerquist	Support finding on pg. 18 of the Draft CSD that GNP is a Section 4(f) Resource. Any actions must not diminish the integrity of the natural values of GNP. Clear statutory obligations support this position and provide legal mandate of non-impairment for any future actions relating to S486.	Thank you for your comments, please refer to Earthjustice letter response, #79
54	Walt	Handschin	Opposes any improvements; Protect what you have before you lose it; I have travelled the roads through GNP, Polebridge and Columbia Falls during every season. Traveling on unimproved roads make you slow down and requires a higher level of interest in the surroundings.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
55	Annemarie	Harrod	Concur with other letters questioning rationality of paving and other means of over-improving the NFFR. Much more deserving are many other roads in the valley with dense populations. Paving will lead to habitat fragmentation and loss and overpopulation. The NF is a jewel worthy of sacrificing ease of travel and comfort.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
56	Morgan	Hart	General comments and comments specific to the CSD submitted. See submission for specific details.	Thank you for your comments. The study was undertaken at the request of the County, who over the years has received numerous requests from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction. Please refer to Earth Justice response (#79) regarding the Jeopardy Opinion and Section 4(f). The study team added information about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the study document.

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57	Ralph	Hemp	Study members should drive this corridor to get a real understanding of the road conditions (dust, road hazards, car wear & tear, etc); only long-term option to control dust is to pave	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
58*	Ralph	Hemp	All of the study group should drive the road at least twice a week to observe the dust and road hazards; Health and safety issues; someone could get hurt on the hazardous road and sue.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
59	Arthur(Duke) and Naomi	Hoiland	Strongly support paving. GNP opposes paving, yet paves all of their roads in the park. Only negative is cost, but in the long run, even that would be a positive.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
60	Brian	Horejsi	I stand in opposition to improving the NFFR. It strikes me as foolish, given the financial difficulties county governments and taxpayers are experiencing, to increase the burden by adding more service demand roads.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
61	Beth	Judy	Cited comments from Brian Peck. Preserve the NFFR as it is and do not waste money to pave.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
62	Randy	Kenyon	Strongly oppose paving; why strictly on the NF and not all of Flathead Valley? Wasteful, will increase speed and decrease safety.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
63	Rick	Kerr	I am afraid political motivation is behind the study and that it is out of sync with actual road priorities throughout the county. Where is the study that indicates NF is the neediest road for improvements? Appaled that tax payer dollars are being spent so recklessly with over 700 miles of unpaved roads in need of improvement. Would be happy with timely grading, limited dust abatement, gradual gravel improvements over time and more speed enforcement.	The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
64	Alexandra	Koelle	Agree with legalcontext outlined in Earthjustice and NPCA letters; it would be professional, ethical, legal breach to recommend paving; paving threatens wildlife and habitats and brings more vehicles with higher speeds; keep S486 gravel	Thank you for your comments. Please refer to Earthjustice letter response, #79.
65	Dave & Connie	Konopatzke	In favor of paving; reduce the awful dust and provide alternative means into Glacier National Park	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
66	Richard	Kuhl	Comments on the Draft CSD: changing the road to make it easier and faster will have impacts not fully evaluated in the CSD. Final screening matrix gives distorted view of road improvement issue. Since not weighted how can it be used to make a decision. Any improvements will lead to more traffic; analysis of land use plan should be made before decision made; should focus on future of NF before road improvements.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.

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67*	Steve	Lockwood	The road is so dusty that no reasonable person could possibly claim to enjoy being in the dust. You can't breathe, see, it is bad for the environment. The road is in poor condition. It is a horrible experience. I am willing to pay the money to improve the road; The upper portion that is paved is pleasant and you can drive with the windows down. The NF should be paved.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
68*	Kary & Karen & Gary	McDonough	62% of those polled wanted road improvements; concerned about safety; should pave for health and safety reasons	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
69	Cecily and Edward	McNeil	Who will benefit from this study? The CS document marginalizes the main consideration-that paving affects GNP; integrity of the park should be prime consideration of the study; There is no red flag in the face of development and fast traffic that the paving alternative would bring to the NF of the Flathead. We concur with and endorse Headwaters Montana evaluation of the study.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
70	Oliver	Meister	CSD falls short of its objective and purpose and lacks visionary ideas and real alternatives (existing and projected growth, land use, character); waste of money	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
71	Shayda	Naficy	Do not pave-consider far less extreme solutions	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
72	Joe	Novak	A total of 10 comments or concerns were listed, these included, can government vehicles be tracked as part of traffic numbers? Number of vehicles per day per month-what is the traffic threshold? Mention of Glacier National Park mandate as it relates to NFFR; How much development exists on this 10-mile stretch of road?	#1- The Environmental Scan (see Appendix B) looks at a larger area to ensure information is captured for the study section. #3 - Section 2.2 revised, no major roadway concerns. #4-This study used total AADT, counts can differentiate types of vehicle (car, RV or truck) but is not able to indicate ownership (private or governmental). #5- There are no guidelines that dictate when a gravel secondary road should be paved based on traffic volumes. #6- Please contact NPS for information regarding their management plan. #7- Comment is unclear. #8 - Thank you for the comment. #9- See landownership response (Ray Brown). Building permits data is not available but septic permits indicate an average of 1-2 permits a year over the last ten years. #10 - GNP's position is provided for in the land management section. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
73	Lynn	Ogle	Paving is the intelligent solution to the problem; Hell Roaring - most of dust in the river is produced in the 13 miles in question.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
74	Brian	Peck	Comments on Draft CSD. NF road only issue 4 months out of the year so not worth tax payer dollars when other roads need the attention; MDOT should consider all roads in the county; reasons for paving nonsense; B.O. and 4(f) evaluations required if moving forward with paving option; focus on simpler solutions geared toward addressing the short-term seasonal issues. Suggest narrowing the road to 24', improve gravel surface, add 2 additional grading sessions per year and additional law enforcement.	Thank you for your comments. The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction.

The matrix below contains a summary of the comments received during the Draft Corridor Study Document comment period and includes a response when clarification is required. Comments are shown in their entirety on the CD.

Comment #	First Name	Last Name	Summary of Comments Received	Response
75	Carol	Pike	This road must be paved for the health and welfare of fish, animals, humans and quality of water; chemicals are added pollution; emergency service concerns; economic impact; road is recreation area and for tourists	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
76	Linda	Pittman	Study seems very complete, but unless County selects an option, it is of no benefit; main issue is dust-it is dangerous, unhealthy for people, wildlife and plants-dust should be controlled by whatever means necessary; temp fix last Fall is nice but deteriorating	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
77	Rachel	Potter	Submitted letter of comments on the Draft CSD. See letter for specific details. Crash Analysis, Development, Management on Adjacent Public Lands, Impacts on Wildlife, Emergency Services, Final Screening matrix	Crash Analysis - there were no crash clusters identified in the corridor. Detailed crash analysis was not available for this high-level scan. 3.2 - Text has been changed as appropriate. 3.3 - New additional language at the request of GNP to reflect their position. Added language about MOU in final study document. 5.1 - Indirect impacts to wildlife are discussed under the screening matrix section. 6c/6d are different than 6a/6b because c/d do not require a full reconstruction of the roadway. The comment is correct; it is one of the higher cost options and it would be up to the County to forward or not. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
78	Debo	Powers	NF is divided on the paving issue; everyone can agree on dust control; I strongly believe paving would destroy the North Fork; However, most people would support less dust	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
79	Timothy	Presso	See full comments in letter dated June 23, 2010. Due to other individual's comments related to this letter, during the draft public review period, the study team has provided responses to some of the Earthjustice questions and comments as part of the public review period, even though the letter was received prior to July 15.	Please see full comment response (2 pages, following this spreadsheet).
80	Kevin	Ramage	Pave the road to the Camas Road entrance with speed limit of 45-50 mph; install a bike path; if county road, why state doing the study; for the cost of the study, we could have paved the road	Thank you for your comments. The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction.
81	Cindy	Ruth	The rural character of the NF will be degraded if paved; it will increase traffic, litter, crime, encourage development. It can best be improved with better gravel and dust reduction measures.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
82	John	Ruth	Against paving; a slow access is what makes this place special; rural character will be degraded; will contribute to increased speed, accidents, traffic, litter, crime, development and wildlife mortality.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
83	Robert	Saurey	Any significant road improvement is unnecessary and unwarranted. Other roads should be addresses instead. Any improvement should be for safety reasons and to maintain the road in its current condition.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
84	Amy	Secrest	Oppose any proposal to pave any sections of the NFFR. Paved road would lead to increased traffic, higher speeds, more development and subdivision, displace and endanger wildlife, and diminish qualities of the NFFR. There are hundreds of miles of unpaved roads in the county in disrepair.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.

The matrix below contains a summary of the comments received during the Draft Corridor Study Document comment period and includes a response when clarification is required. Comments are shown in their entirety on the CD.

Comment #	First Name	Last Name	Summary of Comments Received	Response
85	Molly	Shepherd	Concerned the CSD does not sufficiently address the potential impacts of road improvements on the NF ecosystem as a whole and the way of life in the remote undeveloped valley; absence of paved road has served as a safety net to preserve self-reliant way of life and the most intact ecosystem in the lower 48 states.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
86	Roger	Sherman	Flathead County has more than 700 miles of unpaved road, which serve tens of thousands of citizens a day. It is unclear why the County and MDOT are spending scarce tax dollars on the NFFR that gives limited access to limited people. The dust is due to too high of speeds. There are less expensive means (grading, enforced speed limits, dust abatement). This project is anything but a wise use of taxpayer dollars.	The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
87	Caleb	Soptelean	I favor the cheapest paving alternative (millings/asphalt with chip seal); use dummy patrol if available	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
88	Gerry	Stearns	Based on review of the data gathered in the CSD (accidents/wildlife collision) and options for improvements, application of DSA is the most reasonable choice. Paving would increase both accidents and wildlife collisions. DSA would not violate USFWS Jeopardy Opinion and would not require a new EIS. It is a viable compromise between pro and anti-pavers.	Thank you for your comments. The reference to the 1980 Biological Opinion from the US Fish Wildlife Service (USFWS) is noted. If the improvement option(s) is forwarded consultation would need to occur with the USFWS to determine the potential impacts upon federally listed threatened and endangered species. Improvement option(s) would need to be evaluated in the context of the existing conditions, and the potential effects on federally-listed and proposed species, and designated and proposed critical habitat.
89	Anonymous	Support Paving	I strongly support paving the North Fork Road to Camas.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
90	Kyle	Topham	Work on all the roads closer to town and leave the North Fork alone. There are many other roads that need to be addressed.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
91	Richard	Wackrow	Paving would undermine our unique lifestyle, accelerate development, create safety issues and threaten wildlife and habitat.	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
92	Frances	Wade	Flathead County has many miles of unpaved roads that are closer to town and travelled far more regularly. It would be foolish to squander Federal money to pave this section just to allow more convenient and speedy access to the Camas entrance to GNP.	The request for a study along this specific corridor came from Flathead County in response to numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction. Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
93	Corwyn	Wyman	I sit on the fence on this issue; dust is less of a concern to me than rough surfaces; staff very informative. Thanks for the effort	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.
94	Emma	Young	Do not pave, it would ruin the experience and integrity of the area for both humans and wildlife; consider other roads in the county instead	Thank you for your comments. They are included in our study records.

* These comments were given verbally to the Court Reporter at the Publi Meeting on July 27, 2010. The Court Reporter Comments can be located beginning on Page 153

North Fork River Road – Comment from Earthjustice (Below are excerpts from the letter and comments. Please refer to the scanned document for entire text.)

Comment	Response
<p>I. <u>The Requirements of Section 4(f)</u></p>	<p>Section 4(f) applies if improvement option(s) are forwarded and funded by US Department of Transportation (USDOT) funds. These would include funds received from the Federal Highway Administration (including Western Federal Lands Highway Division). Section 4(f) does not apply if funding is solely from other federal funds, the state of Montana, local or county Government, or private funds.</p> <p>If an improvement option is forwarded into project development the sponsor must comply with the applicable state, local, and federal regulations.</p>
<p>II. <u>S486 Improvements Threaten a “Constructive Use” of Glacier National Park</u></p> <p><u>Wildlife avoidance and fragmentation of wildlife habitat:</u></p> <p><u>Facilitation of increased human activity and residential development:</u></p>	<p>There would be no direct taking with any of the improvement options identified within this Corridor Study. If improvement option(s) are forwarded and funded by US DOT funds, then a determination of constructive use would be required as part of the environmental analysis. If other funds are used, then Section 4(f) is not applicable.</p> <p>The improvement options forwarded for potential future consideration do not increase the design speed, increase the capacity of the roadway, or recommend additional roadway networks. If improvement options are forwarded into project development they would need to be studied to the degree necessary and the applicable regulatory authority required to determine and address potential impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat.</p> <p>Flathead County is experiencing growth throughout. The amount of residential development or increased activity is directly related to land use, local zoning, growth plans, and use by the public. The roadway does not increase total growth or activity; however, improvement option(s) may have an impact on when growth occurs.</p>



August 8, 2010

Ms. Lani Eggertsen-Goff
PB Consultants
488 E. Winchester St., Ste. 400
Murray, UT 84105

This letter includes my comments on the NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD DRAFT CORRIDOR STUDY. Please include this letter in the comment record.

I am writing this as a native Montanan, born in Kalispell, and a longtime North Fork landowner and resident intimately familiar with the Flathead and the many stages of development it has gone through over the past 50 years.

When I look at this issue as a Flathead County taxpayer, I have to ask why paving the North Fork road is even being considered as an option when so much of Flathead County is far more densely populated and yet served by unpaved roads. There are so many areas where the dust not only affects a great many more homeowners but creates air quality problems throughout the heart of the Flathead Valley and its major population centers, with consequences to the health of thousands. What is behind this discussion about spending what could be more than \$10 million to pave the North Fork road? Just because a dozen or fewer vocal North Fork residents complain of the dust and discomfort of driving a dirt road, are we to change the entire fabric of life in the North Fork Valley at taxpayer expense in order to address those complaints? To me, this is not representative of a democratic process and amounts to a subsidy of hundreds of thousands of dollars per complainer. Alternatively, if the paving proposal is intended more as a subsidy to Columbia Falls, I am not sure how much more of a "Gateway to Glacier" the city would be once the long-term impacts on wildlife from paving the road begin to be felt. Devaluing the wildlife resources of the greater Glacier Park ecosystem, for which the North Fork valley is a major component, is not in the long-term interest of Columbia Falls or the Flathead in general. Endangered Species habitat will be severely and negatively impacted and those changes will not be reversible. The North Fork has the most intact ecosystem in the Lower 48 and it is incumbent upon those of us that live there, study it, or manage it as public agents to protect it.

The study report states, "It is likely that any proposed project beyond maintaining existing conditions would likely result in formal consultation under Section 7 with the USFWS if federal funds or a federal action is involved, especially if the proposal would increase traffic speeds, lead to increased development or increase traffic volumes." Clearly, traffic speeds would increase and increase development. I agree with the study in this regard.

The study also brings into focus the international nature of what we would be saying to our Canadian neighbors if we further develop the North Fork south of the border. The relevant

section [North Fork Valley Overview (page 15, paragraph 3] should be expanded upon in order to reflect the rapid change of conditions regarding the oil and gas lease situation on the Glacier View Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest. Some key points to outline...

- A recent MOU was signed between B.C. and Montana that established a ban on mining and energy development in the watershed to best protect water and wildlife resources.
- Senators Baucus and Tester introduced Senate Bill 3075 to withdraw federal minerals from the watershed. This is noted in paragraph 4 but without being identified.
- Approximately 80 percent of the leases of record have voluntarily been withdrawn by the companies holding them at no cost to the U.S. taxpayer. Companies realized that the leases held no value. This represents rapid, not slow, progress.

The final report should emphasize the international context of the watershed and the evolving and as yet incomplete fulfillment of the MOU, and the high priority B.C., Montana, the U.S. and Canadian governments have placed on establishing harmonious management practices across the international border. An 'improved' North Fork Road could compromise some of the gains made in the extinguishing of mineral rights within the watershed. Any road work needs to be framed in this international context.

I would also like to emphasize that I drive the North Fork Road regularly during the summer when the stated problems are most acute. I drive at a modest speed and I make far fewer trips than I would if the road were paved. Although I see others that drive fast and kick up some dust, I do not believe what we have today is an unworkable situation and I do not believe my health or the health of my family members is being negatively impacted in any way. Road dust is made up of heavy, large particles that settle quickly and do not affect Glacier National Park's air quality. I agree with GNP's comments "that road improvement would lead to an increase in traffic and development and a degradation of the primitive values of the North Fork portion of the Park." Of greater concern is that actual air quality that now exists over the Park and region. Any hiker can tell you that a brown haze exists over the region from power, auto, and international pollution sources.

The County works on the North Fork Road as much as it can afford to and the one paved section barely gets any attention. That issue would be magnified if the road were paved. I just spoke with the new owners of the Polebridge Mercantile a few days ago and they are enjoying a brisk business this summer, even during the recession. The current road is working fine.

Emergency response to the North Fork is not as fast as it would be if the road were paved, but there are many areas in the Flathead that have higher densities and slower response times. The Alert helicopter will respond to urgent situations in the same way whether the road is paved or not.

We have much to be thankful for as we consider the North Fork valley as an integral jewel in the "Crown of the Continent". Let us not tarnish it with blacktop and dig the County into a financial hole because a few vocal residents want to commute faster to their jobs or increase their personal fortunes through increased development.

Sincerely,



From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam: "Sheila Ludlow"](#);
[Vernarsky, Patti](#);
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork road - Kaleigh 8-5-10
Date: Thursday, August 05, 2010 9:43:35 AM

Comment that was sent directly to me.

Lani
801-288-3220

From: kaleigh b
Sent: Thursday, August 05, 2010 2:09 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork road

Hello,

As a citizen and member of the greater community of Montana... and enjoyer of beautiful, hard to reach places, I would like to express my concern for paving the North Fork road to Polebridge!! I am asking you to CONSIDER SOME OPTIONS. YOU COULD

- Restart the road study process and study all county roads to help objectify what roads to improve with federal highway tax dollars. The county commissioners took it upon themselves to prioritize the North Fork Road at the expense of other roads in the county
- Ask the MDOT to directly address Flathead County's fiscal problems with maintaining the North Fork Road. Flathead County apparently can't afford to maintain the road. But the MDOT study does not directly address this overriding factor. Does a \$7 - 20 million dollar federal paving 'solution' really solve the County's \$30,000 (!) funding problem?
- Ask the MDOT to justify their assertion that all but paving options won't lead to an increase in traffic up the North Fork Valley. They list only paving options as likely to increase traffic, and not other surface and dust abatement treatments that improve road drivability. I, for one, do not favor road improvement options that would lead to more traffic, more subdivision, loss of the wild and scenic values of the Valley, and loss to wildlife and wildlife habitat.

THANK YOU
Kaleigh

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam](#); ["Sheila Ludlow"](#); [Vernarsky, Patti](#);
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Corridor Study Comment - Doug Barnes 8-5-10
Date: Thursday, August 05, 2010 12:17:20 PM

Lani
801-288-3220

From:
Sent: Thursday, August 05, 2010 11:52 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

Dear Ms. Goff,

As a land owner on the North Fork of the Flathead and wildlife biologist, I understand that my love of this unique ecosystem which has evolved over millenia is not shared or even important to the various proponents of paving it. I only know that what we have is increasingly rare in this world of frenetic nerve jangled suburbanites thinking only of comfort and time.

But this treasury of rare and endangered wildlife and their surroundings are the major reason people travel here worldwide to answer primitive urges and to reconnect with their own heritage and better grasp the sublime if even for a moment in time or during a once in a lifetime experience. (please note that Yellowstone Park has just set an all time monthly record of 60,000 visitors in July for many of the reasons noted above).

We need to be wise and not hasty to trade such a timeless natural heritage for an out-dated philosophy of "funnel'm through the gates" What we have now in and around Glacier National park is nearly pristine and cannot be improved for these flagship species residing here. Once you destroy the base which provides the "magic" inherent here, the spiral downward can be fast and final. Once lost, Paradise cannot be mysteriously recaptured when cavalier, uninformed decisions are implemented.

I implore you and others involved in this attempt to shift the financial burden from the county and state to the federal taxpayers as an obvious sleight-of-hand when you review the recent boon dogle in Alaska termed the "road to nowhere" which is now a classic in the annals of American fiscal irresponsibility . Please do not repeat the same ill- planned and unwise path, especially with so many residents of the valley so anxious for the hundreds of miles of dusty roads to be paved in lieu of this proposed Road to Nowhere here in Montana. Even the cold, unemotional cost accounting of the engineers(both social and physical) as well as elected officials cannot justify this transferr of priorities.

Please bear in mind the recent cooperation Canadian political leaders have afforded all of us in efforts to protect the Fathead headwaters from industrial mining. What message do we send them now when we are poised to run a dagger through the heart of the N Fork with an Industrial Road which will surely gut this same natural heritage so long sought for and recently won for the river?

Have you thought about the monstous costs associated with maintaining an asphalt highway? No matter the design, the cracks will eventually appear and need to be tarred(very labor intensive). If not done the pot holes are next, and unattended they grow and deepen with perpendicular drop-offs which quickly become axle breakers and tire poppers-much more sinister than any gravel hole ever

created! If this condition grows due to lack of funding in the future the very road that excites the "dust busters" so anxious for the smooth comfort and speed of black top will be the first to move back to the urban areas and civilized world of the clover leaf and on- ramp. Tourists will also repell from this condition and revenues will be reversed.

Imagine also the huge cost to provide protection for the numerous endangered species residing here(ie.1) speed bumps to reduce speeds so detrimental to safe passage during migrations and normal foraging activities. It is just not reasonable to expect law enforcement to be present consistently in such a remote area. 2) Federal protection will likely require overpasses and similar stuctures to assure their survival when employing life strategies. Such costs could surpass those of the road itself.

Lastly, the same amenities afforded the general population will also be capitalized on by thieves and poachers-the costs to the community can only be immagined . It is certain however and the unintended consequences of this shift can be a pemanent blight not only to the wildlife and "stage" on which they perfom but will also bring a cost to our world we will mourn for generations to come. I implore you to think beyond your role in the public sector but also as a steward of the planet and father or mother-your children,grandchildren and future generations will thank you for prudently leaving them a little of the "last best place"

With eternal hope,
Doug Barnes



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8/3/10

Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

I believe the goal for the North Fork road from Canyon Creek to Camus Creek should be the 24' paved road, alternative 5b. The road should be built as a scenic route with alignment & design to accommodate 45mph and the users you identified as well as commercial, i.e. loggers, tree planters, outfitters, etc. I do not believe it is accurate to say this type of road will have a high environmental impact. Seems to me it would have the least impact. Why are we paving the roads on either side of the bridges if paved roads have high environmental consequences? The landowners on the North Fork have voted several times regarding what should be done with the road. To my knowledge, the majority of landowners always voted to

Name: ROBERT L. BIGLER

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

If you do not give the study team this comment form at the meeting please mail it to NFFR attention Lani Eggertsen-Goff, PB , 488 E Winchester St., Suite 400, Murray UT 84105 or e-mail Goff@pbworld.com

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pave this section. It is hard for me to believe we are still dealing with this issue! Someone apparently doesn't like the landowners answer!

The Park Service apparently thought the road should be paved as they paved the Camus Creek road in the Park and installed a permanent bridge between the Park & NF road. Also, the first 10 miles of the NF road is paved to Canyon Creek. It seems to defy logic to not pave the road between these two roads. What has changed to warrant not paving the section in question?

I am aware of local folks who have taken out of town relatives and friends into Glacier Park at West Glacier for a short loop. Their plan was to return via Camus Creek Road & the North Fork Road. They were quite shocked to find out how bad the road section in question was. In other words, this is a nice, short loop through Glacier Park and Flathead N.F. if the road is suitable.

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When the section of road is in poor condition some North Fork landowners, including myself, travel the Camos Creek road in Glacier Park rather than bounce down the North Fork. This may help the Park keep their visitor numbers up but is also competition with the tourists.

Robert L. Biggs

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Murray, Pam
Sent: Friday, July 30, 2010 3:25 PM
To: Kirkendall, Amanda
Subject: FW: N. Fork Road

From: Gilbert Bissell
Sent: Friday, July 30, 2010 2:25 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: N. Fork Road

We own property at 8250 N Fork Road. I would support paving the road from Blankenship to the Camas entrance. A large amount of traffic seems to turn off into the park or comes from the park. Could Federal funding be acquired from either the Border Patrol (homeland security), Forest Service or National Parks?

In the past, magnesium chloride has worked well for dust control. The dust is very bad on all stretches of dirt.
Thank you
Gilbert Bissell

From: www@mdt.mt.gov
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov;
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Thursday, August 05, 2010 10:52:18 AM

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/05/2010 10:51:37
First Name: becky
Last Name: braunig
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

I do not favor paving this section of road. I do favor the county keeping it maintained! I wish the same treatment that has been given the stretch of road between Polebridge and Camas could be done to this lower stretch. That stretch is smoother than the paved part of the road in Home Ranch Bottoms!
thank you, becky

Submitter's IP address: 70.41.232.74

Reference Number = northfork_229705810546875

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#);
[Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: Feasibility Study,
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 10:36:26 AM

From: Ray Brown
Sent: Monday, August 09, 2010 7:50 PM
To: sheila ludlow; Murray, Pam
Subject: Fw: Feasibility Study,

--- On **Sun, 8/8/10, Ray Brown** wrote:

From: Ray Brown
Subject: Feasibility Study,
To: "sheila ludlow" <sludlow@mt.gov>
Date: Sunday, August 8, 2010, 7:42 PM

Sheila, One item that we discussed @ the 7/27/10 meeting I'm most concerned with hearing back you about deals with the statements expressing development of private property along the study corridor. I stated to you that only 4-5 people own property near the first half mile and fracturing wildlife crossings or which ever concerns were quoted I believe to be non-existent. You were going to find out exactly who and how many property owners are along this stretch of roadway and correct my figures if I'm mistaken? To this end I'm hoping the study group will correct the statements associated within and include it in the final documents. Also, never mentioned in the study overview that I read was there any EPA mandated Haze and Visibility Program information. Glacier National Park is listed as one of 156 areas in the nation to benefit and be part of this program. Although this is a long term program there's no reason for it to be overlooked and not be part of the findings. If this info is found in the complete texts then I Thank You for including it. I meant to ask for a full copy of the study for my files? Any way you can forward a final copy to myself when done? Thanks For your help with this whole process, Ray Brown

From: Don J. Burgard
Sent: Wednesday, July 28, 2010 2:34 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: Montana North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

- I've commented before. I'm still strongly opposed to paving any section of the North Fork Road.
 - I have a cabin up the North Fork that I try to frequent almost weekly for 4 or 5 days when it's not snow bound.
 - The North Fork character is rough, tough and should not be changed to a realtor bonanza or tourist destination.
- The Glacier National Park Camas Road and the North Fork Road don't need more traffic and the Park opposes paving.
 - Both roads are wildlife corridors and traffic should be a slow and careful wildlife viewing stretch of road.
 - Deaths of both people and wildlife would increase if the North Fork Road was paved.
 - The argument that Columbia Falls business establishments would benefit is bogus. There's no attraction!
 - The argument that emergency services could more quickly get to people in distress is bogus.
 - Paving would save about 10 minute for an ambulance. A helicopter would probably be dispatched.
- I question the value of meetings to get public input regarding the North Fork Road at this stage of the study.
 - If Earth Justice is right about paving being illegal . . . why waste my time for my input?
 - I think the Corridor Study should look into many other issues (with lawyers) before having public meetings.
- I suggest that the Corridor Study release a preferred alternative as soon as possible so I'll know what to oppose.
 - This paving or not paving issue has been going on for decades and I'm sick of it.
 - Leave the road alone and maintain it according to established gravel road standards.

Bcc to: Mitch, Burgie, Sonja, Keeb

Don J. Burgard

Mitchell R. Burgard

Re: Draft Corridor Study Comments

August 9th, 2010

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
PB Americas Project Manager
488 East Winchester Street, Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

To the North Fork Corridor Study Team,

First off. Thanks for giving the public and local landowners the opportunity to comment on the Draft Corridor Study. The document is extensive and I appreciate the amount of work that went into it.

I was raised in the Flathead Valley, currently live in Columbia Falls and share a family cabin on Trail Creek Road in the North Fork. I have worked for Glacier National Park and the Flathead National Forest in the past but I am writing solely as a private citizen.

I would be very interested in seeing the condition of the road through the Study Area improved, particularly during the months of July and August. That being said, I am adamantly opposed to the paving option. I don't know of any road that, once paved, has been 'unpaved' (even if the results of paving lead to future undesirable consequences that the community regrets). Other solutions are not only less expensive, but they can be implemented without closing the door to other options (you cannot test chloride or lignin on blacktop).

This year, the section north of Camas was treated with various improvement options (all of which are described in your Study). Between those treatments and a more normal year in terms of precipitation, the dust of recent drought years has been virtually non-existent and the road has remained smooth through the highest traffic month of July. Maintenance on the Study Section, on the other hand, has been wholly ignored this summer (which many feel is not coincidental). Even in it's current poorly maintained state, the 'problems' associated with the stretch of road in the Study Area are, in my mind, simply a minor inconvenience and a nuisance (or, if your glass is half full, part of the adventure of the North Fork experience).

I love the differing opinions amongst North Fork landowners and the representation from the far extremes of the political spectrum but, as you have discovered, nothing polarizes the community more than talk about improving the road.

I do not, and never have felt, that dust was a major human health or environmental issue and I believe that your report confirms this. Some of my neighbors who are the most vocal about the supposed environmental concerns with respect to road dust have rarely, if ever, expressed concerns about the environment in any other context. The health and safety advocates are diverting the discussion by throwing the 'safety and environmental damage cards'. It is clearly disingenuous and the Study suffers from having to address these red herrings.

Before I get into details (and so that, I too, am not accused of being disingenuous) I will state upfront that my biggest concern with pavement is that it will bring more development, more vehicle traffic and more 'amenities' that will, ultimately, destroy the character of this very unique and special corner of America. I realize that this is a 'pre-NEPA' analysis, but it is the unknowns about the negative secondary impacts of paving that scare me much more than the blacktop itself. Any of the improvements, shy of simple grading and dust abatement, cannot move forward without a better understanding of the long-term potential impacts.

Many of the comments in the draft report and during the public meetings have addressed my myriad concerns with the paving option (and they have done so much more eloquently than I can). In the remainder of this letter I will attempt to provide new comments on specific sections of the report where I have questions and suggestions for additional information that I would like to see in the final version.

Field surveys:

I appreciate the effort that the Study team made to address the complex ecological issues and the cultural, social and environmental concerns that must be addressed before any alternative is implemented. The concept of a 'pre-NEPA' analysis for such a major undertaking is no easy task...impossible, really.

I may have missed it in the document, but I would like to know more about the field survey methods that the team implemented. Without more information on the methodology of the data collection the 'field survey' data seems anecdotal. A few examples:

Page 20 mentions that 'other weeds that could occur in the area include orange hawkweed and oxeye daisy'. Oxeye daisy can be observed within the Study Area from a car traveling the speed limit (just look to the left while northbound after leaving the pavement and you'll observe several patches). A short walk along the roadside should turn up orange hawkweed as it is common north and south of the Study Area. With just a little more effort, the same should go for frogs, toads and the occasional snake (despite the statement on Page 21 that says 'no reptiles or amphibians were observed during the field review').

The scientific literature reviews are appreciated. These are, however, focused on current or historic conditions and a NEPA analysis would have to look deeper into future impacts and consequences. It would be nice if the Corridor Study, if not able to provide answers, at least recognized more of these secondary and tertiary impacts.

Edmond's 2001 and 2002 lynx track survey is cited, for example. The Corridor Study states that the researchers 'documented lynx to the north of Polebridge but none south of Polebridge. What isn't noted is that snowshoe hare populations boom in dense 12 to 18 year old post-fire lodgepole pine. The lynx that were observed north of Polebridge were likely preying on the snowshoes in the 1988 Red Bench Burn. Lynx tracks may not have been observed along the unburned corridor in 2001 and 2002, but it is likely that they will populate the Study Area (2001 Moose and 2003 Robert Fires) in just a few years and for a decade or more thereafter.

Similarly, there is some good research in the report about the number of wildlife carcasses picked up from the roadside in and near the Study Area. I would suspect that the increase in the number of animal carcasses picked up by MDT on the paved section of 486 has a lot to do with increased traffic speeds. Again, I realize that the study is not a NEPA analysis but it is difficult evaluate the options without answers to some questions about the potential impacts of the various improvements. How many more carcasses will be retrieved from the study section if, it too, were to be paved or speeds were increased? The Camas Road is frequently crossed by wildlife (including wolves and bears) that travels to and from the Appgar Range; what will happen on that road if traffic volume increases?

Figures and photos:

The only photograph in the document to take up a full page on its own is Figure 2.2. This is an image of a truck (pulling trailer no less) that is kicking up some road dust. The sentence referencing the image in the body of the study states that, 'dusty roadway conditions decreased visibility considerably'. The document then immediately acknowledges that 'dust was never specifically cited as a contributing factor in the accident logs'.

The word 'specifically' may reveal something of a subliminal bias on the author's part. Dust either was, or wasn't cited as a contributing factor in the accident logs, right?

A photograph of dust may be appropriate in the document but I don't believe it should be referenced in a sentence that demonstrates the decreased visibility that has never contributed to an accident. Furthermore, the scenic beauty and rustic character of the North Fork is mentioned, on occasion, in the study. How about a scenic image of the vast open, undeveloped river corridor that the Study states could be threatened by development (page 17) to balance out the full page dust photo?

Figure 2.1 has a photo of a stream with a caption that says water is present only during part of the year. I believe this is a photo of Hellroaring Creek. Page 12 refers to this as an 'impromptu waterfall'. In drought years the creek has, more or less, gone dry in August. At the time of this writing, however, this creek is still flowing well. Regardless, 'intermittent stream' may be a more appropriate term for this feature.

Historical context:

The Study does a fair job of describing the history of the Study Segment itself but I would like to see more historical information on when and why the two primary roads it connects to (the Main North Fork Road and the Camas Road) were constructed. Cultural and historical context are important, especially in an area that is 'off the grid' and where wagon roads and gravel have long been a part of the community identity.

From what I understand, the Camas Road was never built with the intention of 'creating a new entrance' to the park. Even when the Camas Road was constructed the management plans described the desire to keep the North Fork portion of the park 'primitive', however, the North Fork Valley was under threat of being flooded by a series of proposed hydroelectric dams. Glacier Park's managers found themselves facing a difficult decision; risk seeing the North Fork disappear under water or, reluctantly, encourage more visitation (via Lake McDonald) to the primitive North Fork Valley in order to build a base of opposition for future dam proposals. At the time, some people called it a "useless road" but, on the other hand, you don't have to scuba dive to get baked goods at the Polebridge Mercantile.

Sources:

Man in Glacier, Chapter 6 http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/glac2/chap6.htm

Endangered Rivers and the Conservation Movement, Tim Palmer, Chapter 4, page 66

Today, a statement on Glacier's Biodiversity Page says that, 'Human-caused habitat destruction is by far the single greatest factor contributing to extinctions today. Habitats may be destroyed outright by such activities as building roads (which literally pave the way for further human penetrations into formerly undisturbed areas), clearcutting forests, plowing fields, constructing dams, and developing towns and cities.' <http://glac/resources/bio5.htm>

Despite the original intent, the Camas Road is now largely the reason that the paving option is even on the table. The gravel section may seem like an 'unfinished' stretch of road to some but, to my mind, maintaining it as an improved gravel road is culturally and historically more appropriate.

As with the ecological concerns in the document, I feel like the Study could be considerably more thorough on describing the unique historical and cultural importance of the region. I have traveled the United States extensively and can think of very few areas that are inhabited by humans who live entirely off the grid amongst a natural occurring compliment of all the regions pre-European carnivores. In fact, with the possible exception of the nearby Yaak, I don't think this situation exists anywhere else in the lower 48. What other remote mountain communities at the far end of gravel roads still exist? Are there examples of positive and/or negative consequences that have come from improving roads to isolated communities in the past? It would be nice to see some of these questions answered with the same level of attention that went into the engineering details.

Framing the problem:

If I were to read the document without knowledge of the situation, I'm not sure I would have a clear understanding of the problem that is being addressed. Several perceived problems are brought up but the Study largely explains them as not having basis in fact; dust as a health hazard (it's not PM2.5, just nuisance PM10); safety (no accidents attributed to dust) etc.

The Corridor Study states that the current capacity of the road is up to 4000 vehicles per day but the 2009 estimated average annual daily traffic is only 280 vehicles. The month with the maximum daily average, July, is estimated at 542 vehicles. The document states that there are not currently delays or congestion and that traffic volume does not exceed current capacity. Furthermore, the issue is clearly seasonal in nature...very few residents 'winter' in the North Fork and the Camas Road is not plowed. It gets busy for maybe 12 of 52 weeks per year but, even then, there isn't an issue with capacity or congestion.

The Study goes on to describe recreational activities that can be accessed from the Study Area but, north of Camas, none of them can be reached without driving many more miles on gravel anyway (and, as far as I know, Glacier National Park has not requested assistance with increasing visitation and traffic at a 'new and improved' Camas Entrance). As for the Study Area itself, there is one river access, the Big Creek area, a shooting range and two junctions with gravel Forest Service roads. If road improvements are not being suggested to ease access to these five recreational 'draws' then, is it not to get more visitors and landowners to Glacier and the North Fork more comfortably and at a higher rate of speed?

Other states have completed studies showing that the fatality rate increases on recently paved roads as traffic and vehicle speeds increase. Where are the statistics and estimates on the estimates of future accidents and fatalities after various road improvements are implemented?

As each concern is checked off of the list of real problems, I find myself wondering why such an extensive list of improvement options is being forwarded at all. What are the real problems that are being addressed? Clearly there are benefits to some groups and individuals to promoting paving over other improved gravel options. The County would be interested in passing off the costs of maintenance to the State or the Feds, some communities may get an increase in tourist traffic, some developers and landowners would make some money, and yet, I don't know that ulterior financial motives are the primary consideration for most individuals that support road improvements.

Let's face it, gravel roads are improved and paved primarily to move more vehicles more quickly and more comfortably and, in cases of congestion, more efficiently. The North Fork is one area where taking it slow and roughing it a bit is part of the whole experience and, in this case, paving would not reduce congestion; to the contrary, it is more likely to create it.

Barring the desire of the County to have the State or Feds subsidize our local road and a handful of individuals that see monetary benefit from improvements, this issue seems to boil down, solely, to 'driver comfort'. Most individuals, myself included, simply don't find driving on a bumpy, rutty, dusty, wash boarded surface nearly as comfortable or pleasant as driving on pavement. Words like comfort, convenience, ease (or bone jarring, nerve-wracking etc.) cannot be found in the Study and, yet, these are largely the driving factors (no pun intended) for recommending improvements. Readers intuitively know that a paved or improved road will be more 'pleasant', what they may not understand are the secondary consequences of the improvement.

Boiling down the problem to a handful of proven issues, combined with more information on the potential long term consequences of each action would go far towards helping readers see the big picture and better allow them to weigh the pros and cons of the various improvement alternatives.

For my money (and the taxpayers), increased grading in the summer months, combined with tests of some stabilization and dust control in critical areas would strike a balance between 'driver comfort' and the 'no turning back' risks associated with development if the road were to be paved.

Thank you for your time,

Mitchell R. Burgard

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam; "sludlow@mt.gov";](#)
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda;](#)
Subject: Fw: North Fork Corridor Study Comment
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 9:14:26 AM

From: Don J. Burgard
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Sent: Tue Aug 10 09:22:04 2010
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

During a recent meeting at the North Fork Community Hall an advocate of paving the North Fork Road insisted that he had evidence that the dust from the 10 mile unpaved section south of the Camas Road was indeed causing the Glacier National Park glaciers to melt faster. In a recent Hungry Horse News the weekly writer of the North Fork Views column cited his reasons for advocating paving. He cited health and safety, melting glaciers, and the money the county government would save if considerably more money was spent by the state government to pave it. He concluded the column by suggesting that Glacier National Park had no jurisdiction outside the park, should not oppose paving, and should “. . . butt out and mind their own business.” There are plenty of more credible sources that discredit those weak positions.

In stark contrast to paving advocates reasoning, a report commissioned by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee calls for a “conservation and wildlife management plan” for the transboundary Flathead and a new management plan for the Flathead River Valley that “gives priority to natural ecological values and wildlife conservation.”

Their final report, released July 26 in Brazil, recognizes that B.C.’s Flathead “plays a crucial role in maintaining north-south connectivity in the Rockies.” It also notes that the “huge area of intact nature” in the Crown of the Continent ecosystem, which includes B.C.’s Flathead, offers “the best available environment to allow resilience and adaptation for plants and animals faced with climate-induced challenges to their survival.”

The mission report says that “the Waterton-Glacier World Heritage property forms

the core protected area in this regional ecosystem, and its natural integrity is inextricably linked with the neighboring transboundary Flathead watershed.”

In summarizing the UNESCO mission report in their "state of conservation" report, the World Heritage Committee noted “that the entire Flathead basin, in Canada and the United States of America, is important for protecting, maintaining and buffering” the Waterton-Glacier World Heritage Site.

I have a cabin on Trail Creek. I drive the North Fork Road dozens of times a year with less concern for my health and safety or about the adverse impact I have on melting glaciers than I have while I’m traveling on a paved road in the developed Flathead Valley area. The Corridor Study should put a higher value on the rational, scientific, and intelligent information available from professionals than to the ranting of politically or financially motivated North Fork Road paving advocates.

I personally observe that the North Fork teems with wildlife, including many species of animals that are threatened elsewhere, and has the greatest diversity of plants in all of Canada. It is part of the same ecosystem that is protected in Alberta and Montana as the transboundary Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and the parks darn well do have the right and responsibility to state their objection to paving any part of the North Fork Road. That input is especially important when understandings and agreements are being worked out between Canada and the United States to end or limit by moratorium such activities as mining, clear cutting, road building, motorized road access, and other development that would not follow the priorities of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee report.

I strongly support preserving the North Fork of the Montana Flathead River Valley in its current condition. No paving or other road improvements that could adversely impact that goal should be considered.

Don J. Burgard

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Murray, Pam
Sent: Tuesday, August 03, 2010 11:13 AM
To: Kirkendall, Amanda
Subject: FW: North Fork Road

From: Fowler W. Cary Jr.
Sent: Tuesday, August 03, 2010 5:32 AM
To: mdtinfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road

Dear Sirs:

Some 14 years ago I fulfilled a life-long dream to visit Montana, truly "the Last Best Place" in the Lower 48. Being a life long flat-lander from the East by job necessity, I had longed for the pristine mountain country of my early youth, Kentucky. However, sadly, as in so many treasured places, man has been a very poor steward of these blessings with which he has been entrusted. Those wild, pristine places have long since succumbed to short-sighted development in the name of progress which is always driven by economic vested self-interests. I have listened intently over the years to the voices of my North Fork neighbors, both pro & con, on "progress" for the North Fork, and now clearly understand which represents integrity and which speaks of personal pocketbook for the North Fork.

Now, thankfully, from the vantage of being a part-time North Fork resident of the past twelve years, and from the wisdom that comes from hard bought experience (perhaps the only benefit of growing old) I ask you to carefully consider REAL enlightened stewardship for one of Montana's truly Best Places, the North Fork of the Flathead Valley. Our Canadian neighbors that have acted wisely to preserve & protect this place are surely watching for our concurrence.

Progress can be the wisdom to understand how to preserve and protect what once degraded will be gone forever. Some places should remain the pristine great treasures we found, and we should pass them to our posterity with minimal scars or change. This will most eloquently state to those that will follow us that we were here and we had the wisdom to protect & preserve for you, and the obligation is now yours.

Now is the time to make wise long-term decisions for the North Fork, and I thank you very much for considering what we will pass to future generations. Hopefully, they too will understand the wisdom and discipline of our current choices, and then likewise "do the right thing" for all the inhabitants of this Last Best Place.

Sincerely,

Fowler Cary, Jr.
Polebridge, Montana

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Road Comments
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 2:15:21 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: Douglas Chadwick
Sent: Saturday, July 31, 2010 10:43 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road Comments

To the Members of MDT:

I am writing to suggest that you please move past the outdated assumption a road such as the route accessing the North Fork Valley must be designed to move more traffic faster and more efficiently. A faster and more efficient road will only degrade the special qualities of the wildlife and human communities in the area and threaten the integrity of the greater Glacier Park/Whitefish Range/ Canadian Headwaters Ecosystem. Given the absence of effective land use planning in Flathead County and the strong possibility that it may be dismantled altogether, improved access will lead to the opposite of improvement in the lives of the people and animals that inhabit the North Fork. Higher speeds represent a threat to the safety of species moving east and west through the valley and also using the valley bottomlands as winter and key spring range. Commercial and real estate development will exacerbate the problem, creating higher traffic volumes, greater human disturbance in the valley and disruption of critical wildlife activities. The remote, rural character -- the frontier lifestyle -- of residents will be equally threatened. Crime will doubtless increase, especially poaching and cabin break-ins, as outlying residences become easier to reach.

There are very few areas left in the contiguous states offering the scenic and natural values that the North Fork preserves. It is a privilege to live there. Moreover, there are precious few ecosystems south of Canada as rich in large native species, all of which will be increasingly at risk from more traffic moving more quickly. Most notably, the Transboundary Flathead has been shown in studies to contain the densest and most diverse array of large and mid-size native carnivores in the U.S., from martens, lynx and wolverines to wolves and grizzlies. For that matter, the grizzly population on the west side of Glacier and adjoining Whitefish Range is the densest remaining south of Canada, while the grizzlies of the British Columbia Flathead represent represent the densest interior population left in Canada.

I am writing this as a wildlife biologist but also as a longtime North Fork

landowner and resident intimately familiar with the Valley and its wildlife populations, having participated in studies there.

Now, writing simply as a Flathead County taxpayer, I have to ask why paving the North Fork road is even being considered as an option when so much of Flathead County is far more densely populated and yet served by unpaved roads where the dust not only affects a great many more homeowners but creates air quality problems throughout the heart of the Flathead Valley and its major population centers, with consequences to the health of thousands. What is behind this discussion about spending colossal amounts of money to pave the North Fork road? A dozen or fewer vocal North Fork residents complain of the dust and discomfort of driving a dirt road. So? Are we to change the whole quality and temp of life in the North Fork Valley at taxpayer expense in order to address those complaints? This sounds undemocratic and amounts to a subsidy of hundreds of thousands of dollars per complainer, does it not? Or is the paving proposal intended more as a subsidy to boosters in Columbia Falls, who hope to profit from advertising the town as a "Gateway to Glacier"? If so, this is very shortsighted, since paving the road would devalue the wildlife resources of the greater Glacier Park ecosystem, for which the North Fork valley is a major component.

Again, the old notion of equating more and faster traffic with progress is surely past its expiration date. A dirt road requiring patience and care while driving is a positive thing for the North Fork Valley in every way. I recognize that MDT personnel are neither trained nor encouraged to think this way, but in this case, you should. If you lived in the North Fork, you would -- unless you're among the few who expect to live in one of the wildest, loveliest places left anywhere and let Flathead County and American taxpayers provide you with a quick and comfortable highway to town. The most important event affecting the North Fork Valley and its future for generations to come was the recent decision by British Columbia to forego massive industrialization of the Valley's headwaters for oil, gas, and minerals. As a result, major oil companies have voluntarily abandoned leases on federal lands on the U.S. side of the North Fork. Proposals to funnel more traffic at higher speeds into the U.S. North Fork, stimulating subdivision and commercial and residential development while making the route more lethal to wildlife and creating greater human disturbance and environmental impact at all levels, send an unbelievably counterproductive message to our Canadian neighbors. That message is either: "We don't get it" or "We don't really care."

Please re-think the question of how one actually goes about improving life in the second decade of the 21st century. It definitely is no longer a question of what's best for automobiles. That's looking backwards -- trying to plan the future by looking in your rear view mirror, so to speak. For the North Fork Valley and its wild and human communities, a better road is not a bigger, smoother road. It is

a road that causes the least disruption and change.

Thank you for your attention,

Douglas Chadwick and Karen Reeves

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Friday, August 06, 2010 11:37:58 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [<mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov>]
Sent: Friday, August 06, 2010 10:32 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/06/2010 10:31:39
First Name: Allen
Last Name: Chrisman
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

I appreciate the scope of the work that has gone into the North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study, and believe you have captured the full range of conditions, public sentiment, and possible solutions to long term management of the North Fork Road.

My parents purchased the family property above Trail Creek in 1958, and I have spent many summers on the North Fork. My parents also were among the original signatories of the North Fork Compact to voluntarily preserve the unique character of this place. We are still active members.

I support fully the need to reduce the dust problem on the North Fork and applaud the County for the road improvements and test sections of different abatement products.

I also support the proposal to pave the lower portion of the North Fork between Canyon Creek and Camas Creek. I believe it

is the most feasible solution to accommodate the level of traffic there, including a high level of rafters. The light raft trailers contribute significantly to the creation of the washboard in the gravel road through this section, which becomes a significant safety hazard.

I also recommend reducing the speed limit on the lower road from Columbia Falls to Canyon Creek to 55 miles per hour and keeping a reasonable speed limit (suggest 45 miles per hour) on the portion from Canyon Creek to Camas Creek if it were to be paved.

I also support gravel improvements on the portion of the North Fork Road north of Camas Creek to include improvement of the base course and drainage, narrowing of the roadway, addition of crushed surfacing, and dust abatement as the county can afford it, or finds grants to improve the road.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Submitter's IP address: 174.44.8.193

Reference Number = northfork_812530517578125

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: Fw: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Date: Monday, August 09, 2010 3:49:00 PM

From: Pat Dillon
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov <mdtnffrteam@mt.gov>
Sent: Mon Aug 09 17:40:58 2010
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

I am writing to comment on the above-referenced road study. According to your Study Focus, the purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive long-range plan for managing the approximate 13-mile corridor of the road from Blankenship Road to Camas Creek Road, and to determine what, if anything, can be done to improve that corridor based on needs, public and agency input and financial feasibility.

One of the primary driving forces behind this study is to address road dust complaints. Since the entire corridor study area is within the Flathead National Forest, adjacent to Glacier National Park, there should be no residential homes in the study area, and the impact of dust on people would be limited to those travelling in their vehicles. Dust on the road in the study area only poses a problem for primarily three months of the year during the dry summer months. Most vehicles would be travelling with their windows closed and their air conditioner on in their vehicles during those months, so the dust would not create a health hazard to those individuals. Since no one resides along that stretch of road, there would be no health hazard posed to residents. Stricter enforcement of the 35 mph speed limit and more posted speed signs (perhaps a Solar Speed Indicator Sign as indicated in your Study -- if it doesn't get shot up) would help to discourage the many speeders on this section of the road that create the dust visibility hazards to other drivers. Paving that section of the road would undoubtedly lead to even higher rates of speed and more risk of injury to people and wildlife.

I am sure that there are many unpaved sections of road in the county

with dense residential populations who would benefit from "road improvement" including paving. Why is the uninhabited portion of the North Fork Road the object of so much focus by the County and MDOT, when there are more than 700 miles of unpaved roads in the County?

As for road improvements, I am in favor of your Maintenance Treatment Improvement Option 2A, which would reduce the quantity and severity of potholes and wash boarding by increasing the road grading from twice a year to four times a year, not just for the study corridor, but for the entire North Fork Road. I would also encourage the addition of a guardrail along the steep bank north of Camas Creek Road, outside the study corridor.

While the county has done a great job of improving the North Fork Road this summer north of Camas Road all the way up to Polebridge, as a result of this "improved" road, I have noticed a dramatic increase in traffic and traffic speeds. If merely improving the road north of Camas has this effect, I can only imagine the impact that paving the section of the road leading up to Camas would have on increased traffic and speeding.

The smoother the road, the faster cars travel. The faster cars travel, the greater the dust and the higher the accident rate. The road seems to only be a hotly debated problem June through August, and is generally accepted by all users the other nine months of the year. Today's society tends to not have patience for such a road, but rather to have an expectation of a catered experience with little or no inconvenience.

Since its inception, the relatively poor condition of the North Fork Road has unintentionally acted as a controller of traffic. The bumps, curves and dust reduce speeds, and hence the number of people who would likely visit the North Fork area. Without the bumps, curves and dust, traffic to the North Fork would realistically increase 10-fold, which would likely have a significant impact on the environment.

In addition, the primitive nature of the North Fork Road has

historically protected the North Fork from commercial exploitation and development. Speculative investors of North Fork property were generally unsuccessful due to difficulty accessing the area. The North Fork remains relatively unspoiled today in a large part due to the primitive condition of the road.

There are many people throughout the Flathead Valley who absolutely refuse to travel to the North Fork due to the road condition. This is not necessarily a bad thing. People who wish to have quick, smooth access to the river and lakes surrounded by mountains have many other options available to them through northwest Montana.

Imagine what a smooth, quick-access or paved road would do to the sense of solitude people have come to expect out of North Fork destinations. The entire North Fork experience would be changed by both the number and type of visitor traveling to the area.

Bottom line, the North Fork's remote, rural character, and the scenic and natural treasures that make it so unique from other areas of the country would be not only threatened, but lost by the influx of people and resulting development that would come from paving any portion of the North Fork Road. Residents who cry out for paving should remember that when they purchased or inherited their property, the road was not paved and there were no utilities in place, and it was this very non-conformist nature that helped preserve the area's individuality. Let there be one stronghold left in the United States where people and wildlife can live harmoniously by maintaining a balance between the two, and saying no to encroachments of a more convenient lifestyle.

Sincerely,

Patricia Cole

From: www@mdt.mt.gov
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov;
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Monday, August 09, 2010 5:08:18 PM

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/09/2010 17:08:15
First Name: Jon
Last Name: Cole
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

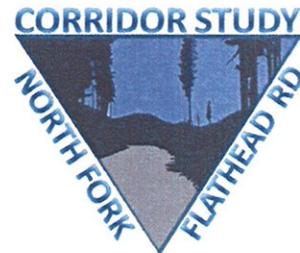
Comments:

I am commenting in response to the North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study and the possible improvements, including paving.

I am supportive of any efforts to improve and maintain the entire North Fork Road. However, I do not want to see the rural, rustic and remote character of the North Fork area changed by the increase in traffic and driving speeds which any further paving of the road will undoubtedly bring. One of the main reasons I purchased land in the North Fork 22 years ago and moved there 13 years ago was because of the lifestyle that an unpaved road and no utilities affords.

There already exists a paved road alternative from Columbia Falls to Camas Creek Road. Anyone wishing to avoid the bumps and dust on that section of the North Fork Road can use the Camas Creek Road through the Park which is usually open from May through November. This route is a little longer mileage-wise, but takes about the same amount of time to drive, due to increased legal traffic speeds on the pavement.

Rather than pursuing options to pave a section of the road that is uninhabited and already has a paved alternate route, I would urge you to concentrate your efforts on options for funding more grading to the entire road all the way to the border, as the road north of Polebridge has been severely neglected over the years.



JOHN COLLINS PAGE 1 OF 2

Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

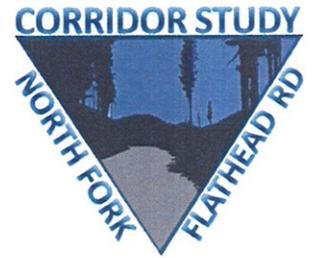
I FEEL THE NORTH FORK AREA IS AN UNspoiled, PRISTINE REGION THAT IS BECOMING MORE UNIQUE AS DEVELOPMENT INCREASES IN MANY OTHER PARTS OF THE FLATHEAD VALLEY. PAVING THE NORTH FORK ROAD WILL ENCOURAGE INCREASED RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH FORK, BRINGING ADVERSE IMPACT ON WILDLIFE AND QUALITY OF LIFE. I STRONGLY OPPOSE PAVING THE ROAD.

THERE ARE NO COMPROMISE REASONS TO PAVE THE ROAD. I FEEL THAT PAVING THE ROAD WILL LEAD TO GREATLY INCREASED TRAFFIC AT HIGHER SPEEDS, PRESSURE TO RELAX EXISTING ZONING RESTRICTIONS IN ORDER TO PERMIT INCREASED DEVELOPMENT AND WILL RESULT IN THE LOSS OF THOSE QUALITIES THAT MAKE THE

Name: JOHN COLLINS, SR

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



JOHN COLLINS PAGE 2 of 2

Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

NORTH FORK SUCH A UNIQUE AREA — ITS REMOTENESS, THE ABUNDANCE OF WILDLIFE, AND THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING IN AN AREA THAT IS SOMEWHAT REMOVED FROM THE REST OF OUR DEVELOPED SOCIETY.

I AM OPPOSED TO FURTHER STUDY OF THE PAVING OPTION AND WOULD ENCOURAGE THE MONTANA DOT TO FOCUS ITS EFFORTS ELSEWHERE. I'VE TRAVELLED THE ROAD FOR THE PAST TWENTY YEARS AND AM NOT BOTHERED BY THE DUST AND LESS THAN PERFECT ROAD CONDITIONS. THESE RELATIVELY MINOR ISSUES ARE A SMALL PRICE TO PAY TO MAINTAIN THE NORTH FORK AS IT IS — REMOTE, UNSPOILED BY DEVELOPMENT.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

If you do not give the study team this comment form at the meeting please mail it to NFFR attention Lani Eggertsen-Goff, PB , 488 E Winchester St., Suite 400, Murray UT 84105 or e-mail Goff@pbworld.com

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Corridor Study Comment
Date: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 10:51:56 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: Del Coolidge
Sent: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 10:39 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Cc: mdtncfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

Dear Ms. Goff and the North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Team:

I wish to emphatically register my opposition to "improvements" in State Highway 486 over any portion of the highway. At this time, of course, "improvements" are being proposed for the section between the end of present paving, twelve miles north of Columbia Falls, and the intersection with Glacier National Park's "Camas Route" I object to the sudden reaction to pressure from Flathead County's Commissioners. That is, to me, the reason for the new study.

Any improvement in this road will result in further degradation of the North Fork Valley. I have been spending long vacations since 1950 in the North Fork. During the last six years we have been temporary residents in our second home in Polebridge for many days throughout the year. The sixty years of observation have allowed me to realize that the only factor causing past degradations in the ecology and quality of life for man and wildlife in the North Fork has been each sequential improvement in the road serving that valley. That has been true, incidentally, on both sides of the international border.

Letters from authorities such as Douglas Chadwick, one of Montana's smartest biologists, and Mr. Dave Hadden who represents many of us who wish to stabilize the North Fork Valley's status and prevent further loss of pristine qualities have been reviewed by myself and hopefully by you. I do not need to repeat the points they made. The North Fork Road, the subject of your study, NEEDS NO IMPROVEMENTS. If anything, it needs to be returned to the condition it enjoyed in 1955. It is unfair to the residents of Flathead County and

Montana to spend millions to "improve" and pave one road serving only a few Montanans. Flathead County cannot maintain the roads of the County now; money spent on "improvements" would be wasted, much less money would be required to maintain the whole road as it now exists.

Rural subdivision, if the road is improved by paving, will proceed until all of the North Fork Valley will be developed exactly as the first twelve miles of the road that is paved has led to the multiple homes that now exist along those twelve miles. Rural subdivision will ruin all of the qualities that now make the North Fork Valley an area that should be enjoyed by those who look for the environmental qualities found now on the other side of the North Fork River in Glacier National Park.

Please, simply drop this study, and worry about the rest of Flathead County or State of Montana. There are multiple roads that need your help and the taxpayers' dollars. The North Fork Flathead Road does not. And, please remember, you seem to be focused on a "corridor". You cannot do so. The changes you and special interest groups would advocate for would affect, adversely in the extreme, thousands of square miles of semi-wilderness that should be preserved as it is now. And, for those of us who use that road several dozen times a year, we DO NOT NEED "IMPROVEMENTS". Thank you very much.

Respectfully, Del Coolidge

To: **Lani Eggertsen-Goff**, PB Americas
From: Jackie Corday

August 16, 2010

RE: Comments on Draft North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

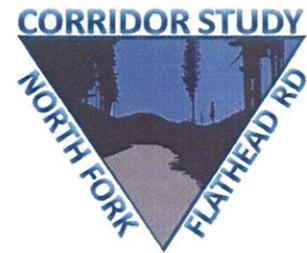
Cost of Wildlife Mitigation: In my comments submitted on this project in June, I stated my biggest concern in regards to a paving option will be the impacts to the wildlife. As noted in the Draft North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study ("Study") on pg 20, the North Fork area has incredibly diverse wildlife (63+ species of mammals), "a unique community of carnivore species . . . that appears unmatched in North America," and "important spring, summer, and fall habitat with some winter range" for ungulates. Many of these species carnivores and ungulates move around between Glacier National Park to the east and USFS public land to the west of the road (Study, pg 22), which means that at some point they must cross the North Fork Flathead Road.

The current gravel bumpy road keeps most drivers traveling around 20-30 mph. Paving would increase this speed to 45-65 depending on the curves (and driver of course). Many studies have shown that higher speeds equal a much larger amount of animals being killed by cars as the driver's reaction time is reduced to a fraction of the time of slower speeds. This is acknowledged on page 41 of the Study: "If the road is paved, animal-vehicle collisions will increase." The Study mentions that AVC could be mitigated to some degree by installing "wildlife crossing structures as part of any pavement options." However, in Table 5.2, none of the surface treatment options include any wildlife mitigation measures even though those measures would be required in order to reduce the "high" "Impacts to Wildlife" rating in Table 5.3. Even though an exact dollar amount is not known, an estimate could be used based on similar measures taken on Hwy 93 North & South. Because this corridor has even more wildlife use and greater species diversity than the Bitterroot and Mission Valleys and is next to Glacier National Park, the estimated mitigation costs need to reflect those conditions.

Need More info on Surface Options: I am also concerned that Table 5.3 gives the Millings/asphalt and Foamed asphalt mix options a "Medium" rating for impacts to the environment and impacts to wildlife without any explanation as to why those options would have less impacts than full pavement. Both of these options would greatly increase driver speed as compared to gravel.

Why was Narrowing the Road Dropped: If there is an explanation for why the "narrow the gravel roadway" option was dropped for further consideration I could not find it in the Study (I might have missed it). The option rates well under safety, controlling dust, low impacts to wildlife & the environment and agrees with the land use plans, so a through explanation is in order for eliminating this option.

Environmental Scan – Appendix: This document provides good additional information for agencies and the public about the North Fork area, history and environmental conditions. There are a few paragraphs that are so important, however, that I believe they should be in the main document. First, under either "Impacts to Wildlife" on page 40 or "Maintain the Existing Character of the Area" on page 42, insert the full 2nd paragraph on page 15 of the Scan regarding Glacier National Park managers' concerns about the paving option. What GNP officials think about the options is critical for readers of the Study since this park has such significance to not only Montana residents, but to the whole country. Second, the information about USFWS consultation in regards to the various road options' impacts on grizzly bears on page 35 of the Scan is also critical information and should be placed in body of the Study, perhaps on page 40 under "Impacts to Wildlife."



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

I am life time resident of the NF a large road bldg we have paid road maintenance for dust abatement, it was so expensive an other road was started to pave (the Horse Ranch section in front that first) Enough money wasted on dust control it could have been paved in silver fallow, Paving would be the answer.

I have been driving

Name: Lee Dawnes Lee Dawnes

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork road study?
Date: Friday, August 06, 2010 11:35:46 AM

From: Paul Edwards
Sent: Friday, August 06, 2010 10:56 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork road study?

Members of the MDT:

What insanity is this, sirs? Is there any rational purpose whatever behind a study of the merits of paving an already perfectly adequate gravel road into a tiny, remote, isolated rural community adjacent to a Wild and Scenic River and one of America's crown jewel National Parks, whose few year-round residents are overwhelmingly content with that road as it is?

Is there any basis in logic or practicality for spending money to determine whether the public should bear the appalling costs of creating a blacktop highway into de facto wilderness, to an end point where no one lives and beyond which no one can go, through prime habitat for many precious and endangered species that the American people want protected from just such incursions, and that are, due of its present character, largely so protected?

Can there be, in the fevered imaginations of a cadre of delusional boomers and bureaucrats, some intelligible justification for asking the public to finance an absurd highway to nowhere that virtually no one wants, when the all the rest of developed, inhabited, commercially active Flathead Country makes do with its network of badly kept, poorly maintained roads?

Surely, sirs, you by now apprehend the lunacy of this scheme. Surely you would be embarrassed, nay, shamed, to put your imprimatur on such a monument to utter folly.

Relying, as I do, on the persistent capacity of the human mind, when presented with irrefutable facts and compelling argument, to make the right decisions, even in the face of baldfaced imbecility, I am confident that you will dismiss this piece of egregious foolery out of hand.

You will, of course, recall the episode of the bizarre and redoubtable Sarah Palin and her "bridge to nowhere", and its outcome. Enough said...

With tentative respect, pending your decision, I am, Paul Edwards

From: pat estenson
Sent: Saturday, August 21, 2010 2:55 PM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

I just spent the night at Bowman Lake.... the road up there is terrible.....

I am all in favor of paving the road to Pole bridge....

Since I am new to the area, moved to Apgar in 1947,,,, I don't want to be to pushy.... but fix the dam road.... and tell all the new comers to go back to Texas if they don't like things up here.

thanks for the oppportunity to comment..

pat estenso
rollins, mt.

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam](#); ["Sheila Ludlow"](#); [Vernarsky, Patti](#);
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Corridor Study Comment - Rayna Eyster 8-5-10
Date: Thursday, August 05, 2010 12:39:00 PM

From: Rayna Eyster
Sent: Thursday, August 05, 2010 11:33 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

This note concerns the proposed study of the North Fork Road from Columbia Falls to Camas Road.

We are opposed to the study and to any improvements done to the North Fork Road. Our main objection is the spoiling of the primitive, rustic character in the one of the few remaining wilderness areas in our country.

It seems to us that Columbia Falls wants to increase their traffic (and possibly local business profit) by labeling themselves as a Gateway to Glacier at the expense of wildlife (by increased traffic) and the natural beauty of the wilderness. What impact would this have on Glacier when people enter the park without paying from the Camas Road entrance?

We urge you to restart the road study and study all county roads. There are over 700 miles of dusty, heavily used county roads and thousands of county taxpayers standing in line waiting for paving that it appears to be a terrible waste of available dollars to study a road to nowhere and leave the majority of taxpayers without adequate roads to travel to work and school. Improving roads that impact the greatest number of residents makes much better fiscal sense and then may free up monies to adequately grade the North Fork Road more often.

Paving/chip sealing improvements to the road will undoubtedly cause accidents (harming both people and animals) due to higher traffic speeds. Road improvement will lead to loss of the wild and scenic values of this part

of the county. We want to preserve the uniqueness of this land. Paving the road will bring all of the development that follows which is not conducive to preserving wildlife habitat.

Thank you

Rayna and Erryl Eyster

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam](#); [Ludlow, Sheila](#);
[Vernarsky, Patti](#);
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Corridor Study Comment
Date: Friday, August 06, 2010 4:11:38 PM

From: Edwin Fields
Sent: Friday, August 06, 2010 4:09 PM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

Ms. Eggertsen-Goff, just wanted to take a moment to comment again on the North Fork road. As I said at the first meeting in Columbia Falls the jeopardy opinion on Grizzly Bears still stands so I caution against any undertaking that could lead to greater Grizzly mortality. Any improvement to the road will increase speed and ultimately lead to more accidents. If people want quicker access for ambulances they should look to providing some landing areas for life flight instead of ground transportation. Improving the road could lead to more development pressure which would lead to more traffic and jeopardize the delicate negotiations with Canada to limit development of the North Fork in British Columbia. I am President of Headwaters Montana. We have been working closely with our Senators and groups in Canada to protect this sensitive area. I am not opposed to limited width alteration and an improved gravel surface with a dust abatement additive.
Sincerely, Edwin Fields

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Murray, Pam
Sent: Thursday, July 29, 2010 10:34 AM
To: Kirkendall, Amanda
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov]
Sent: Thursday, July 29, 2010 9:24 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 07/29/2010 09:23:32
First Name: Mark
Last Name: Fleming
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

Greetings, I am very happy that a study is taking place for S486. I have always been concerned for various reasons about this road. I love to frequent this area, but have found it to be getting worse over the years. I for one, along with many others in the Valley would love to see more of an improvement then the magneseium solution. Watching what the dust does to the surrounding trees and ground cover is horrific. We need to step up and finally fund a paved solution to the Camas Road area. Some people will clearly be against this approach, but it truly is in the best interest of all in the long term. I would gladly pay more in tax to see this happen!!

Best Regards and Good Luck!

Submitter's IP address: 174.44.14.174

Reference Number = northfork_12506103515625

From: Mayre Flowers
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2010 10:46 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: Re: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

Lani---There were seven PDF attachments and two web addresses attached to the information I sent you. Please review the names of these documents below and let me know which ones you did and did not receive and I can resend the ones you did not get or you can go to the website links I provided you with this list. Thanks for getting back to me. Let me know if you are now able to review all of the attachments that I sent. Thanks Mayre

Land Use Effects of Paving Rural Roads in Western Montana

Headwaters Economics, Bozeman, Montana

September, 2008

PUBLISHED ONLINE: www.headwaterseconomics.org

Montana Wildfire Cost Study

Technical Report

8-8-2008

ONLINE AT: www.headwaterseconomics.org

Fiscal Impact of the Montana Legacy Project on Lake County, Montana

January 2009

ONLINE AT: www.headwaterseconomics.org

Feb. 20th Letter of review of the Montana Legacy Project by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.—Lake County

ONLINE AT: www.headwaterseconomics.org

Fiscal Impact of the Montana Legacy Project on Mineral County, Montana

January 2009

ONLINE AT: www.headwaterseconomics.org

Feb. 20th Letter of review of the Montana Legacy Project by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.--- Mineral County

ONLINE AT: www.headwaterseconomics.org

Fiscal Impact of the Montana Legacy Project on Mineral County, Montana

Headwaters Economics, Bozeman, Montana (summary)

January, 2009 www.headwaterseconomics.org/legacy

Web links to:

Home Development on Fire-Prone Lands West-Wide Summary

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<http://www.headwaterseconomics.org/wildfire/>

Draft Flathead County Transportation Plan 2010

http://flathead.mt.gov/planning_zoning/Drafts.php

From: Mayre Flowers
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 7:43 PM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Cc: Mayre Flowers
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

Please consider the findings of the following studies on the potential impacts of paving of the North Fork Road on further development in the area and on the associated costs that may result to county tax payers to provide services to additional rural development in this area. Additionally, consideration of the merits or lack of merits of paving the North Fork Road should consider the paving needs of other areas of Flathead County and provide justification for why this road would be given priority over other roads. Finally the USFS has just provided a road treatment to the Tally Lake Rd (completed in the past week) that is suppose to provide a smooth, dust-free surface with durability. This road treatment method should be considered in your review.

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam;](#)
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda;](#)
Subject: FW: Glacier National Park Comments
Date: Tuesday, August 03, 2010 4:11:59 PM
Attachments: [Comments on the July 2010 Draft Corridor Study.doc](#)

Lani

801-288-3220

-----Original Message-----

From: Jim_Foster

Sent: Tuesday, July 27, 2010 3:14 PM

To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani; sludlow@mt.gov

Subject: Glacier National Park Comments

Lani and Sheila,

Attached are Glacier's comments on the draft Road Corridor Study. One of biggest concerns is that our position regarding the management of the NF area seems to have been reworded or diminished. Please incorporate the paragraph as submitted in these comments since this will be a public document. Also, we believe that a paragraph addressing the MOU between British Columbia and the State of Montana should be included in the Management Section.

Thank you for letting us comment,
Jim

James E. Foster II, P.E.
Chief of Facility Management
Glacier National Park

(See attached file: Comments on the July 2010 Draft Corridor Study.doc)

Comments on the July 2010 Draft Corridor Study, North Fork Flathead Road.

Section 3.3 Management Emphasis on Adjacent Lands

1. Glacier comments: There is no substantive information about the desired management emphasis of Glacier National Park in this section, only references to Section 4(f) property.

Our 1999 General Management Plan for the park states (p. 42) for the North Fork area of Glacier:

Philosophy:

The North Fork would be preserved to contribute to the integrity and primitive character of the transboundary watershed. Management actions would reflect the importance of inter-agency and international cooperation.

How the area would be managed:

Resources would be managed to preserve the wild character of the area and the important linkage to the entire North Fork Valley, including the Canadian portion, for wildlife conservation.

Commercial development or new commercial activities would not be permitted.

The inside North Fork Road (which is inside the Glacier NP boundary) would remain narrow and unpaved.

2. Glacier comments: Our main management position regarding the North Fork Road is buried at the bottom of Section 3.12 Air Quality, and we would like to move this into the 3.3 Management emphasis section and modify the statement with what is in bold below.

Glacier National Park is opposed to **paving** (change from **improving** since we favor better dust abatement) the road since its **management direction** is to preserve and protect the primitive values inherent in the North Fork portion of the park. GNP believes that **paving** would lead to an increase in traffic and development, **loss of wildlife habitat and connectivity**, and a degradation of the primitive values of the North Fork of the park. **The park's designation as a World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve also intensifies the park's desire to preserve this area.**

3. Glacier NP also feels that the mention and explanation of the MOU between the Province of British Columbia and the State of Montana should be explained in the Management Section 3.3. In addition to the ban on mining and mineral extraction activities, the MOU recognizes the "transboundary Flathead is also an important wildlife corridor that that is home to the highest density of large and mid-sized carnivores and the highest density of vascular plants in the United States and offers superior opportunities to study, document, and preserve species diversity as changing climate conditions and shrinking glaciers present adaption challenges"

4. There is no mention of direct vehicular-caused mortality on p.22.

5. The recent application of the betonite/gravel combination as a road improvement on the North Fork Road above the Camas junction appears to be very successful. Why is this recommendation not forwarded on Table 5.4?

6. Glacier would like to point out other cumulative effects of increased development resulting from asphalt pavement. These are potential water quality issues from additional and longer use of septic systems in the North Fork floodplain, runoff from asphalt pavement itself and additional gravel access roads, and more vehicle emissions with increased traffic.

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda;](#)
Subject: Fw: forgotten words
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 8:05:50 AM

From:
To: mdtfnfrteam@mt.gov <mdtfnfrteam@mt.gov>
Sent: Tue Aug 10 01:16:26 2010
Subject: forgotten words

Dear Lani Eggertsen-Goff

Here are the words I could not remember when I spoke to you at the open house in Columbia Falls. They were for a proposed bumper sticker by the North Fork Preservation Association to hopefully slow down traffic on the gravel road.

WHAT IS THE NORTH FORKING HURRY?
SLOW THE TRUCK DOWN.

Best regards
John Frederick



Rocky Mountain Region Office

303 West Mendenhall Street, Suite 3 | Bozeman, MT 59715 | tel 406.586.3970 | fax 406.587.0216
www.defenders.org

August 9, 2010

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
488 East Winchester Street, Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

Re: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Dear Montana Department of Transportation and others involved in this project,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

I am writing on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife, whose nearly 500,000 members nationwide, including 1,500 Montana residents, highly value the unique and truly outstanding wildlife values present in the North Fork of the Flathead in northwestern Montana. We appreciate the discussion in the draft study devoted to wildlife, and we call attention to the following statements in particular.

A unique community of carnivore species resides in the North Fork Flathead region that appears unmatched in North America for its variety, completeness, use of valley bottomlands, and density of species which are rare elsewhere... The following species occur in the study area: Grizzly bear, black bear, wolf, coyote, red fox, cougar, lynx, bobcat, marten, fisher, wolverine, badger, river otter, mink, and various weasels (Weaver 2001).

Unmatched in North America. And there is an additional statement from Weaver's 2001 study:

Due to these unique characteristics and its strategic position as a linkage between National Parks in both countries, the transboundary Flathead may be the single most important basin for carnivores in the Rocky Mountains. [Weaver 2001, p. 5]

The single most important basin for carnivores in the Rocky Mountains. We urge that whatever decision you make with this project not only maintains but also capitalizes on this extraordinary and overriding value of the region, for the local community and Americans nationwide. In fact, when considered alongside British Columbia's portion of the North Fork Valley, the area can truly be seen as a continental resource for wildlife that is of global significance. It is these values that have led to the recent international agreement to protect the area from exploration and development of oil, gas and minerals, and the subsequent voluntary withdrawal of leases on federal lands on the U.S. side by several major corporations. It is important that the decision for this project honors these extraordinary international conservation measures and be fully consistent with them. Not just because of the direct effects of the road surface alternatives on wildlife and their ability to safely use the area, but especially because of the likely and significant changes to the area catalyzed by any changes to the road.

We appreciate statements in the draft study to guard individual imperiled species from any impacts if the road is paved, such as the following.

National Headquarters

1130 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-4604
tel 202.682.9400 | fax 202.682.1331

The North Fork is considered Nodal habitat serving as a critical migratory link for bull trout migrating upstream to spawn in tributaries such as Big Creek. Big Creek is considered Core habitat (drainages containing the strongest remaining populations of bull trout in the restoration area) in the Flathead Drainage... If a project were to evolve from the corridor study, extensive coordination with fish biologists from the USFWS and MDWP would be necessary under Section 7 of the ESA to go through the Jeopardy analysis, whether any “take” of bull trout is anticipated, whether there are impacts to proposed critical habitat and what conservation and coordination measures can be taken to minimize the amount of potential “take.” (p. 26)

The North Fork Road itself is within designated lynx critical habitat... Impacts to lynx would need to be evaluated for any improvement option proposal advanced into a project for the study area (p. 27)

The North Fork Road corridor study area lies within the boundaries of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem [grizzly bear] Recovery Zone... Any proposed roadway paving project resulting from the North Fork Road Corridor Study or future project development would need to be reviewed for potential impacts to Grizzly bears and their habitat. It is likely that any proposed roadway project beyond maintenance of existing conditions would likely result in formal consultation under Section 7 with the USFWS. This consultation is required if federal funds or a federal action is involved. This consultation is required especially if a proposal would increase traffic speeds, lead to increased development, or increase traffic volumes. (p. 27)

We strongly oppose paving or otherwise “improving” the North Fork Road. We are convinced that maintaining the North Fork Road in its current, unpaved state will best avoid impacts to the above individual species, many others and the area overall, and promote the world class values of the area for both wildlife and people.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and please keep us informed of any developments.

Sincerely,

David Gaillard, Rocky Mountain Region Representative

Cc: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda;](#)
Subject: Fw: North Fork Road
Date: Tuesday, August 03, 2010 1:30:05 PM

----- Original Message -----

From: Richard
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov <mdtnffrteam@mt.gov>
Sent: Tue Aug 03 15:10:45 2010
Subject: North Fork Road

I suggest that the road is left as is. -- As to the thought of a top coating of some kind - do not use salts!!!! It is a corrosive to any metal and also to fiber. Salts are also toxic to plants, trees and grasses . It will eventually reach the waterways. Native plants are not accustomed to salts. One batch may do no harm but repeated and prolonged application will. Wake up people in high places. ! This method was tried 50 years ago by the loggers association and Flathead Forest and it did not work and was abandoned . I admit that It made for a smooth hard surface for awhile but continued traffic broke it down and the first rains made for a horrible road surface and it is not worth the environmental damage it will create from continued use. Eventually it will turn to powder - mixed in with or as road dust and then it makes a nice salt laced cloud of dust to filter out on plants, trees and the waterways At the time there also was evidence of plant damage and I don,t think salt has lost it's toxic corrosive property's since that trial. It may be a different chemical form of salt but in the end salts are salts. This make work on the Eastern portion of Montana where the conditions are different.

Two years ago I was for paving the road but I have lately changed my mind and don't think it is a good idea. It may be good for money people, business and developers but in the long run it won't be good for fishermen and common recreational use. It may do them more harm than they realize. Progress is not always a good thing.

My vote and opinion would be ---- leave the road as is

The state should also help with the maintenance as the use of the road is seeing a high use of tourists more so than ever. And the state is doing the promoting.

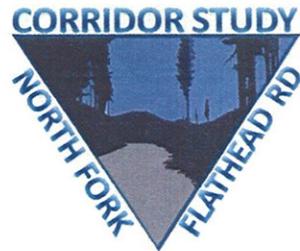
I might add - I drive that road at least once every two weeks and some times twice in a week so I am not just a occasional user. I do travel it often.

Richard Garlough

From: _____
To: [Egertsen-Goff, Lani](#);
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment
Date: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 8:30:50 AM

Please look at all roads in the county for upgrades, not just the North Fork that goes no where. Please get your priorities straight.

Marion Gerrish



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

As plans move forward consider adding more culverts, up-sizing existing culverts, & adding crossing structures for wildlife. Large, E-box-type structures are probably not appropriate, but adding or up-sizing box culverts may be appropriate. Even smaller culverts serve wildlife as well as hydrology.

Name: Steve Gniadek

Address

E-mail:

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: NFFR Corridor Study
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 10:35:06 AM

From: Steve Gniadek
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 12:47 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: NFFR Corridor Study

During the open house meeting I submitted very brief comments suggesting that culverts be up-sized and added to the road where they would provide the most benefit in facilitating wildlife crossing as well as improving drainage. Due to the distractions at the open house I wasn't able to elaborate on those comments. I am concerned those brief comments may be construed as endorsement of paving the road; that is definitely not the case. I was merely suggesting that as culverts are replaced they should be up-sized, and when other work allows, additional culverts, including larger box culverts, should be added. This can be accomplished gradually, as conditions permit, regardless of the alternative chosen for the road. Adding culverts or even larger wildlife crossing structures will not mitigate for the impacts to wildlife from paving the road.

The cost comparisons among the various alternatives made it clear that paving the road will be the most costly and onerous to tax-payers, and that minimal, periodic maintenance will be the most cost-effective and sufficient to provide for safe travel. If any improvements are necessary, work comparable to the recent grading and dust-abatement on the segment north of Camas Road would be the most reasonable.

I drive the road out of choice, not necessity, and am content to drive it in its current condition, at a reasonable rate of speed and with appropriate caution. If I were fortunate to live in the North Fork I would not complain about the road because the attraction and value of the North Fork is in large part a product of the road, and will only be diminished by "improvements" to the road. I don't understand why people would choose to live in the area, and then demand that we tax-payers foot the bill for destroying the very essence of the area by converting it to conditions that

can be found anywhere else.

I have no more to add to my earlier comments of June 11.

Steve Gniadek

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam](#); ["Sheila Ludlow"](#); [Vernarsky, Patti](#);
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Corridor Study Comment - Grabowski 8-4-10
Date: Thursday, August 05, 2010 9:47:22 AM

From: Grabowski, Joe
Sent: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 4:37 PM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

Dear Ms. Eggersten-Goff,

I am commenting regarding the North Fork Corridor Study, and specifically the initiative to pave the North Fork road from the existing end of pavement to the Camas road entrance to Glacier National Park. Presently I find the general condition of this road to be horrible. With the exception of the brief period of time after grading the road is not safe to drive, regardless of the time of year.

During warm weather months the surface has numerous wash boards that make driving extremely difficult and challenging. When it is dry, as is often the case during spring, summer and fall, it is very dusty, regardless of the speed of traffic. During my trips to the summit of Glacier View Mountain, which offers an excellent vantage point of this corridor, I can safely state that the bottom 500' of elevation above the river bed is a dust bowl. All one has to do to confirm this is look at the dust accumulated in the trees and vegetation along this road corridor. Better yet, take a hike to the summit of Glacier View and see for yourself. During the winter months the road surface often becomes solid ice with potholes. During this period it is completely not safe to drive. Should an emergency happen anywhere north of the existing end of pavement emergency personnel would be put at risk to respond. It is very likely that the amount of dust kicked up by even the most modest amount of traffic along this corridor is presenting a health and environmental risk.

The argument that paving the road will lead to pollution in the river I find to be weak at best. I am a civil engineer who has studied extensively in the subcategory of civil engineering called environmental engineering. All along this corridor there is sufficient distance between the road and the river to completely filter out any possible non-point source pollution that may runoff into the river from a paved road surface.

Additionally the argument that paving in the road will compromise the primitive nature of the North Fork is weak. This area has very little private land for development. It is mostly federal and state land. Even with paving it is too far from even the closest area where decent jobs exist to ever become a "bedroom community." Additionally, Flathead County is presently over built with housing to substantiate development of any significant degree in the North Fork. I have to ask, is the Yaak Valley corridor a bedroom community of Libby and Troy? Not really. This road is paved and well maintained throughout the winter and has very similar characteristics in nature and proximity to existing population centers as the North Fork. I find this valley to be very primitive.

It was a mistake to redirect the funds for the paving of this road to the Big Mountain road. Please do the right thing and pave this road. I have yet to hear one person object to paving a road once it is done.

Sincerely,

Joe Grabowski

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 10:27:20 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [<mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, August 03, 2010 8:18 PM
To: mdtnfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/03/2010 20:18:02
First Name: robert
Last Name: graham
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

Pave it!!!!!! i OWN A HOME THERE AND WILL SOON RETIRE THERE. i'M
A "LOCAL."

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Monday, August 09, 2010 12:11:31 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [<mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov>]
Sent: Saturday, August 07, 2010 11:57 AM
To: mdtnfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/07/2010 11:57:28
First Name: Robert
Last Name: Grimaldi
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

While most of these final comments are probably not totally applicable to the purpose of public input on the study itself, I feel compelled to go on record with what I feel are comments germane to the over all issue regarding the NFFR Corridor Study.

I would appreciate it if the comments are included in study comments.

Based on letters to the editor in local newspapers and comments made by a county official at the July 27th public gathering to review the study and its proposals, the \$124k study appears to be headed for the filing cabinets and DVD storage. In these times calling for fiscal austerity, it seems a shame to see even a relatively small, by government standards, amount of \$124k probably being wasted on something doomed from the start. Nonetheless, Montana Department of Transportation Director Jim Lynch should be commended for his willingness to provide funding for the study. Commendations to Parsons Brinkerhoff as well for

the high quality work produced.

A recent article in the Hungry Horse News closed outlining challenges implementing the options developed by the contractor and presented in the NFRR Road Draft Corridor Study Document. All of the challenges noted could be overcome by a proactive county commission. There seems to be a determined unwillingness by county officials to seek funding from a combination of federal, state and local resources. According to news articles, the general public continues to misunderstand the scope of the study. There is a tendency to believe, actively promoted by paving opponents, that the study includes the entire length of the North Fork Road rather than a 10 mile corridor with virtually no private property along its length. No effort has been made to change this misunderstanding by officialdom or the media. Opponents of road improvement which might include the possibility of paving are undoubtedly pleased that the study has limited public consensus. That there is a low tax base in the area where work would be done is another reason given for the unlikely event improvements will be made as a result of this study. However invalid that reason might be, it effectively contributes to negative views.

In the Thursday, August 5th edition of the Hungry Horse News, columnist and long-time North Fork resident Larry Wilson pretty much sums up the outlook of a great many people familiar with the study and local politics. Mr. Wilson is so disillusioned, he wisely chose to save himself the time and expense of the July 27th meeting given his informed awareness of political attitudes.

With irrational opposition from Glacier National Park, noncommittal fence-riding by the Forest Service and the lack of committed interest by the county, perhaps it would have been best to spend the \$124k on a study where some success might have been achieved and the state could realize some return on investment. It might have saved lots of money and inconvenience to many people, to say nothing of having to once again witness short-sighted bureaucracy and unreasonable environmental activism.

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Sent: Monday, July 26, 2010 1:40 PM
To: Kirkendall, Amanda
Subject: Fw: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

----- Original Message -----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov <www@mdt.mt.gov>
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov <mdtnffrteam@mt.gov>
Sent: Mon Jul 26 15:33:25 2010
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 07/26/2010 13:33:25
First Name: Robert
Last Name: Grimaldi
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:newsletter

Comments:

My comments are related to the Draft Corridor Study Document.

Unfortunately I was unable to read the entire document prior to the July 27th meeting and will probably have additional comments after perusing a CD containing the study which I will obtain on July 27th.

I am impressed by what I have read on pdf files. The study appears comprehensive, is clearly written and easy to read for one not familiar with documents of this type. What weaknesses that are notable might be related to my lack of knowledge on how numbers were arrived at or no familiarity with standards used to measure compliance with road construction.

Improvement option 2b states ".....there are no locations in the study that are lacking appropriate guardrail installations."

I strongly disagree with this statement. Two areas exist where the lack of guardrails is significantly dangerous in the event a vehicle was to attempt to leave the roadway. Both are along, and at the end of, a long straightaway conducive to a driver increasing speed. Along the straightaway are approximately 20' drops at a 15 percent grade. Where the road curves to the left at the end of the straightaway there is a 200' embankment just above the river. The entire area is devoid of trees which could prevent going over the cliff and into the river.. This area is about 30' from the road. A driver traveling at too high a rate of speed, particularly at night and

lacking familiarity with the road, could easily slide off a gravel strewn road and lose control. The area I am referring to is approximately 4 miles south of the exit into GNP at the Camas Junction. Please review and reconsider this area for including guardrail installation in the study.

Section 2.5 Recreation Uses, should be expanded and more detailed. Recreation use of the North Fork Road is the primary reason why the road issue has become of considerable concern to many road users and residents in particular. The two major federal agencies, Glacier National Park and Flathead National Forest, are the primary contributors to increased road use. The Forest Service is promoting recreational use and increased travel by encouraging visitors to rent cabins and to use the river for rafting, kayaking, canoeing, and fishing, while it promotes general forest use for hiking, camping, fishing and the harvesting of berries and mushrooms. Glacier National Park encourages visitors to the northwest corner of the park via the North Fork Road, but discourages improvements to the road and does not encourage use of a track within the park known as the Inner Road. Your report states that "over 4000 vehicles entered Glacier National Park through Polebridge north of the study area". The report doesn't state what period of time this covers nor does it state how many entered the Camas Creek entrance to the park which is unmanned and where no fee is manually collected. GNP is not a good neighbor when it comes to access. It provides paved roads for its visitors but stands opposed to road improvements outside the park because it fears development. Where, pray tell, is development to occur on lands adjacent to the corridor study which are 99.999989 percent federally owned ? More study of GNP's position needs to be examined. As a taxpayer-citizen I would like to see GNP consider closing the Polebridge and Camas entrances after improving the Inner Road for visitation to the northwest portion of the park. This would alleviate a major source of traffic on the road reduce dust and danger , allay park development fears, satisfy environmental concerns and possibly eliminate the need for paving. Additionally, the Forest Service could consider controlling river recreation with floating devices via the permitting/fee process.

Pleasing consider these comments and incorporate the concepts into your draft study.

From: www@mdt.mt.gov
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov;
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Friday, July 30, 2010 8:20:16 AM

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 07/30/2010 08:20:12
First Name: Robert
Last Name: Grimaldi
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:newsletter

Comments:

For Lani: Per our conversation you can obtain up to date information on the number of vehicles entering the Polebridge Ranger Station entrance to GNP by accessing this website: <http://www2.nrintra.nps.gov/mpur/Reports/reportlist.cfm>

Obviously not each of the 14k+ vehicles entering and leaving this entrance accessed via the corridor study route nor did each vehicle leaving. However the number is greater than 4000.

Thanks for reviewing these numbers.

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Dave Hadden
Sent: Wednesday, July 28, 2010 11:01 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Cc: Rachel and Jack Potter
Subject: FW: Obama

Dear Lani: Rachel Potter asked that I send you the information regarding the White House interest in what we refer to locally as the Transboundary Flathead, a.k.a. the North Fork River. Below please find the pasted article on the federal-to-federal process now underway to resolve long-standing issues between Montana and BC on appropriate management and use of the watershed. Also, below find the White House press release. Attached please find senators Baucus and Tester letter to President Obama on this issue, and a separate letter to Sec. Salazar and Sec. Clinton.

All this points to the protracted history (since 1974) to conserve this special place and the tremendous progress made since Gov. Schweitzer and Premier Campbell agreed in February of this year to forego energy and mineral development in the watershed.

Your work regarding alternatives to 'improve' the Nfork road to the Camas entrance of the park have a direct bearing on the transboundary effort, as wildlife concerns have been the key issue along with water quality in the transboundary discussions. The Canadian Flathead valley is unsettled and provides only dirt road access no better and no worse than the US Nfork road. Improvements in road infrastructure usually lead to more traffic, more settlement, more disturbance and displacement and conflict with wildlife. We will submit formal comment before August 10 but request that you include this communication in the formal comment record.

Cheers and thanks,

--

Dave Hadden, Director



545 Holt Drive
Bigfork, MT 59911
406-837-0783
Dave_Hadden@headwatersmontana.org

Organizational Mission: Headwaters Montana works to protect water, wildlife, and wilderness in the Crown of the Continent.

----- Forwarded Message

Dave:

I've got to fly right now, but can you please send Lani documentation of the Obama Harper talks, etc. thanks tons

Rachel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 28, 2010

Senators Continue To Seek Permanent Protection For transboundary Flathead region

(Washington D.C.) – Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester today called for four-way, international talks between the U.S., Canada, the State of Montana and the Province of British Columbia to secure permanent protection for the North Fork of the Flathead River basin.

The Senators made their request immediately after the White House today announced that the United States and Canada are committed to ensuring the sustained protection of the Flathead River Basin and are exploring cooperative actions that can be taken to reach that goal.

In a June 9 letter to Obama, Baucus and Tester asked the President to use the G-20 Summit to engage the Canadian government, because only an international treaty can provide permanent protection. The G-20 Summit took place between June 25 and June 27.

In their letter today to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and, Baucus and Tester called for the quick start of 4 – party talks and asked for a meeting to chart the best path forward for the U.S. government's role in the upcoming talks .

"Today's announcement by President Obama and Prime Minister Harper marks the start of this next chapter in our nations' transboundary work to protect the North Fork," the Senators wrote. "The Department of the Interior and the State Department will lead this effort, and we need to get started as quickly as possible with four-party talks involving the United States, Canada, British Columbia, and Montana. President Obama took our request to take steps to protect this jewel of the continent, and we look forward to working with you to make this a reality."

The Senators said the end goal of permanent protection would help both the U.S. and Canada.

"By codifying permanent protection for both sides of the border, we can protect this environmentally, economically and culturally significant region so that every American and every Canadian will know the same transboundary Flathead River Basin that we know today," Baucus and Tester wrote.

Baucus and Tester have worked tirelessly for decades to protect the North Fork for future generations.

They recently introduced the North Fork Watershed Protection Act of 2010 in March to prevent new oil and gas development mining in the watershed. The legislation bans future oil and gas leasing and mining on Federal lands in the North Fork. Baucus and Tester also negotiated the voluntary relinquishment of almost 174,000 acres of current oil and gas leases, free of charge to the American taxpayer.

For Immediate Release June 28, 2010

Statement by the Press Secretary on Protecting the Flathead River Basin

On the margins of the Summit meetings in Canada this weekend, President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper noted the historic February 2010 memorandum of understanding between Premier Gordon Campbell of British Columbia and Governor Brian Schweitzer of Montana protecting the transboundary Flathead River Basin.

They discussed how relevant U.S. and Canadian agencies, including the U.S. Department of the Interior and Environment Canada, working with representatives of the Province of British Columbia and the State of Montana, could support this understanding and could help ensure the sustained protection of the Flathead River Basin.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/statement-press-secretary-protecting-flathead-river-basin>



P.O. Box 4310, Whitefish, Montana 59937

Ms. Lani Eggertsen-Goff
PB Consultants
488 E. Winchester St., Ste. 400
Murray, UT 84105

July XX, 2010

Dear Ms. Goff:

This letter contains our comments on the NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD DRAFT CORRIDOR STUDY. Please include our letter in the comment record.

We wish to begin by stating that the document does not make clear to the public the authority under which this study and public expenditure was conducted, nor the requirement of the MDOT or Flathead County to consider and weigh public comment. Thus it is unclear to us what significance this report, its contents, or public comments have. Please clarify the statutory authority of this study and its results. This concerns us because, for example, some of the report results appear to us to be highly subjective and unsubstantiated. In addition, at one point the report makes clear that Flathead County's difficulty with affording the maintenance of the road section seems to be driving the 'need' for this analysis. Yet the product of this report never directly addresses this overriding concern directly. Thus we question the need and public expense of this report.

Main Document

2.0 Existing Conditions

A presumption exists throughout this report that assumes that the road must be changed or somehow improved. While a 'no-action' option is presented, it appears to be there *pro forma*. Also, the cost comparison between a no-action and other options depicts the existing situation as more expensive than simple grading (\$2 million vs. \$582 thousand). How is that possible. This seems highly counter-intuitive and we cannot find data in the report to substantiate this discrepancy.

2.6 Crash Analysis

The report states, "The rural crash rate from 2004 to 2009 for the study area is 3.59. Although this rate is high, the actual number of total crashes is low." We ask, How much will government spend to fix a problem that does not exist. Percent crash rates are virtually meaningless in this situation as overall travel numbers are low. We maintain that other county roads need attention with crash rates and human injury due to poor road condition/design. Why are Flathead County and MDOT focusing on the North Fork Road alone and not conducting a comparative study of other county roads to demonstrate where the need for road surface improvement might be greatest in terms of human health and safety?

The report further states, "without a lot of traffic congestion and except in severe dust conditions, the majority of drivers tend to exceed the posted speed limit." Thus the resolution of the crash issue is educational, not technical. The road is not the problem. Driving habits are.

3.0 Environmental Conditions

Headwaters engages citizens of the Crown of the Continent in the region's critical conservation issues: water and wildlife conservation, and climate change.

3.2 Development

The report states, “due to its beauty and recreational opportunities, the North Fork valley may in the future face an influx of population that has occurred in other communities bordering our nation’s most popular natural features.”

This is an assumption that *would prove true* if MDOT and Flathead County ‘improve’ the North Fork Road. Road improvement leads to greater vehicular use, which leads to residential migration and development. Such development in the North Fork would contribute to a decline in wildlife habitat, displacement of species including T&E species, and the destruction of the rural character of the area, all issues that argue strongly for keeping the road as it is or minimizing ‘improvements’.

Zoning in Flathead County has not proven an effective tool to control undesirable or destructive rural subdivision. Flathead County has a track record of allowing exceptions to zoning regulations or in changing zoning. In other words, the report errs in assuming that zoning is an effective land management tool in Flathead County that would limit undesirable impacts to National Forest and National Park resources and to wildlife and water quality. This is not the case.

See further comment on environmental conditions below in our review of the Environmental Scan Draft Report.

5.0 Improvement Options Development and Funding Mechanisms

Re: Dust mitigation. The report states, “On the gravel sections of the road, the existing traffic generates a great deal of dust. This was a common concern with stakeholders and the public.” It should also be stated that road dust is not a universal concern. Given the cost of any road upgrade and dubious safety concerns from road dust, road dust should not be used to justify road work.

The report also makes the dubious statement that, “As mentioned above, vehicles traveling at higher speeds result in dusty conditions, which are suspected to contribute to an increase in accidents.” As we read the report, it states that vehicle speed, not road dust, is the likely contributor to the road’s (low) accident record.

Re: Impacts on wildlife. We can be sure that an upgraded road surface will lead to higher design speeds (40-50mph) and greater wildlife mortality and vehicular accidents and damage.

Re: Roadway Surface Conditions. One solution to the road debate, pull all that spread material back into the original road width and call it ‘good’.

Re: Maintenance. The report states, “Gravel roadways require a considerable amount of maintenance”. MDOT’s own figures demonstrate that almost any other road treatment from paving to chip sealing is far more expensive than maintaining the existing road *as it is*. If Flathead County’s ability to afford road maintenance cost is the issue then why not directly address this concern rather than force an expensive solution and shift responsibility to the national tax payer.

Re: Speed. See comments above regarding dusty conditions contributing to accidents. Here, two or two sections later the report correctly attributes driver error (speed) to the cause of recorded accidents.

Re: Roadway Safety. The report states, “There is a relatively high accident rate within the corridor.” However, accident rates mean nothing in this situation because overall usage is

Headwaters engages citizens of the Crown of the Continent in the region’s critical conservation issues: water and wildlife conservation, and climate change.

actually quite low resulting in low overall number of accidents. This discrepancy illustrates the MDOT's bias for finding problems with roads that don't, in fact, exist.

Re: Emergency Services. Improving the road corridor will not measurably improve QRU response time. Any significant emergency medical evacuation would still need to be performed via Life Flight helicopter, just as in any other part of the wide-spread Flathead County.

5.2 Potential Improvement Options

The report states: "the NFFR would likely be improved incrementally, which may affect funding." We actually read this as 'the entire North Fork road would likely be improved incrementally.' Read this way it becomes imperative that MDOT conduct a full blown EIS on the entire road corridor from Columbia Falls to the Canadian line. Government agencies must assess full build out.

5.3 Cost Comparison

Table 5.2 provides the first numbers of financial costs of improving the proposed road corridor. However, this data is not substantiated in the report. If Flathead County's ability to pay for maintenance is the actual driving concern of the study, then Table 5.2 needs to actually substantiate the cost of all the alternatives, including the no-action alternative. If public safety is the driving concern, then we think reducing speed should be the first priority. Road surface improvement that increase speed may not improve public safety. The cost comparison demonstrates that less expensive, effective means of reducing speed exist without resorting to high cost options. Combinations of road grading, dust abatement, signage, remain the most effective means to improve public safety and probably the most cost effective. However, we are not prepared to advocate for any alternative at this time based on the poor documentation provided in Table 5.2.

5.4 Screening Matrix

The screening matrix presented in Table 5.3 appears to us to be highly subjective. Were we to complete a MEPA environmental checklist for any other project based on the level of documentation presented to support this table, we would not pass a serious review.

We ask, how can MDOT substantiate that only bituminous surface treatments would lead to an increase in traffic. Table 5.3 does not pass the credibility test in this regard. We maintain that *any road surface that increases speed or road drivability will increase traffic.*

Further, Table 5.3 appears to assert that almost every option 'agrees with land use and management plans' except bituminous options. Management plans for the FNF and GNP do not directly address road improvement issues for the North Fork Road. In any case even all but one bituminous option advances forward for further consideration. The intent of the report seems to be to screen for credible options. In this final analysis, the screen used appears to be very wide indeed to result in almost no screening at all.

5.5 Funding

Secondary Highway System (STPS): We appreciate learning in this section of the report how the road project prioritization process works. We are alarmed that Flathead County chose to emphasize this section of the North Fork Road - and MDOT agreed - over a county-wide study that objectively studies road improvement needs.

The report states, "The Counties and MDT take the input from citizens, small cities, and tribal governments during the selection process." Please note our strong objection to Flathead

Headwaters engages citizens of the Crown of the Continent in the region's critical conservation issues: water and wildlife conservation, and climate change.

County and MDOT's singling out the North Fork Road for single study. We think tax payer dollars would have been much better spent evaluating and objectively considering county-wide road needs.

Public Lands Highways (PLH) Discretionary: The report does not state whether this project is being formally considered for PLH discretionary funds, and if so, it does not reveal the timing of the application process or the public's right to know.

Forest Highway: The report does not state whether this project is being considered for PLH Forest Highway funds, and if so, it does not reveal the timing of the application process or the public's right to know.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP): The report does not state whether this project is being formally considered for PLH HSIP funds, and if so, it does not reveal the timing of the application process or the public right to know.

Environmental Scan Draft Report

2.2.1 Section 4(f) and 6(f)

The report states, "Constructive 'use' can also occur when a project's proximity impacts are so severe that the protected activities, features, or attributes that qualify a resource for protection under 4(f) are 'substantially impacted'." Please elaborate on this statement. We would assume, for example, that "use" might be proscribed or denied based on USFWS evaluation of project impacts to T&E species under the ESA, or under other existing federal statutes.

2.5 Recreational Uses

This section contains a factual errors concerning permits for the North Fork River. Permits are not required for use by private parties. However, commercial outfitters do require a permit from the Flathead National Forest for commercial floating use. The FNF currently experiences difficulty maintaining a high level of visitor quality experience because of heavy use of the river and corridor. We think improvement to the road surface will increase public access and bring additional, adverse pressure to the Wild and Scenic River and corridor resource. The draft study conclusions demonstrate a strong bias that understates the likelihood of increased road and visitor use.

North Fork Valley Overview (page 15, paragraph 3)

This paragraph needs to reflect the rapid change of conditions regarding the oil and gas lease situation on the Glacier View Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest. First, senators Baucus and Tester introduce Senate Bill 3075 to withdraw federal minerals from the watershed. This is noted in paragraph 4 but without being identified. Second, approximately 80 percent of the leases of record have voluntarily been withdrawn by the companies holding them at no cost to the U.S. taxpayer. Companies realized that the leases held no value. This represents rapid, not slow, progress. This positive conservation development came about as a result of the need to comply with the MOU signed between B.C. and Montana that established a ban on mining and energy development in the watershed to best protect water and wildlife resources. The final report should emphasize the international context of the watershed and the evolving and as yet incomplete fulfillment of the MOU, and the high priority B.C., Montana, the U.S. and Canadian governments have placed on establishing harmonious management practices across the international border. An 'improved' North Fork Road could compromise some of the gains made in the extinguishing of mineral rights within the watershed. Any road work needs to be framed in this international context.

3.2 General Wildlife

Headwaters engages citizens of the Crown of the Continent in the region's critical conservation issues: water and wildlife conservation, and climate change.

The report states, "It is likely that any proposed project beyond maintaining existing conditions would likely result in formal consultation under Section 7 with the USFWS if federal funds or a federal action is involved, especially if the proposal would increase traffic speeds, lead to increased development or increase traffic volumes." We concur.

6.2 Non-attainment Areas

The report states, "The corridor study area is not located in a non-attainment area for PM-2.5, PM-10, or carbon monoxide (CO)." We note that while airborne dust can be a nuisance, it is actually comprised of large particles that are not deemed particularly damaging to human health over limited exposure time. We think this report establishes the absence of need to curb dust based on human health concerns.

6.3 Class I Airsheds

We agree with GNP's comments "that road improvement would lead to an increase in traffic and development and a degradation of the primitive values of the North Fork portion of the Park." Of greater concern is that actual air quality that now exists over the Park and region. Any hiker can tell you that a brown haze exists over the region from power, auto, and international pollution sources. Road dust is made up of heavy, large particles that settle quickly and do not affect Glacier National Park's air quality.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Dave Hadden, Director
Headwaters Montana
406-837-0783 / info@headwatersmontana.org

cc: Chas Cartwright, Superintendent, Glacier National Park
Chip Weber, Supervisor, Flathead National Forest
Jimmy DeHerrera, District Ranger, Glacier View Ranger District, Flathead National Forest

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Monday, August 09, 2010 12:13:24 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [<mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov>]
Sent: Saturday, August 07, 2010 8:30 AM
To: mdtnfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/07/2010 08:30:28
First Name: Keith
Last Name: Hammer
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

We urge you to not pave any portion of the North Fork Road and instead invest more time and study prioritizing other gravel roads in Flathead County that are in far greater need of paving. There are scores of other roads that receive far more traffic in close proximity to far more homes than the North Fork Road. The dust from the North Fork Road is too coarse to affect air quality in Glacier National Park and affects very few residences close to the road, while the dust from many other roads in Flathead County does indeed drift through many residences and presents a true public health issue. The gravel condition of the North Fork Road helps limit our number of visits there, and that is a good thing

for both wildlife
and other people enjoying the rural, uncrowded nature of the
North Fork Flathead
Valley and western portions of Glacier National Park.

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: sludlow@mt.gov; [Vernarsky, Patti](#);
[Murray, Pam](#);
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Corridor Study Comment
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 11:44:33 AM

Lani
801-288-3220

From: wayne
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 10:56 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

REQUEST TO INCLUDE ALL COUNTY ROADS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

I am a resident and business owner of the Creston area of the Flathead valley.
My following comments are made after careful consideration and reflection.

I see lingering dust haze from various county roads here in the valley. It would be improper and myopic to pave the North Fork road while leaving the greater population here with air that at times violates clean air standards. I request any funds, Federal, State and Local, used to be applied here in the valley and not in the North Fork!

I am sure there are many real estate, property owners, opportunists that would sacrifice the healthy air of the Flathead Valley to optimize commercial interests in the N. Fork Valley.
Didn't I read in the Daily Inter Lake about residents along the Mennonite Church road are being forced to pay for that paving. USE ANY & ALL FUNDS available here in the populated valley!!

I request that a 'restart' or NEW study begin (with public involvement) to prioritize and determine which county roads should be improved with Federal Tax dollars. The county commissioners have abandoned the public trust by prioritizing the North Fork Road before more immediate and pressing road needs locally.

This letter is NOT made from a "preservation of the N. Fork" standpoint. IT IS MADE FROM AN OBVIOUS NEED FOR ROAD IMPROVEMENTS IN AND AMONGST OUR LOCAL RURAL COMMUNITIES WHICH SUFFER FROM POOR AIR QUALITY.

I question if influences from \$\$\$\$\$\$ concerns (banks, realtors, high-end residential estates, etc.) aren't swaying our commissioners to play a part in N. Fork development. They can try to justify this by the "increased tax base" in the future to pay for the needs (immediate) being abandoned now.

Please clean your neighbors' air now..... forego paving Utopia into 'Estatelandia'.

Sincerely,
Wayne Hammer

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 4:41:11 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [<mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 4:22 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/10/2010 16:22:09
First Name: Will
Last Name: Hammerquist
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on: other

Comments:
Lani Eggertsen-Goff
488 East Winchester Street, Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

Re: Montana Secondary Highway 486/North Fork Flathead Road
DRAFT Corridor Planning Study

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff:

Thank for you for the opportunity to provide additional comments

regarding the above-mentioned corridor study. Please refer to the
comments submitted by NPCA and Earth Justice on June 23rd for a
complete version of our comments relating to the corridor study.

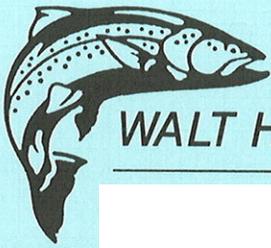
We support the finding on page 18 of the DRAFT study that
Glacier
National Park is a Section 4(f) resource. We reiterate our

position
that any roadway improvement actions for S486 that expend
federal
aid highway funds taken S486 must not diminish the integrity of
the
natural values of Glacier National Park. Clear statutory
obligations
support this position and provide a legal mandate of
non-impairment
for any future actions relating to S486.
On behalf of our members, we thank the study team for the
opportunity to participate as a stakeholder in the study
process.

Sincerely,

Will Hammerquist
Glacier Program Manager

Rec'd 9/9/10



WALT HANDSCHIN

AUGUST 4, 2010

DEAR LANI EGGERTSEN-GOFF—

REGARDING THE NORTH FORK ROAD 486 CORRIDOR STUDY-BLANKENSHIP TO CAMAS ROAD: I URGE YOU TO OPPOSE "IMPROVEMENTS" TO THIS ROAD OUT OF CONCERN FOR SAFETY, SCENIC VALUES AND TOURISM EXPERIENCES.

SLOWER ROAD SPEEDS WILL PROTECT ALL ANIMALS INCLUDING THOSE THAT RIDE IN CARS.

LATER THIS MONTH I WILL VISIT GLACIER NATIONAL PARK FOR THE 26TH TIME. I TRAVEL OVER 1200 MILES TO EXPERIENCE SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT. I WILL BE STAYING AT POLEBRIDGE FOR THE QUEL TIME. IN THE WINTER I HAVE TRAVELED FROM WEST GLACIER TO POLEBRIDGE, AND RETURN. IN THE SUMMER I HAVE TRAVELED FROM POLEBRIDGE ON TO COLUMBIA FALLS. TRAVELING ON UNIMPROVED ROADS SLOWS THINGS DOWN AND REQUIRES A HIGHER LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE PROSPECTIVE TRAVELER. THIS SLIGHT DEMAND UPON THE DRIVER CREATES A SELECTION PROCESS THAT REDUCES CONGESTION, DEVELOPMENT AND HOMOGENIZATION. YOU HAVE TO PROTECT WHAT YOU HAVE BEFORE YOU LOSE IT. I AM REMINDED OF MY TRAVELS IN 1980 FROM PRINCE RUPERT, BRITISH COLUMBIA, TO MASSETT, ON GRAHAM ISLAND, THE MOST NORTHERN OF THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS. I FLEW TO THE ISLAND ON A GRUMMAN GOOSE. IF I WANTED TO BRING A CAR, IT HAD TO WAIT FOR THE WEEKLY BARGE. THAT LITTLE BARRIER KEPT THE ISLAND A BEAUTIFUL PLACE WITH SANDWILL CRANES, PYGMY DEER AND LINES OF SEALS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE EXTREME NORTH SPIT. I HOPE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SAVE THE NORTH FORK FOREVER.

SINCERELY

WALT HANDSCHIN
Walt Handschin

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: Fw: North Fork Road Comments
Date: Wednesday, August 11, 2010 1:50:28 AM

From: Annemarie Harrod
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov <mdtnffrteam@mt.gov>
Sent: Wed Aug 11 01:18:37 2010
Subject: North Fork Road Comments

To the Corridor Study Team:

The North Fork of the Flathead Road is a topic all North Fork residents complain about. Its status as rough and dusty, other times as muddy and slick, is a thread that connects us to the settlers of the early 1900s. The North Fork homesteaders measured their trips to Columbia Falls by days and broken wheels. We measure our travel time by the hour or even in minutes, depending on how far from the Canadian border we begin. With the development and marketing of four-wheel- and all-wheel-drive vehicles, the North Fork Road poses minimal challenge during the worst of times. The Flathead County Road crew and grader are to be commended for their skills in maintaining it. Their work is so good that many vehicles of all types feel safe enough to exceed the posted speed and raise the dust we love to complain about. In 35 years of coming up the North Fork Road and 26 years to my place, I have never seen an accident—they are too few to call the NF Road a “dangerous” road. The county maintains the road as their resources allow. For that we all should be thankful.

I concur with the many letters you have received questioning the rationality of paving and other means of over-improving the road. I will note a few of my major concerns.

The dust we create by our speeding is not sufficient reason to pave the NF Road. NF population density does not merit it; and the consequent tax base is not sufficient to sustain the road’s maintenance in the long term. Much more deserving are the thousands of Flathead county taxpayers who need their roads paved because of a population density and heavy use that far exceeds ours, often without the protective foliage and setback from the road that NF residents have. Why do they not merit the benefits of a study that could identify those in greatest need?

From the beginning of human settlement, trails, rails, and roads--figuratively speaking--were the wheels that carried the engines of settlement and commerce into rural areas. Paved highways made possible the relentless expansion of suburbs out

into the countryside, both near and far from urban areas. Rezoning allowed the development of commercial properties to support the growing communities as it currently does in Flathead County. Flathead County has experienced a rapid increase in its population growth. The North Fork of the Flathead is one of the few relatively pristine places and, according to biologists, the wildest valley in the lower 48 states. Your study notes (in Appendix A) that it is home to a unique community of predator and prey species that appears unmatched [in the U.S.] for its variety, density of species, and use of bottomlands (p.17). These bottomlands are in, and other times, adjacent to the corridor that is the object of your study.

A paved or improved road over time seriously threatens the North Fork ecosystem in a number of ways. It naturally increases the speed of most users, a significant factor in the mortality of our unique wildlife. It also increases the number of the vehicles which in turn increases the vulnerability of grizzlies, wolves and other wildlife to accidents and illegal harvesting. As Appendix A notes, the mortality of grizzlies is the “most serious consequence of roads in grizzly habitat” (p.35); and people account for 80 to 90 percent of wolf mortality (p. 27). Many other less charismatic animals will also be negatively impacted.

The ability of wildlife to move safely across a corridor that cuts through their home range makes it difficult for them to access the most important part of their habitat: the riparian area along the river corridor. We are drawn to bodies of water for scenic and recreational opportunities; for wildlife, they are essential for survival. Riparian zones provide safe travel corridors and resting places for many species because of the cover provided by the dense vegetation, the more diverse food sources, and more moderate climate in summer and in winter--to name a few of many benefits.

Wildlife habitat is also diminished by the increased level and duration of noise and emissions from vehicles. Road improvements will be accompanied by increased traffic, speed and unrelenting pressure for greater economic expansion into the North Fork. This inevitable growth in traffic and development will increase the haze in the park and the corridor that forms as a by-product of combustion from automobiles, wood stoves, power plants, and industrial processes. The scenic values of this place of incomparable beauty will be degraded. The ambient quality of road dust is short-lived and relatively low-lying; and yes, irritating and annoying but not dangerous unless accompanied by risky driving. The values of wildlife, pristine air and water, unrivaled scenic beauty, and serenity stand to be seriously compromised with a road that wheels in forces incompatible with sustaining what makes the North Fork of the Flathead the best place for its wildlife and human communities.

The best road for the North Fork corridor is one that allows us to hold its rightful place in the Crown of the Continent. The North Fork is a jewel worthy of sacrificing ease of travel and comfort.

Sincerely,

Annemarie Harrod

From: www@mdt.mt.gov
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Friday, August 06, 2010 3:25:15 PM

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/06/2010 15:25:05
First Name: Morgan
Last Name: Hart
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

We are writing in response to your call for comments on the "Draft Corridor Study, North Fork Flathead Road" (NFFR). We request that our concerns be entered into the official record:

- Study justification and costs: With the unemployment rate in Flathead County at 11.5 percent (Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - Last updated July 26, 2010), it is appalling that Flathead County and the Montana Department of Labor (MDOT) are spending over \$100,000 of tax dollars on an out of state contractor for a study focused on a tiny percentage of the unpaved roads in the county. With more than 700 miles of unpaved roads in Flathead County, serving tens of thousands of citizens per day, why is Flathead County and MDOT funding a detailed analysis of a 13-mile section on a single road serving less than 100 year-round residents plus seasonal visitors? At the very least, the final report should contain a detailed accounting of precisely how much money was

spent on this study and a breakdown of the costs. For example, what is PB Americas' profit margin on this study as well as the overhead and labor rates they charged the taxpayers?

- Study Context: First, why haven't Flathead County and MDOT provided a comprehensive list of all un-paved county roads and a specific, measurable priority ranking for upgrading or paving each one? It seems like the high price tag for this study could easily accommodate such an analysis, and, without one, the study can hardly be touted as the basis for making a decision concerning what, if anything, needs to be done to the North Fork Road.

Secondly, the so-called "issues and needs" articulated in the study (dust, rough surface, safety) are seasonal, occupying at most four months out of the year. How can Flathead County and MDOT justify spending \$7.4 - \$19.7 million on a 13-mile stretch of road while ignoring literally hundreds of permanently occupied county roads? In effect, the study condones wasting an order of magnitude more money, after a six-figure plus study, when there are important shovel-ready projects that could help create and sustain jobs in the Flathead Valley. This abhorrent dereliction of duty by elected and appointed state, local and municipal officials is bad enough in terms of human cost, but it will also destroy a unique wildlife habitat, all for the convenience of seasonal visitors and profits for the development lobby.

- Legal reality: In 1980, and again in 1982, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Jeopardy Opinion concerning the paving

of
this portion of the North Fork and its impacts on grizzly bears
due to
increased traffic, speed, human development, and habitat
fragmentation. Three decades later, there have been no
substantive,
scientific challenges to the findings of the Jeopardy Opinion.

That
Jeopardy Opinion remains in force, but the study attempts to
circumvent it by listing "Double Shot" (2 chip seals) under its

"Improve Gravel Surfacing" category. This fact alone calls the
entire
study's impartiality into question through its advocacy of
stealth
paving options.

The fact that the vast majority of the study area is on federal
property, combined with the likelihood that federal dollars,
assistance, or approval will be needed all provide a "federal
nexus"
or connection to this project. This in turn means that any
paving, or
stealth paving alternative will require a Biological Assessment
from
the Forest Service, formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act,
and
an assessment of potential "Take", "Harm", and "Jeopardy" under
Section 9 of the same act. None of this is discretionary, and
the
study should state this legal fact prominently.

In addition to the Jeopardy Opinions, the draft study notes that
any
efforts to seek funding for NFFR work through the Federal
Highway
Administration (FHWA) (the most likely source of Federal funding)
would trigger the requirements of Section 4(f) of the Department
of
Transportation Act of 1966, which states that "Prior to
approving a

project that 'uses' a Section 4(f) resource, FHWA must find that there is no prudent or feasible alternative that completely avoids 4(f) resources and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from 'use.'" Thus, the final report should state unequivocally that any proposal that includes paving of the North Fork Road violates this act, since it would have significant negative consequences for both listed wildlife and habitat on the Flathead National Forest lands west of the river, and Glacier Park east of the river.

- Pro-paving bias: The draft study contains several stalking horses for the development lobby. The first is that the Jeopardy Opinion can be evaded by "providing wildlife-crossing structures as part of any pavement options". Yet even the draft study cannot mask the ridiculous cost of such an approach: \$13 million. If implemented with even the lowest cost of the paving options, this would raise the price tag for 13 miles of road to over \$20 million dollars. It boggles the mind that MDOT and Flathead County would seriously consider such a level of expenditure (even if the funds come entirely from the Federal Government) during the worst recession since the 1930s. And such a scheme would not even work, because the massive fencing system required to channel wildlife to the crossing structures would sever the North Fork ecosystem in just the manner that the Jeopardy Opinion was designed to prevent. The inclusion of such farcical nonsense again casts doubts on the efficacy

of the entire study.

By stating that “the zoning district in the area (1 unit per 20 acres) north of Camas Road will limit the potential build-out of the North Fork valley”, the draft study also implicitly supports a long-standing developer canard to the effect that the Jeopardy Opinions are no longer needed because of the North Fork Neighborhood Plan. While we support and some of us were instrumental in getting the North Fork Neighborhood Plan enacted, it can and has been circumvented, as study members would have seen for themselves if they had bothered to drive the road or take decent notes when interviewing residents and “stakeholders”. Furthermore, for the draft study to suggest that “the remote, undeveloped nature of the North Fork area limits the opportunities for future growth” is either incredibly naïve or an indication of what special interests are really behind this study in particular and paving the road in general. Increased development is inevitable if the road or any portion of it is paved. As the rest of our comments demonstrate, there really is no other reason to pave the road.

By listing “Coordination of emergency services to address long travel times from Columbia Falls up the NFFR for ambulances and fire fighting equipment vehicles” as a legitimate issue, the study is complicit in a long-standing deceit employed by paving advocates. The fact is that outside of municipal boundaries, ALERT helicopters are almost always employed for medical emergencies regardless of the road surface. The criterion for what type of emergency

vehicle
to dispatch is distance from the nearest medical facility, not
the
type of road. If paving advocates get their way and the road is

paved all the way to the Canadian border, it will still be a
helicopter
that medivacs them out when they have a car crash caused by
excessive speed, which is also inevitable with a paved road.

With
respect to fire fighting equipment, this argument could be
dispelled
by anyone with the remotest experience of wildfire management.
We have lived through every fire on the North Fork since 1965
and
the heroic efforts of both national and local crews were not
materially hindered by road conditions, because a) fire crews
operate in worse environments than the North Fork all the time,
and
b) one of the first activities always undertaken is to grade the
road
for heavy equipment and conduct dust abatement operations.

Not only should all the aforementioned pavement pandering be
removed from the final report, but to provide a genuinely
impartial
document, the study should explicitly refute claims that dust
from
the North Fork road does everything from pollute the North Fork

River to hasten the melting of glaciers in the Park. A good
place to
start is by quoting Dr. Jack Stanford of the Yellow Bay
Biological
Station, who has stated that dust from the road seldom makes it
to
the river, settling for the most part in nearby forest. And
relatively
heavy road dust particles (PM 10) would be lucky to make it
several
hundred yards from the road, and certainly are not going to
carry
several miles into the high peaks, air, and glaciers of Glacier

National Park.

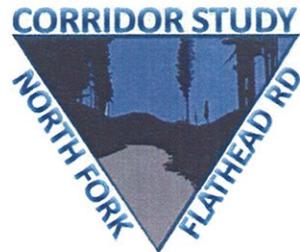
- Cost Realism: At \$7.4 - \$19.7 million, paving options are by far the most expensive alternatives under consideration – 3 to 10 times more expensive than current maintenance; 2 to 5 times more expensive than bentonite and magnesium chloride combined; and 2 to 5 times as expensive as narrowing the road to 26 feet, upgrading the gravel, and funding added law enforcement – combined. Paving is simply a reckless misuse of taxpayer dollars, even when we're not in a deep recession. By squandering tax dollars on out of state consultants and catering to developers by treating all "road improvement options" equally, the study and its sponsors are complicit, or worse, in this waste of scarce resources.

- Environmental Stewardship: Recently, Montana and British Columbia concluded a landmark Memorandum of Understanding that withdraws the Canadian Flathead from mining, oil and gas development. In response, Montana Senators Baucus and Tester have introduced legislation to preclude the U.S. North Fork from similar future developments, and several large oil companies have retired their leases in the area. In the face of these hopeful developments protecting the Flathead Valley's clean water, it is shameful that State, County, and Columbia Falls are not serious about protecting the North Fork on our side of the border. The lack of a single word about this landmark achievement in the study, to say nothing about the detrimental consequences to cementing an international agreement concerning the preservation of this unique ecosystem that paving would entail, speaks volumes.

In conclusion, none of the paving (or stealth paving) alternatives cited in the draft study are economically, environmentally, or legally defensible. As long-term North Fork residents we urge Flathead County and MDOT to direct scarce resources to areas in the Flathead Valley where people are hurting and jobs are urgently needed. If you cannot leave well enough alone on the North Fork Road then we would ask you to consider building on the successful gravel improvement recently carried out under RAC funding (have any of the out of state "experts" driven the unpaved parts of the road between Camas and Polebridge lately?) to include narrowing the roadway to 24 feet; improving the gravel surface; adding two additional grading sessions per year combined with appropriate dust suppressants; and additional law enforcement to curtail excessive speeds by a majority of motorists.

Sincerely,

Ray and Fern Hart, Morgan and Patti Hart



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

The study members should drive this road at least twice a week, so they can get a real understanding of the road conditions (dust, road hazards, lack of visibility, car wear & tear, etc). It would be suggest one of the days should be on the week-end when traffic is heavy, and you can observe the dust pouring into the river. The County Commissioners should also be included. The only long term option to control dust is to pave the road!

It continues to be a health & safety hazard, and some day there will be an accident & the Co. will be sued for knowingly maintaining or failing to address a known hazard. and the lack of funding will be no defense. You should ask the Co attorney for an opinion.

RALPH C. HEVOP.

Reid 8/2/10

Corridor Study
North Fork Flathead Road

I would like to be on record as strongly supporting paving the North Fork road to Camas. For over 40 years the people who use the road on a regular basis have had to deal with a sub-standard road only because of the vast amount of propaganda spewed out by environmental groups. One of these groups is Glacier National Park! I can not believe the Hypocrisy and Arrogance of the GNP in opposing paving when they continue to pave everything inside the Park, especially the road connecting the North Fork Road. The only negative to paving this road is the cost, but in the long run even that would be a positive.

Respectfully ,

Arthur J (Duke) Hoiland
Naomi R Hoiland

Arthur J Hoiland
Naomi R Hoiland

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: sludlow@mt.gov; [Murray, Pam](#); [Vernarsky, Patti](#);
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Corridor Study Comment - Rec"d 10 a.m. 8/11/10
Date: Wednesday, August 11, 2010 10:16:17 AM

Lani
801-288-3220

From: Brian L. Horejsi
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2010 10:04 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

Dear Ms. Goff;

Its well known that the watershed of the north Fork of the Flathead is a unique and remant part of Americas public lands system. It "earns" these distinctions because of the richness and intactness of its biological diversity, which are today viable because they have refuge from the pressures typically brought to landscapes by road access and motorized use, and the growing number of human users these ecosystem fractures result in.

It should be evident that local residents and many Montanans value the Flathead as a semi primitive landscape fortified by legally designated protected landscapes such as Glacier National Park. I can assure you that many British Columbians and Canadians feel the same way.

At a time in the history of North America when human population pressures are threatening our atmosphere, through green house gas emissions and subsequent global climate disruption, promoting expanded and increased mechanized use of landscapes is counter productive. These lands stand as a bulwark against our deteriorating atmosphere and should be valued as regions of global carbon storage.

The south end of the Flathead, the area immediately impacted by the Camas Road, is a critical low development transiton buffer to the national forest and Park landscape adjacent to it. Its an area I've often walked, picked mushrooms in, and skied in winter, both on the road and adjacent trails. Upgrading the road, along with the increase pressure to develop housing that road access drags with it, will advance the erosion of the regions ecological integrity.

It seems to me that Montana has a huge network of county roads that drain state and local government treasuries for maintenance and upkeep (snow removal, for example). The local county is no different. It strikes me as being foolish, given the financial difficulties county governments and taxpayers are experiencing, to increase the burden by adding more service demanding roads.

It is obvious that I stand in opposition to improving the North Fork road. I trust you will act in the interests of all country residents, Montanas and many other North Americans and reject pressure to upgrade the North Fork Road.

Sincerely,
Dr. Brian L. Horejsi
Frequent user of public land in Montana,
Graduate of the University of Montana,
Wildlife Scientist and
Resident of Calgary, Alberta.

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam](#); [Ludlow, Sheila](#);
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: Draft comments on North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Date: Friday, August 06, 2010 9:34:36 AM

Lani
801-288-3220

From: Beth Judy
Sent: Friday, August 06, 2010 8:03 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: Draft comments on North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff,

Many good points are made in the letter below that Brian Peck shared with me--all of which, having been a regular annual tourist in the North Fork area since 1995, I agree with.

As a Montanan, I disapprove of resources in an economically strapped state being spent on pavement for a road that has so many valid arguments against it. I hate to see money unwisely spent, especially when there is so much need elsewhere in our state.

The North Fork is nationally and now even internationally recognized as an ecologically VITAL place. It must not be tampered with. There are many good, deeply thought out solutions for the road's problems that have been put forward. Let's go that direction instead of pavement.

Thank you.

Beth Judy

From: _____
To: [Eggersen-Goff, Lani;](#)
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment
Date: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 8:45:12 AM

Greetings,

As a long time landowner and part-time resident of the North Fork, I would like to add my comments regarding the North Fork road study. First, let me state I strongly oppose any notion leading to the paving of the North Fork. I do not understand why the study is strictly on the North Fork and not all of the Flathead Valley, where there are miles and miles of unpaved roads with dense developments begging for pavement. It doesn't make sense. And the assertion by MDOT that paving will not increase travel or development likewise does not make sense. The use of millions of federal dollars spent to save the county \$30,000 to \$40,000 is utterly wasteful, particularly in this economic climate of huge deficits. Lastly, paving will increase speed which will in turn reduce safety dramatically. This whole notion of even considering North Fork pavement is beyond the pale.

Thank you

Randy Kenyon

Donna Harrison

To: MDT mdtnffrteam@mt.gov

Dear NFFR Team Members,

Please enter my following comments into the official record on the “Draft Corridor Study, North Fork Flathead Road”. Also, please keep me informed on future study updates.

I’m afraid political motivation is behind the nature of this “study”, much like the infamously planned “bridge to nowhere” was in Alaska. I have been a property owner in the North Fork of the Flathead for over twenty (20) years, and find this “corridor study” out of sync with actual road priorities throughout Flathead County. Where is the study that indicates that the North Fork Road is the neediest road in the county for road improvement?

Over 700 miles of unpaved roads exist in Flathead County. Thousands of year-round Valley residents deal with summer dust, and autumn, winter, and spring muddy/slippery unpaved roads. As a long-time Montana and Flathead County resident (38 years and 20 years, respectively), I am appalled that the state and county are spending our hard earned tax dollars so recklessly, especially during such tough economic times. Certainly, the priority of spending tax dollars on road improvements should be directed to where the population center exists, not on a remote road that demands drivers to slow down and appreciate not only a county, state, and national treasure, but a globally rare complete ecosystem, the North Fork of the Flathead.

Many long-time North Forkers would be just happy with *timely* road grading (i.e. after wetting rains), limited dust abatement (talk to local USDA Forest Service *for free*), gradual gravel improvements over time, and more speed control enforcement to remind those visiting that the North Fork Road is a “road to somewhere” VERY special.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Rick Kerr

July 7, 2010

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
488 East Winchester Street, Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

Re: Montana S 486 Road Corridor Planning Study

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff,

I am writing to submit comment on the Corridor planning Study for Montana S486, also known as the North Fork Road. Specifically, I urge you to consider the legal context outlined by Earthjustice and the National Parks Conservation Association in a recent letter to you (June 23). I am in emphatic agreement with their argument.

I worked as an Environmental Scientist and Project manager at Ecosystem Research Group, a consulting company in Missoula, from 1999 to 2002. During my time there we had several contracts for writing Scenic Byway Management Plans – for the Sawtooth and Gold Rush Byways in Idaho, and for a Mississippi River route in Missouri. We also completed several extensive NEPA assessments for TES species along a fiber optic cable line (central Montana to Seattle portions). I therefore know the difficulties of working in a professional setting as a contractor. In the case of the North Fork Road, I believe it would be a professional, legal, and ethical breach on your company's part to recommend paving in your report.

As a Montana resident since 1996, I have visited the remote west side of Glacier National Park and Polebridge many times. This area is unique in its healthy wildlife populations and relatively large expanses of undivided habitat. Both of these qualities are directly threatened by the possibility of an utterly unnecessary road "improvement" in the form of paving. Paving inevitably brings more vehicles and higher vehicle speeds – results that are amply documented to fragment habitat and increase roadkill.

I urge you to do the right thing – recommend keeping S486 gravel.

Sincerely,



Alexandra Koelle, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow in Environmental Humanities,
Bill Lane Center for the American West, 2010-2012
Stanford University

(I can be reached at the above Missoula address through August.)

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Murray, Pam
Sent: Tuesday, August 03, 2010 11:13 AM
To: Kirkendall, Amanda
Subject: FW: North Fork Road

From: Connie Konopatzke
Sent: Monday, August 02, 2010 8:46 PM
To: mdtinfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road

We are definitely in favor of paving the North Fork Road. We have lived in Columbia Falls for over 30 years. Once a year we travel to Polebridge. We also like to ATV and travel the road in our truck to some of the side roads and unload our ATV's there. Some of the side roads are in way better shape than the North Fork road. If some people think this is going to stop people from using the road - they are wrong. The more people moving to the valley will also generate more people seeking out the less populated areas - including the North Fork area. So, it might as well be paved to reduce the awful dust; not to mention an alternative means into Glacier National Park.

Dave and Connie Konopatzke

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam; sludlow@mt.gov;](#)
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda;](#)
Subject: FW: North Fork Corridor Study comments Marylane Pannell/Richard Kuhl 8-9-10
Date: Monday, August 09, 2010 10:50:28 AM

A few comments directly related to the corridor study document...

Lani
801-288-3220

-----Original Message-----

From: Marylane Pannell
Sent: Monday, August 09, 2010 10:47 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Cc: Marylane Pannell
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study comments

This email contains my comments on the North Fork Flathead Road Draft Corridor Study. Please place it in the comment record.

As acknowledged in the Corridor Study, the North Fork is recognized internationally for its wildlife and environmental values. These values exist in large part because human disturbance to the valley floor has been minimized. It is this undisturbed valley floor which is crucial for maintaining the area's unique natural values. The present condition of the North Fork Road plays a big part in limiting human impacts-in some ways even bigger than the county, state and federal agency land use plans. Changing the road to make it easier and faster to travel will have impacts that are not fully evaluated in the Draft.

The final screening matrix gives a distorted view of the road improvement issue. Since the criteria used are not weighted it is hard to see how they can be used to make a decision. Safety appears to have the same value as impacts to the environment or wildlife despite the low number of accidents on the road. The Matrix also indicates that none of the surface treatments except paving will lead to more traffic. This assumption is unrealistic. If the present condition of the road limits the number of users than improvement of any type will lead to some increase of vehicles. The matrix indicates all the proposed stabilization treatments will lead to increased vehicle speeds. If that is so it must also be assumed that they will

lead to an increase in traffic and if that is so the impacts to the environment and wildlife could be just as high as pavement. It is also difficult to see why full pavement to a 24 foot top advances for consideration when it is listed high in the categories of cost, environmental and wildlife impacts, increased speed, more traffic and conflicts with land use plans. The matrix is used to make it appear that a decision on the road is based on quantifiable criteria when in fact the N,Y, M, L, and H used to fill the blanks are based mostly on opinion not hard data. A more liberal use of the word "unknown" would be more accurate and would point to areas needing more research.

It has been suggested that the county land use plan for the North Fork is sufficient to limit development if the road is improved. Before a decision is made on the road an analysis of the land use plan should be made. How many 20 acre lots could be allowed under the plan? How many smaller lots were created before the current plan went into effect? How secure is the land use plan? What would the North Fork look like under full development? What is the experience in other localities of maintaining a land use plan as more people move into an area? Would more recreational use of the area, including river use, force the land management agencies to limit recreational visits through the use of permits? Even if dust is reduced by a chosen treatment will increased use of the road and more development eventually lead to more air and water pollution? These are the kind of questions which should be addressed if maintaining the special quality of the North Fork is the chief priority.

An issue not adequately dealt with in the matrix is the issue of cost. It is not sufficient to estimate the cost of the various treatment proposals. What should also be considered are the other road improvement projects in Flathead County which could benefit from the dollars potentially proposed for the North Fork. Improving the heavily used Whitefish Stage Road would be a much wiser use of tax dollars. When it came time for me to settle down and buy a house I bought one in Kalispell to minimize my impact to the environment. People who buy property in the North Fork know the condition of the road when they buy. I do not feel like spending my tax dollars to improve the condition of the road to benefit a handful of property owners. When I visit the North Fork I am content with the condition of the road no matter how dusty, icy or rutted because I know it helps protect the area. I frankly have little sympathy for folks who buy property in an area such as the North Fork and then start demanding "improvements" at taxpayer expense.

At the April meeting in Columbia Falls Jim Lynch hoped that this study would produce a consensus on what to do about the road. I doubt that goal has been achieved because the Corridor Study focused on the wrong question. Before reaching a consensus on the road you need to reach a consensus on the North Fork. With personal goals as varied as replicating the Blue Ridge Parkway, increasing tourism to benefit Columbia Falls, faster travel, increased subdivision possibilities, higher home resale prices, grizzly bear sanctuary, wildlife and wilderness preservation, privacy protection and unregulated recreational opportunities it is no wonder an agreement can not be reached on the road in a few short months. It would have been better to have spent the considerable money expended on this Corridor Study on an effort to reach consensus on what the North Fork should look like in the future. I hope that the end of the study time does not lead to a forced decision about consensus when none exists. Since the goal of this study was to search for a consensus, if none is found, it should be so stated, and attention focused on roads where there is a consensus.

Richard Kuhl

Ms. Lani Eggertsen-Goff
PB Consultants
488 E. Winchester St., Ste 400
Murray, UT 841005

Dear Ms. Goff:

Our comment on the North Fork Flathead Road Draft Corridor Study will be brief. The draft seems a competent document within the framework of the interests that pushed it and paid for it -- namely, the commercial interests in the immediate area of Columbia Falls and county and state response to them.

Ostensibly the report makes the effort to be inclusive (witness the long lists, the many letters).

To our way of thinking, the entire exercise begs the question: Who will benefit from this study? Who will use its tables and long lists to for their own purposes? Perhaps not right away, but in a few years?

With its emphasis on local input, the document marginalizes the main, the overriding consideration -- namely, that paving affects a major glory in our national heritage: Glacier National Park. The report minimizes the fact that the mechanisms of travel to and near the Park are not the most important issue. The integrity of the Park itself should be the prime consideration of any road study in its immediate vicinity. In this regard, we find that references to previous ecological studies of the Canyon to Camas section of the North Fork Road are relegated to the back pages of the study.

In other words a sense of the world significance of Glacier Park is eerily absent from the study. One feels that the document is is mostly by locals and for locals.

There is a feeling of unreality, of pro-forma activity, to the entire effort. Paving, which would be detrimental to the entire west flank of the Park, is seen as just another alternative. There is no red flag in face of the development and fast traffic that the so-called paving alternative would bring to the North Fork of the Flathead.

As to other elements of the study, we concur with the July 20th letter to Ms Eggertsen from Headwaters Montana and endorse its evaluation of the study.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cecily R. McNeil *Edward B. McNeil*

Cecily R. McNeil
Edward B. McNeil (North Fork Landowners since 1959. Founding members of The
North Fork Compact.)

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Road Study Group
Date: Monday, August 09, 2010 12:12:06 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: North Fork Hostel
Sent: Saturday, August 07, 2010 9:26 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani; Northforkroadstudy
Subject: North Fork Road Study Group

North Fork Road Study Group

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
Parsons Brinckerhoff
488 E. Winchester St. Suite 400
Murray, Utah 84107

To the MDOT study group:

I am writing to suggest that the document you produced about the North Fork Road falls way short of it's objective and purpose and lacks visionary ideas and real alternatives for the future.

The study falls short in documenting existing and projected growth and land use in regards to all proposed maintenance options for the study corridor. Considering the international importance of the North Fork Valley and the values of Glacier National Park for present and future generations nothing in this document comes even close to address the challenges of the North Fork's primitive and wild character in the future!

Other than listing paving as the only option that would increase traffic, there is an obvious lack of ideas or real alternatives for the study corridor.

If poor visibility and safety during the summer months and maintenance are the real issues behind the decision to conduct this corridor study by Flathead County and MDOT the document falls also short of justifying such a study only for the North Fork Road Corridor without considering similar gravel roads county and statewide.

If Columbia Falls City interests to use the corridor for their "Gateway to Glacier" advertising campaign or the complaints of a few very vocal residents are a ulterior motive to produce this paper county commissioners and MDOT have totally missed their obligations to the residents of Flathead County.

If Flathead County can't afford to properly maintain the North Fork Road, perhaps the county's fiscal problems should be addressed first before squandering money on yet another study!

Thank you,

Oliver Meister

North Fork Hostel Team

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Road Comments
Date: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 5:59:26 PM

From: Shayda Naficy
Sent: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 5:58 PM
To: mdtntfteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road Comments

Dear Members of Montana Department of Transportation:

I am writing to ask that you **not** pave the North Folk Road which extends up to Polebridge, and consider far less extreme solutions for any problems that you may presently be attempting to address. I am an owner of a cabin in Polebridge proper and the main reason for that area's charm is its primitive, slow-living quality--a characteristic that would be undermined by putting in a dramatically improved road. There are plenty of roads available for those who want superhighways running through nature. What we need more of are areas like the North Fork Valley which are still somewhat sheltered from development. Part of the necessary protection of this still wild and beautiful area is in minimizing entry to the area. This is an important task which is in your hands.

This area is one of very few of its kind left. Please--if you are truly concerned for the welfare of the area, its residents, and wish to maintain the areas' unique draw--scrap the one-size-fits all plan, and leave it alone, or come up with a plan which protects what makes this place special.

Thank you for your consideration,

Shayda

Shayda Naficy

2 Study - mandate / charge
10 miles - why are they
discussing grizzly bears north of PB
etc - etc - etc

3 never & date whether road needs
current safety regs

4 chart about vehicle usage -
no breakout of govt vehicles
are they counted or not

5 # of vehicles per day per month
can't find report
when does a road need to
be paved? 300?
5 months? exceed

6 what is "your" mandate
GNP -? "recreate" ~~forest~~ wetlands &
grasslands?

7 Stimulus - repeated
potholes - paving - sediment
why are we different - discriminate
against?

8

Green Groups

earthjustice - Waman, NPCA
black carbon - dust

development
recreate
roads
bibs models?

Plyer - complete the park - ~~hypocritical~~

development

in those 10 miles of roads
how much public land is there?

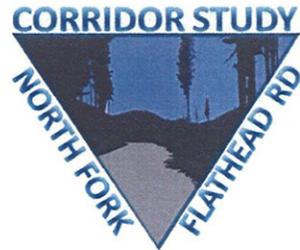
Zoning - Sds, permits - inspections

how many groceries have septic
tanks?

Pg 18 development
the 10 miles?

Pg 32 GNP believes
that road improvements would lead
to an increase in traffic &
development and a degradation
of the primitive values of
the NF portion of the park.

GNP is opposed to
improving the road since its mission
is to preserve & protect the
primitive values - inherent in
the NF portion of the park
flyer to complete the park



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

Unless something has changed there will be no paving on the North Fork Road in the foreseeable future. Not because of lack of money! Not because of intelligent thinking! Not because the public doesn't want paving. Paving is the intelligent solution to the problem.

Surveys in the NF have proven that 53% of the returned surveys stated paving should be done to Camas. Check the records. Paving to Camas ~~is~~ should be done.

Hell Roaring is not a part time creek it runs full time and has for the past 60 years plus.

Most of the dust in the River problem is produced in the 13 miles in question!

Name: Lynn P Cole

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

August 5, 2010

Natural Resources Defense Council

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
488 East Winchester St., Suite 400
Murray, UT. 84107

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the “Draft Corridor Study, North Fork Flathead Road” (NFFR). Please enter the following comments and concerns into the official record and keep us advised of further developments on this issue.

* With more than 700 miles of unpaved roads in Flathead County, serving tens of thousands of citizens per day, it is unclear to us why the County and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT) are spending scarce tax dollars on a detailed analysis of a comparative “Road to Nowhere” serving less than 100 year-round residents plus seasonal visitors.

Before this corridor study proceeds to any decision phase, it’s imperative that the County provide, and MDOT carefully consider, a comprehensive list of all un-paved County roads and a specific, measurable priority ranking for upgrading or paving each one. Only then can citizens and taxpayers determine if the considerable expenditure of time, people, and money being put into this study is warranted.

In addition, while this study considers only the impacts of the segment of the NFFR south of the Camas Rd. junction, key research by U.S. Forest Service biologists suggests this is inappropriate for the following reasons:

“Highway impacts must be addressed at the geographic scale by state DOT’s and the Federal Highway Administration, as well as by total length of highway. Trying to address impacts by short highway segment, as is presently done, is not appropriate. It is impossible to understand the importance or context of a highway segment to carnivores without looking at higher scales.” (Ruediger, et al. 2000).

* It’s vital than MDOT understands and acknowledges that the stated problems with the NFFR – dust, rough surface, safety – are almost entirely seasonal ones spanning little more than 4 months each year. We fail to see how any scenario can justify the spending of \$7.4 - \$19.7 million on a seasonal issue, while hundreds of miles of permanently occupied County roads go begging.

It’s also important to acknowledge that any paving option will permanently compromise key wildlife habitat to solve a temporary, seasonal problem. As noted again by Ruediger et al. (2000):

“Other highways that can have a serious impact are the upgrading of gravel forest and backcountry roads into paved two-lane highways. When located in carnivore habitat, these former low standard roads begin the process of increasing traffic volumes and speed in carnivore habitat. Paving of forest roads increases the potential for permanent human occupancy of remote areas through encroachment of subdivisions, resorts and high-use recreation development...”

“When traffic volume increases, there is an evolution of highways from gravel roads to paved two-lane roads, and from two lane highways to more problematic four lane highways...The eventual result of such a progression in the highway system on rare carnivores is the slow strangulation of viability due to population isolation, loss of habitat, mortality of individuals, and a decline in potential population size.”

* In 1980, and again in 1982, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) issued a Jeopardy Opinion concerning the paving of this portion of the North Fork and its impacts on grizzly bears due to increased traffic, speed, human development, and habitat fragmentation (USFWS 1980, 1982). Today, with 30 additional years of “best available science” under our belts on bears and roads, it’s clear that the FWS concerns and Jeopardy Opinion were well justified (Mace and Waller 1997:Mace and Manley 1993, Kasworm and Manley 1988 & 1991, Mattson and Knight 1991, McLellan and Shackleton 1988, Aune and Kasworm 1989).

In fact, FWS data presented at Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Subcommittee meetings consistently shows that 90-95% of grizzly mortality in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) is human-caused, with the Number 1 mortality factor being “management control”, often of habituated/food conditioned bears, often around private homes and developments in rural areas. Paving the North Fork, and the development that will surely follow, will only make this situation worse.

That Jeopardy Opinion remains in force, and applies not only to all paving options listed under “Bituminous Surface Treatment” but to alternatives such as “Double Shot” (2 chip seals), improperly listed under “Improve Gravel Surfacing” when it’s simply paving under another name – with all the same negative consequences.

The fact that the vast majority of the study area is on federal property, combined with the likelihood that federal dollars, assistance, or approval will be needed, all provide a “federal nexus” or connection to this project. This in turn means that any paving, or “paving look-alike” alternative will require a Biological Assessment (BA) from the Forest Service, formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and an assessment of potential “Take”, “Harm”, and “Jeopardy” under Section 9 of the ESA. None of this is discretionary.

There is some suggestion that MDOT thinks it can circumvent the Jeopardy Opinion by proposing overpasses and underpasses in combination with paving. We’d suggest that MDOT think again. First, as noted in this Corridor Study, a system of over or underpasses every mile would cost an outrageous \$13 million. Second, such a system is

usually combined with tall fencing to guide wildlife to the structures, thereby severing the North Fork in two, just as it has done in Banff National Park. Finally, overpasses do nothing to mitigate the increased housing development likely to follow any paving scheme. North Fork habitat would be hopelessly fragmented – not just for grizzlies, but for deer, elk, and moose as well.

Some have suggested that the Jeopardy Opinions are no longer needed because the North Fork Neighborhood Plan includes a 20 acre minimum lot size to prevent the area from going into subdivisions of 1, 3, and 5 acre lots. While this is helpful, we know of no research showing that grizzlies, wolves, lynx, or elk can survive in a landscape carved up into scores or hundreds of 20 acre “ranchettes.” MDOT must also consider that a local property rights group, American Dream Montana, has stated its intention to overturn the Flathead County Growth Policy. If they’re successful, the attached Neighborhood Plans go down the tubes as well. And finally, the North Fork Neighborhood Plan indicates that of 746 individual properties, 73% were already less than 20 acres when the Plan was approved and that at full build-out this could create up to 1034 individual lots and a linear fracture zone in the heart of the valley.

* As noted in a June 23, 2010 letter to you from Earthjustice and the National Parks Conservation Association (Preso 2010), and covered on P: 18 of the Draft, any efforts to seek funding for NFFR work through the Federal Highway Administration would trigger the requirements of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. As the Draft states, “Prior to approving a project that ‘uses’ a Section 4(f) resource, FHWA must find that there is no prudent or feasible alternative that completely avoids 4(f) resources and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from ‘use.’”

Clearly, any proposal that includes paving of the North Fork Road both triggers, and violates this act, since it would have significant negative consequences for both listed wildlife and habitat on the Flathead National Forest lands west of the river, and Glacier Park east of the river. From a wildlife standpoint, these habitats are vital and inseparable – except by a high speed, paved highway.

* At \$7.4 - \$19.7 million, paving options are by far the most expensive alternatives under consideration – 3 to 10 times more expensive than current maintenance; 2 to 5 times more expensive than bentonite and magnesium chloride combined; and 2 to 5 times as expensive as narrowing the road to 26 feet, upgrading the gravel, and funding added law enforcement – combined. Paving is simply a reckless misuse of taxpayer dollars, even when we’re not in a deep recession.

* The argument that a paved road is necessary for fire and emergency services response is simply nonsense, and a red herring misused by paving advocates. Having worked in fire management for 21 years, I can assure you that fire crews don’t let a little dust and a few bumps slow down their response to a wildfire, and on past North Fork fires, the road has been quickly graded and dust suppressant applied.

As for response to medical emergencies in remote areas, those are almost universally dealt with using the Alert helicopter, and for an area like the North Fork, that would still be the case even if the entire road were paved to the border.

* Paving boosters have also claimed that dust from the North Fork road does everything from pollute the North Fork River, to hasten the melting of glaciers in the Park. Both claims are nonsense. As we noted in our April 20, 2010 comments, Dr. Jack Stanford of the Yellow Bay Biological Station has stated that dust from the road seldom makes it to the river, settling for the most part in nearby forest. And relatively heavy road dust particles (PM 10) would be lucky to make it several hundred yards from the road, and certainly are not going to carry several miles into the high peaks and glaciers of Glacier National Park.

* The North Fork Valley, both north-south and east-west, provides critical linkage zones for numerous species, from deer, elk, and moose, to listed species like wolves, grizzlies, and lynx. A high-speed paved route through the heart of the valley, and the development that would follow, risks severing these connections and placing additional species and their habitat in peril. If local paving boosters want to keep current threatened and endangered species on the ESA list and add additional species to their numbers, paving a road through the heart of wild country is a pretty good way to do it.

* Recently, Montana and British Columbia concluded a landmark Memorandum of Understanding that withdraws the Canadian Flathead from mining, oil and gas development. In response, Montana Senators Baucus and Tester have introduced legislation to preclude the U.S. North Fork from similar future developments, and several large oil companies have retired their leases in the area. In the face of these hopeful developments protecting the Flathead Valley's clean water and wildlife, the last thing we need is a mixed message from the State, County, or Columbia Falls suggesting we're not serious about protecting the North Fork on our side of the border.

When we look at the wide variety of options being considered, it's clear to us that the County and MDOT need to step back from all of the paving alternatives - which are indefensible economically, environmentally, and legally - and focus instead on simpler solutions geared toward addressing the short-term seasonal nature of the problem. In that regard, we recommend that you, Flathead County, and MDOT consider options which combine narrowing the roadway to 24 feet; improving the gravel surface; adding two additional grading sessions per year combined with appropriate dust suppressants; and additional law enforcement to curtail excessive speeds by a majority of motorists. We look forward to working with you as the process continues.

Sincerely,

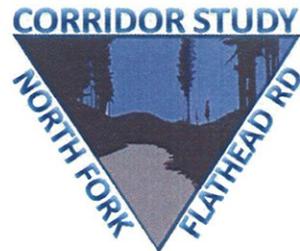
Brian Peck for
Natural Resources Defense Council

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USFWS. 1982. Biological Opinion to the Federal Highway Administration on the reconstruction of Forest Highway Route 61 (NFFR) and its impacts on grizzly bears and gray wolves. April 28, 1982.

USFWS. 1980. Biological Opinion to the Federal Highway Administration regarding the effects of proposed improvements to the North Fork Flathead River Road on the grizzly bear, gray wolf, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and *Silene spaldingii*. July 14, 1980



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

Columbia Falls Area Chamber of Commerce Carol Pike

① This road must be paved for the health and welfare of fish, animals, humans and the quality of the water.

② The chemicals are an added pollutant for us all.

③ 90% of road is USFS land and the public recreation area for the Flathead valley and the tourists.

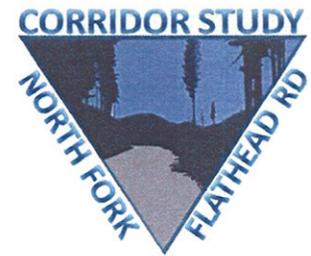
4 Emergency Services Concerns -

Name: 5. Economic impact for construction of Going to Sun Road
Construction. Three years west side of Park will close
Address: in September.

E-mail: Carol Pike

6. 60% of the people living in Polbridge want the road paved.

If you do not give the study team this comment form at the meeting please mail it to NFFR attention Lani Eggertsen-Goff, PB, 488 E Winchester St., Suite 400, Murray UT 84105 or e-mail Goff@pbworld.com



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

The study seems very complete but unless the County wants to select an option and fix the road situation it really is of no benefit at this time. The temporary fix done last fall is nice but is deteriorating fairly rapidly. My main problem with the road is the dust problem. It's dangerous, unhealthy for people, wildlife and plants and should be controlled by whatever means necessary. I also am concerned that the good road base laid from Cyn Ch to Camas entrance to park is deteriorating so that the paving that should have been there ~~could~~ will be ~~not~~ impossible to do without repeating the work.

Name: Linda Pittman

Address:

E-mail:

Comments on North Fork Flathead Road Draft Corridor Study, July 2010.

Submitted at Open House, Discovery Square, July 27, 2010.

Rachel Potter

I want to commend the team on a generally thorough job that conveys many different aspects of this complex issue. Here are a few comments:

2.6 Crash Analysis. The second paragraph is not clear as to what period of time the listed crashes occurred. It makes a difference because if, for example, 5 crashes occurred on the paved section of road from 2004 to 2009, a significant percentage of crashes occurred on the pavement during those years, a fact that should be emphasized. Just one more reason that paving does not necessarily improve safety.

3.2 Development.Paragraph 3. This is a very important issue and should be strengthened. See Stakeholder Interview with the North Fork Landowner Association on page 70 Appendix B regarding total number of parcels and potential parcel divisions. The North Fork Neighborhood Plan that is referred to can be viewed at: http://flathead.mt.gov/downloads/documents/document_209_1219933290.pdf . There were numerous parcel divisions immediately before the 20 acre limit went into effect.

There is also information in Appendix A pg 14 regarding growth rates in Flathead County that should be pulled up into this section.

Besides improved access being likely to increase build out and subdivision of existing parcels, current landowners will undoubtedly spend more time in the North Fork. A paved lower road will make commuting from Polebridge much easier. Many occasionally used cabins will become year round residences.

There is a large and well funded movement to repeal the Flathead County Growth Policy. This recently happened in Montana's Ravalli County and many people fear there is a good possibility it could happen here. If the growth policy is repealed, all existing zoning, including the 20 acre limit becomes null and void.

3.3 Management Emphasis on Adjacent Public Lands. Why are management goals for Glacier National Park's North Fork not spelled out here? A glaring omission.

The MOU (see Appendix A page 15) and the whole transboundary situation should also be referred to in this section. President Obama and the Canadian Premier recently talked about setting up federal to federal negotiations to extend and strengthen protections for the drainage beyond the MOU. Any improvements to the road that could result in

impacts to wildlife and other natural attributes would be in direct conflict to these high level efforts. This issue needs to be very prominent in this study.

The 1985 Forest Plan stipulates dispersed recreation for most of the Glacier View District. An improved road will increase numbers of recreationists, making it increasingly difficult to manage for this. There will be increasing demand and need for infrastructure improvements and expenditures.

5.1 Impacts on Wildlife Impacts on wildlife can be direct and indirect. Only direct mortality is mentioned here. In fact, the indirect effects on habitat fragmentation, displacement, etc. may be much more of an issue. Again, material from the appendix should be included here.

Emergency Services. If an ambulance could drive the 10 gravel miles of the study section 20 mph faster on a paved road (60 mph vs 40 mph), the approximately one hour and forty minute drive time from Trail Cr. to North Valley Hospital would be reduced by only 5 minutes. I understand that emergency service personnel have also indicated that this is a non issue. Response time for emergency services is given far too much emphasis throughout this document.

In fact, a paved road is likely to result in a worse rather than better situation for emergencies. With a paved road will come more people, both landowners and recreationists, resulting in an increase in need for help far from hospitals and fire stations. A fundamental tenant of land use planning is that development should be discouraged the farther you are from infrastructure such as hospitals and fire stations.

Table 5.3 Final Screening Matrix

Why is 3a, bentonite, not advanced for further consideration? It is an option that has actually been tried and is working remarkably well.

I don't understand why options 6c and d are different from full pavement. If done well, why would they have less impact to the environment and wildlife?

Why is 6b, full pavement 24' top, advanced for further consideration when it does so poorly with the screening criteria?

This document does not present any documentation that pavement will improve safety. Many people think that increased speeds and more people on a paved road will reduce rather than improve safety.

And... hot off the press! The UNESCO World Heritage Committee released the following report yesterday:

**WATERTON-GLACIER INTERNATIONAL PEACE PARK(Canada and USA)
REPORT OF THE REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION
20 to 27 SEPTEMBER 2009.**

Among their findings:

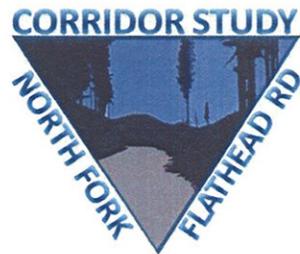
- *They called the uninhabited Canadian Flathead watershed "one of the last of America's remaining wild rivers and of global ecological significance."*
- *"This is one of the [continent's] largest, most pristine, intact and best-protected expanses of natural terrain."*
- *"The Waterton-Glacier World Heritage property forms the core protected area in this regional ecosystem, and its natural integrity is inextricably linked with the neighbouring transboundary Flathead watershed."*

Any improvements to the road that would negatively impact wildlife or the environment will get intense scrutiny from the highest levels of the international community.

To see the complete report go to:

<http://www.flathead.ca/files/WATERTON%20MISSION%20REPORT%20FINAL.pdf>

Once again the road study must put more emphasis on the international significance of the drainage.



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

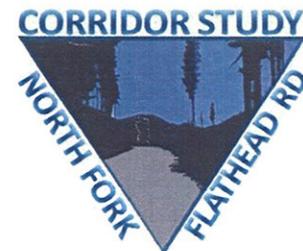
The community in the North Fork is divided on paving. I think that the position that everyone could agree on is dust control.

I strongly believe that paving would destroy the North Fork. However, most people would support less dust.

Name: Debo Powers

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

Pave the road to Camas Park Entrance this is what the people want Put up a 50 or 45 mph sign Install a bike path along side to the PARK Entrance from C. Falls main street! No need for 70 mph signs on the N. Fork Rd.

If its a county Rd why is the state doing the study - for what we're spending here we could have paved it!

Is the N. Fork Rd a state Hwy?

If so does it need to be paved under state law?

Didn't we already study this a couple of times at a big expense to tax payers?

Why is this meeting being held here and not at a public Bldg.

Name: Kevin Ramage

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

From: www@mdt.mt.gov
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov;
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 1:56:31 PM

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/10/2010 13:56:28
First Name: Cindy
Last Name: Ruth
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

I have been a Montana resident my entire life, and have spent a considerable amount of time along the North Fork of the Flathead River. It is one of my favorite places in Montana and the world and is a very special Montana treasure that should be preserved for future generations.

The rural character of the North Fork will be degraded in many ways by paving the road. Once the lower section is paved then it will only be a matter of time before the road is paved all the way to the border. A slow access into the North Fork area is what makes this place special. Once the road is paved and fast access is available to the masses this area will be just like every crowded recreational zone seen in Colorado and California.

A paved road will turn the North Fork into a big trailer court of countless RVs. A paved road will allow for people to drive real fast and will contribute to increased wildlife mortality and human accidents. A paved road will significantly increase traffic, litter, and crime. A paved road will encourage subdivision and commercial development. It's sad how people move way out of town into the country to escape city congestion and commercial development and then want paved roads and shopping at their doorstep. These people should have stayed in town instead of causing our last best places to be like everywhere else.

I am against paving the North Fork Road and believe it can be best improved with better gravel construction and dust reduction measures.

Slow and bumpy access to the North Fork of the Flathead River country is what has helped protect this area for so long.

Paving the North Fork Road will rapidly contribute to its demise as a special place unlike any other.

Please protect the North Fork of the Flathead by NOT paving the road.

From: www@mdt.mt.gov
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov;
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 11:04:58 AM

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/10/2010 11:04:43
First Name: John
Last Name: Ruth
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:

Comments:

I have been a Montana resident for over 31 years and have spent a considerable amount of time along the North Fork of the Flathead River. It is one of my favorite places in Montana and the world and is a very special Montana treasure that should be preserved for future generations. I completed a Masters thesis in the North Fork area and lived part time at the border over a three year period in the late 80's conducting baseline water sampling for the proposed Cabin Creek Coal Mining project.

I am against paving the North Fork Road and believe it can be best improved with better gravel construction and dust reduction measures.

The rural character of the North Fork will be degraded in many ways by paving the road. Once the lower section is paved then it will only be a matter of time before the road is paved all the way to the border. A slow access into the North Fork area is what makes this place special. Once the road is paved and fast access is available to the masses this area will be just like every crowded recreational zone seen in Colorado and California.

A paved road will turn the North Fork into a big trailer court of countless RVs. A paved road will allow for people to drive real fast and will contribute to increased wildlife mortality and human accidents. A paved road will significantly increase

traffic, litter, and crime. A paved road will encourage subdivision and commercial development. Its sad how people move way out of town into the country to escape city congestion and commercial development and then want paved roads and shopping at their doorstep. These people should have stayed in town instead of causing our last best places to be like every where else.

Slow and bumpy access to the North Fork of the Flathead River country is what has helped protect this area for so long. Paving the North Fork Road will rapidly contribute to it's demise as a special place unlike any other.

Please protect the North Fork of the Flathead by NOT paving the road.

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 12:33:35 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [<mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov>]
Sent: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 12:15 PM
To: mdtnfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/04/2010 12:14:30
First Name: Robert
Last Name: Saurey
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

As part time residents of the lower Northfork, (Blankenship), and long-time (50 years+) recreational users of the Northfork, (huckleberry picking, hunting, hiking, fishing, camping, floating, canoeing, skiing), I believe my family and I have the proper perspective to comment on this study. I have never looked at the NF road as a barrier to our enjoyment, rather as an element of the overall experience in a relatively primitive area, with an intact environment that would be degraded by increased access.

In short, any significant road improvement is unnecessary and unwarranted. We do not want additional development in our treasured NF. We do not want any additional development of the west side of Glacier park, and in fact, improvement of the road will result in an unacceptable impact upon our Blankenship place, as it will encourage even more traffic than now exists to use Blankenship Road to access the NF as an alternate route to

Camas Creek, and the inside the NF road. This will result in additional maintenance requirements and upgrades for Blankenship Rd. which will add increased costs to the Flathead County, and I have seen no analysis of those costs in any of the proposals for improving the NF road.

Any residents, or speculators that feel that they were going to get an improved NF road to "enhance" their investment should be told that other road priorities in the Flathead should be addressed , and they should learn to accept the fact that the road just may stay in its current condition, until those priorities are taken care of. And even then, any improvement should be for safety reasons, and to maintain the road in its current condition, and should not be justified by increased development etc., which will result in significant degrading of the NF.

I have been involved in the protection of the NF from inappropriate Canadian development, and one thing is certain, the Canadians are very interested that we also protect our side of the NF equally and as rigorously as we are asking them to do.

I say yes to the no change option, and no to any attempts to "improve" the NF road.

RG Saurey

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: Fw: North Fork of the Flathead Road Corridor Study - comments
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 8:06:33 AM

From: Amy Secrest
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani; mdtfnfrteam@mt.gov <mdtfnfrteam@mt.gov>
Sent: Tue Aug 10 00:42:43 2010
Subject: North Fork of the Flathead Road Corridor Study - comments

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff,

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the “Draft Corridor Study, North Fork of the Flathead Road (NFFR)”. As full-time residents of the North Fork, we oppose any proposal to pave any section(s) of the North Fork Road.

There are few places with the rural character and wilderness qualities of the North Fork, and a paved road would be a permanent change that would forever compromise the values that make the area unique. A paved road would lead to increased traffic, higher vehicle speeds, and more development and subdivision. These impacts would displace wildlife including threatened and endangered species, increase the frequency of road-killed animals, and would result in an overall loss of wildlife security.

A paved road would increase the human foot-print on the North Fork, diminishing the solitude and rustic qualities that make the area truly special. We urge MDOT and Flathead County to consider that much of the North Fork’s real value is attributable to its being among a handful of places that do NOT have paved roads.

Paving would also be an obscenely expensive means of resolving a dust issue that is only a seasonal problem. And it does not make sense to spend several million taxpayer dollars on a handful of miles along a road that services only a few people, when there are hundreds of miles of County roads in disrepair that serve a far greater number of citizens year-round.

Paving is not essential to public health and safety: dust has not been cited as

the cause of any vehicle accidents on the road, dust is made up of large particles that do not necessarily present a health threat, and emergency medical services are likely to use a helicopter in the case of an emergency whether the road is paved or not.

Please – put resources and taxpayer money toward the improvement of gravel roads elsewhere in the County that service a greater number of people over more months of the year; redirect efforts to improve the North Fork Road toward better maintenance of the existing gravel surface; and please do not diminish the rural, wilderness, and ecological value of the North Fork by paving the road and increasing the human footprint.

Thank you, and sincerely,

Lee and Amy Secrest

MOLLY SHEPHERD

July 27, 2010

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
Parsons Brinckerhoff
488 East Winchester Street, Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

Re: North Fork Flathead Road Draft Corridor Study

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff:

I have owned property on the North Fork since 1987 and now live here most of the time. I am immediate past-president of the North Fork Landowners' Association and have served as chair of its Fire Mitigation Committee since 2003. The NFLA has not taken a position on specific road improvement options; the opinions expressed in this letter are my own.

The authors of the NFFR Draft Corridor Study should be commended for their work product. The draft study contains substantial relevant information that has not previously been compiled, as well as some thoughtful analysis.

My concern is that the draft study does not sufficiently address the potential impacts of road improvements on the North Fork ecosystem as a whole. Nor does it adequately consider potential impacts to the way of life in this remote and undeveloped valley. The North Fork ecosystem and the North Fork way of life have a mutually dependent, symbiotic relationship.

While I acknowledge that the study is limited to the corridor between Canyon and Camas Creeks, improving the road seems likely to have profound impacts on the North Fork Valley and on the way of life of people who live and own property there.

As many public comments have suggested, the North Fork Valley is perhaps the most intact ecosystem in the lower forty-eight states. Limited human infrastructure has kept it that way. In particular, the absence of a nice paved road has served as a de facto safety net for the entire ecosystem.

The absence of a paved road also has served as a safety net for a time-honored, self-reliant way of life. The recently adopted North Fork Neighborhood Plan celebrates the values that have survived here but almost nowhere else. The plan is written not only for those who own property in the North Fork but also “for people everywhere who care about special beautiful places and are sensitive to the increasing pressures on the landscape.” Plan, p. 4.

Deciding which if any action to take to improve the North Fork Road will require a high order of stewardship, both of the land and of a way of life. For decision-makers to be good stewards, they must have good information about how these precious and irreplaceable resources may be affected, including possible unintended consequences. Such information also helps to counter any underlying assumption that pavement represents “progress.”

More public benefit may flow from preserving a fragile ecosystem and way of life than from imposing intrusive change in the name of progress. Public policy would be well-served by taking a closer look at how these resources would be impacted by improvements to the road and in particular, by paving.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft corridor study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Molly Shepherd".

Molly Shepherd

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
488 East Winchester St., Suite 400
Murray, Ut. 84107

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff,

Please accept my comments on the "Draft Corridor Study, North Fork Flathead Road" (NFFR).

May I say first that Flathead County is the size of the state Connecticut and with more than 700 miles of unpaved roads in Flathead County. These non-paved roads serve tens of thousands of citizens per day, it is unclear to me why the County and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT) are spending scarce tax dollars on such a road (North Fork Road) that gives limited access to limited numbers of people. The county, as well as the MDOT, needs to consider the huge priorities of roads that citizens have been requesting for years to be paved. How then can a consideration of up to twenty million dollars be even considered for such a lightly used road which leads to seasonal housing and to no where?

It has also been highly argued that dust is a huge environmental issue. In my opinion, having driven this road many times the culprit is speed.

Those who argue in favor of paving state. State that the dust from the road does everything from pollute the North Fork River, to hasten the melting of glaciers in the Park. This is un-factual and Dr. Stanford of the Yellow Bay Biological Station has scientifically stated these particles seldom travel as far as the North Fork River. Traveling to Glaciers is pure nonsense I have many times experienced people driving at very high rates of speed, hence the dust and road damage.

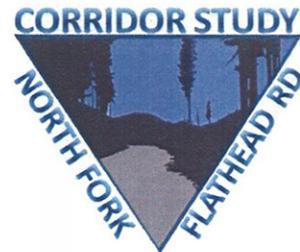
It is my opinion there are less expensive, effective methods of maintaining the road. Examples are; road grading, enforcing speed limits, dust abatement and possibly speed limit signs.

It amazes me why Flathead County has chosen this very expensive project while there are so many other important priorities here in this county. Obviously people living on dusty roads have not been polled or taken into consideration.

As a resident of Flathead County I would like to express my strong opposition to the paving of the North Fork Road. This project is anything but a wise use of taxpayer dollars.

Thank you,


Roger Sherman



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

-I favor the cheapest paving alternative, i.e. Millings/asphalt with chip seal.

- Use the dummy patrol if available.

Name: CALEB MICHAEL SOPTLEAN

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

If you do not give the study team this comment form at the meeting please mail it to NFFR attention Lani Eggertsen-Goff, PB , 488 E Winchester St., Suite 400, Murray UT 84105 or e-mail Goff@pbworld.com

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 2:21:54 PM

--this is an old one but I am not sure I sent it to you --please double check
Thanks!

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [<mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov>]
Sent: Sunday, August 01, 2010 10:04 AM
To: mdtnfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/01/2010 10:03:48
First Name: Gerry
Last Name: Stearns
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:roadway issues

Comments:

Based on review of the data gathered (especially accidents and wildlife collisions) and options for improvement, it seems that application of DSA is the most reasonable choice. Paving would increase both accidents and wildlife collisions.

DSA would not violate the US Fish and Wildlife Service jeopardy opinion and would not require a new EIS.

DSA is a viable compromise between pro- and anti-pavers.

The county would find it easy and cost effective to maintain.

Canada has animal corridors that have had limited success. DSA would eliminate this cost-prohibitive measure.

Keep in mind that all the people on the North Fork who lobby for a paved road were aware of the gravel road when they purchased their property.

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Vernarsky, Patti;](#)
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda; Murray, Pam;](#)
Subject: FW: Comment on a Project Submitted
Date: Friday, August 06, 2010 1:21:10 PM

FYI

Lani
801-288-3220

-----Original Message-----

From: Grant, Paul
Sent: Friday, August 06, 2010 11:32 AM
To: Ludlow, Sheila; Eggertsen-Goff, Lani; Murray, Pam
Subject: FW: Comment on a Project Submitted

fyi

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [<mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov>]
Sent: Friday, August 06, 2010 11:17 AM
To: MDT Comments - Project
Subject: Comment on a Project Submitted

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 08/06/2010 11:17:16
Project Commenting On: mtcorridorstudy document
Project State Highway No.: s 486
Nearest Town/City to Project:columbia falls
Project Milepost: 9.5 to 22.7

Comment or Question:

I would like to be on record as strongly supportine paving the Nortfork road to Camas.

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam](#); ["Sheila Ludlow"](#); [Vernarsky, Patti](#);
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: FW: North Fork Corridor Study Comment - Kyle J Topham 8-5-10
Date: Thursday, August 05, 2010 9:54:55 AM

Lani
801-288-3220

From: KYLE J TOPHAM
Sent: Thursday, August 05, 2010 9:43 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study Comment

Please tell the "powers that be" to work on all the roads closer to town and leave the North Fork alone. There are so many others to consider that are in or between valley communities that need to be addressed. The North Fork is fine!

Thanks for your time

From: [Murray, Pam](#)
To: [Kirkendall, Amanda](#);
Subject: Fw: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted
Date: Thursday, August 05, 2010 8:45:08 AM

----- Original Message -----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov <www@mdt.mt.gov>
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov <mdtnffrteam@mt.gov>
Sent: Thu Aug 05 10:39:26 2010
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 08/05/2010 08:39:26
First Name: Richard E.
Last Name: Wackrow
Email Address:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip code:
Topic you are commenting on:other

Comments:

This study seems to be predicated on the notion that all North Forkers want the North Fork Road (not, the "North Fork Flathead Road") paved. Despite what you might have heard from certain factions on the North Fork, we don't.

Paving the road would undermine our unique lifestyle, accelerate development in our valley, create safety issues, and threaten wildlife and their habitat (please refer to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's jeopardy opinion of the 1980s.)

Finally, in 2007-2008 the North Fork Road Coalition for Health and Safety paid two University of Montana faculty to supervise and complete a study of dust on the North Fork Road. I did an analysis of that study, and concluded it to be worthless on several counts (e.g., experimenter bias, small sample size). If you would like a copy, please drop me an e-mail . Thank you.

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam; "sludlow@mt.gov";](#)
cc: [Kirkendall, Amanda;](#)
Subject: Fw: comments on North Fork Road improvement
Date: Monday, August 09, 2010 2:02:26 PM

From: Fran Wade
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Cc:
Sent: Mon Aug 09 15:51:47 2010
Subject: comments on North Fork Road improvement

As a resident of the Flathead since 1973, and a former resident on Trail Creek Road in the 1980's, I think I have sufficient experience to make an informed comment on this issue.

The foremost issue is finance. Flathead County has many miles of unpaved roads, that are located much closer to towns, and traveled far more regularly than the North Fork Road. As our budget does not expand to cover the \$30,000.00 needed to just maintain the NF Road, and there are far fewer people using the road, it would be foolish to squander Federal money to pave this section just to allow more convenient and speedy access to the Camus entrance to Glacier National Park. Any highway money we are fortunate enough to obtain would be more equitably spent on paving local roads the have homes along them, and are traveled every day by residents. All the arguments about pollution, apply as well to these gravel roads, and more people suffer from the dust on a more consistent basis.

The North Fork Road might benefit from a light dust cover, but extensive surface treatments may, in the long run, only add more pollutants to the soil in an otherwise more pristine area. Easier access will certainly guarantee faster speeds, many travelers already regularly exceed the speed limit, in spite of the wear and tear on their vehicles. The notion of

increased police patrols, is also a pipe dream. With the many miles of roads in this county and the size of police protection we are able to support, any increase of patrolling would be insignificant. Drivers on paved highways exceed the speed limits with a far higher likelihood of being apprehended. To pretend the threat that someone might get ticketed on the NF Road for speeding would cut back on abuse is totally unrealistic.

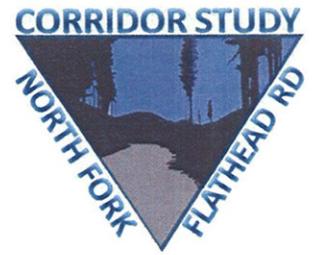
Present conditions do curtail a lot of traffic simply because people do not wish to subject themselves and their vehicles to the slow, dust-clogged, or uncomfortable surface and long drive. This limits the damage done by dust, allows more travel by wildlife, unthreatened by speeding vehicles, and possibly discourages more development in an areas we have long tried to protect from destruction.

Perhaps with the up-coming construction through Bad Rock Canyon, an improved NF Road would divert more Park traffic through Columbia Falls, but it is highly unlikely it would provide the economic salvation, city fathers and merchants are fantasizing. The cost to the North Fork-a treasure that has so far partially escaped the whole-sale development that has so transformed the Flathead-is more than we need to pay.

As to the notion that a paved lower NF Road, from Glacier Rim to the Camus Road, would increase the access for health related vehicles, and police protection to residents of the NF, the majority of people living on the unpaved NF Road, live north of Camus. If people choose to make their homes in a semi-wilderness area-a privilege few of us can afford-they must accept that every choice has its price. If you want the beauty of the wilds, you must accept that some inconvenience will be the cost.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinions.

Frances Wade



Comments: On the Corridor Study Document

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

Please give us your comments on the Corridor Study Document that may include questions, comments or concerns

I sit on the fence on this issue. Part is less of a concern to me than rough surfaces.

I found County, MDT, Glacier Park, and USFS staff to be very informative and pleasant to speak with. I'm glad to have them working for us.

Thanks for the efforts.

Conwyn

Name: Conwyn Wyman

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

From: [Eggertsen-Goff, Lani](#)
To: [Murray, Pam;](#)
cc: [sludlow@pbworld.com;](mailto:sludlow@pbworld.com)
[Kirkendall, Amanda;](#)
Subject: FW: North Fork Road Study
Date: Wednesday, August 04, 2010 2:47:54 PM

another comment

From: Emma Young
Sent: Wed 8/4/2010 2:31 PM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Road Study

Ms. Lani Eggertsen-Goff,

I'm writing to let you, and anyone else who may be concerned, that I am very upset to hear that Flathead County/MDOT is considering paving the North Fork Road up to Polebridge. This is an area that is very dear to my heart and important to me in many ways, and one of the reasons it is so special is precisely the fact that that area is not easily accessible and that that road is not paved or conducive to high-speed traffic. This road does not need to be paved and many of the people living up in the area do not live there because they want easy access to the greater world. This is a place where people go to retreat from that larger world, and paving this road would ruin that experience and integrity for both humans and wildlife for generations to come. The North Fork region has one of the highest concentrations of grizzly bears on the continent and paving the road up there would, I'm certain, negatively impact that population as well as lead to increasing confrontations between humans and the bears.

There are many unpaved roads in Flathead County that service individuals who do need improved/increased access to the rest of the county. I ask that you consider those roads to be a priority over road such as the North Fork Road which leads to no towns of any size and is valued for its rustic nature. Flathead County has enough budget problems without using money in such a reckless, unnecessary and unwanted manner. Please do not go through with this project.

Sincerely,
Emma N. Young

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DRAFT CORRIDOR STUDY OPEN HOUSE

Public Information Meeting slated to discuss corridor
planning study - Highway 486 in Flathead County

Tuesday, July 27, 2010 - 6:15 P.M.
Discovery Center
540 Nucleus Avenue, Columbia Falls, Montana

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Reported by: Bambi A. Goodman, CSR, RPR, CRR

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. BARNES: My name is Doug Barnes, and I
3 live on the North Fork of the Flathead, sometimes
4 seasonally, sometimes year round. And I've been a
5 property owner since 1988. My background is wildlife
6 biologies and environmental sciences.

7 I have a very serious interest in the future of
8 my neighborhood, and I'd like to basically just favor
9 the plan to maintain the road, oil it, take care of
10 dust, make it as safe as we can, but I'm no way in favor
11 of any paving of any kind.

12 We have the most special place left in the
13 lower 48 right here. And the only way that we know
14 we're not going to mess it up is by knowing that right
15 now it appears to be supporting the most diverse
16 complete ecosystem that we know of in America. I don't
17 think it's worth taking a chance on some maybe or
18 proposed economic benefit at the sure expense of a
19 degradation of an ecosystem that is functioning
20 completely and in order.

21 So I think if we make any mistakes, as in any
22 important issue, we must do it on the safe side at all
23 costs. We can't be negligent. We can't be
24 overconfident about our behaviors. We have to work with
25 what we know has been success, and every step that the

1 public may demand has to be carefully scrutinized lest
2 we lose this tremendous gift that we have.

3 I do support the improvements that the road
4 people have made. It's much more than I ever expected.
5 I used to see the road would be taken care of three
6 times a year. You'd be lucky at times in the late '80s
7 to even get a snowplow up there for weeks on end. So
8 the suggestions that were made by others, not
9 necessarily myself, about making the road safer and less
10 dust, I applaud. And that's more than I thought that I
11 would see in my lifetime.

12 So I'm very happy with what Sheriff Dupont did
13 when he was the sheriff. I think he's a person of the
14 people. I think he's a conscientious, honest person,
15 and I do applaud his interest in holding these levels on
16 a very high participation level.

17 I don't think there's much evidence that
18 supports the idea that dust is a real health hazard,
19 physiologically. I know that it is not a negative to
20 the fish population. The dust particles are large
21 enough that they're never going to go more than a few
22 hundred yards off of the road, therefore, they're no
23 threat to any feature in the Park, that I'm aware of,
24 Glacier or otherwise. I'm able to time my trips with
25 care, with the window up when it's appropriate, early in

1 the morning, late in the evening. I have suffered no
2 ill health effects. And the price that I pay -- that
3 small price that I pay to slow down is made up ten-fold
4 the minute I get out of my car when I'm at home. So I
5 don't want to push the envelope. I don't want to be an
6 overcivilized suburban mentality. I don't want to
7 exhibit the fast-paced frenetic philosophy that so many
8 people that have traveled on freeways experience and
9 carry over into their experience here. I'm not in a
10 hurry. I'm here because my front and my backyard are
11 perfect. The road is not, but that's a price I took on
12 when I bought my property.

13 I hope that there will be further introduction
14 of information that can be tested scientifically, if
15 there are any doubts about the real threats, other than
16 the fact that excessive speeds could definitely impact
17 certain species of wildlife, the grizzly being one.
18 Other endangered animals would be endangered further by
19 the foolishness of people who are in a big hurry all of
20 the time and only want a smooth, fast ride 24/7.

21 And another point that may not be made by a lot
22 of people, I realize that everybody in this culture
23 likes to take it easy on the weekends. But
24 unfortunately, the thieves like to take things easy.
25 And I believe if we make this road into a convenient

1 late-night side trip for bored people or people on
2 prohibitive substances or drunk, we're opening ourselves
3 up for much more crime down the road just by the fact
4 that we want an easier access on our road.

5 So I think, basically, I could say a lot more,
6 but there's probably going to be people coming that will
7 cover other issues that I would have said anyway. I
8 wanted to mention some things that might be less
9 understood or not even mentioned. So I'll just thank
10 you folks for the opportunity, and I'll just get home
11 now and take care of the rest of the evening.

12 I want to stress that I'm very happy with the
13 improvements that they've made. When we agreed to
14 improve the road conditions, I think the county has done
15 a more than adequate job of meeting or exceeding what
16 most of us thought should be done. This does not ever
17 include pavement. So for where we are right now, this
18 is the happiest situation that I could ever hope for.

19 **MS. CALDWELL:** My name is Alice Caldwell.
20 I live in Polebridge full time. I have for seven years
21 full time, and we bought in '86.

22 I was telling Pam, last Monday our terrier was
23 attacked by a hybrid wolf. And going back and forth
24 with the animal control, Fish Wildlife, we ended up
25 having to make a fast trip down to the vet here in

1 Columbia Falls. The hybrid wolf had bit him on the
2 neck, got him by the neck. Anyway, there was -- the vet
3 thought it was fluid, but it was gas that was built up
4 in him. But anyway, long story short, we drove the
5 short way back down -- from Polebridge down to Columbia
6 Falls. We didn't go through the Park. The road was so
7 wash-boardy, Little Bear was in a lot of pain. I know
8 he's a dog, but he was hurting. And it was just -- we
9 were in our little '88 Jeep pickup. And it was
10 shimmying just so wash-boardy, I had to drive like 20,
11 25 to keep the pace.

12 Spent four hours at the vet. They had to put
13 him in a twilight sleep to do -- open up the wound and
14 everything. He was out of it when we took him home. We
15 chose to do that. Several of the wash-boards on the
16 way -- and this was on July 23rd of 2010. A couple of
17 the wash-boards were so bad, we jerked, and he jumped
18 up. And then he laid right back down and went to sleep.
19 But it happened twice. And it was so bad, plus the
20 dust. So basically, that's all I have to say.

21 We knew what we were getting into when we came
22 up here, but there's so much traffic. I know they say
23 there isn't and it's not a lot during the summer, but
24 there's a lot of traffic on the road. And a lot of it
25 goes into the Park.

1 I guess I'm done.

2 I know when I went to the doctor on July 1st, I
3 had an appointment over in Whitefish hospital for a CAT
4 scan. My appointment was at 11:00, and we left at about
5 a quarter after 9:00. Traffic, you just wouldn't
6 believe it. And my husband had to stop about five
7 different times, the dust was so bad, there were so many
8 people coming and going. And one time we got -- and the
9 dust was so high, we saw -- we thought it was a house
10 being moved, but it was a shed from the Shed Man. And
11 you could just see the rafters. And it was weird
12 because of the rafters. And if you stop, you have the
13 chance of somebody tail-ending you. And that's on the
14 section from Canyon Creek up to Camas. It's just bad.

15 I would like to see them pave it. Their
16 grading is not doing the job. And they don't dust coat
17 it. They did up from Camas to Polebridge with the mag
18 chloride on it but, you know, as I told my daughter on
19 the phone just a while ago, we will never see it, she
20 will never see it, my grandson's children might see it
21 happen. But I wouldn't bet on it. But something needs
22 to be done. There's too much traffic for -- and it's
23 not just in the summertime; trust me. But in the
24 wintertime it's nice and snowy.

25 MR. GRIMALDI: My name is Bob Grimaldi, and

1 I'm here to tell the folks that have done the work so
2 far that they've done a tremendous job. I think they
3 have a very comprehensive report. It's easy to read,
4 easy to follow. Some of the technical aspects are a
5 little tough for me to handle, but it's a very good
6 report, and I'm very pleased to see it happening.

7 I'm a resident of the North Fork area, and I
8 have been there permanently since 1998. I've watched
9 the road deteriorate since 1972. And it has received
10 scant attention until recently, and there is some
11 improvement. I'm certainly hopeful that this project
12 that they're studying will come to fruition and lead to
13 a paved section in the corridor and that way free up
14 some county funds to take care of other roads in the
15 county that need attention as well, including more work
16 on the North Fork Road.

17 The only weakness I found with the initial
18 report was there was a comment about guardrails, that
19 were sufficient. Well, I don't agree with that. There
20 are some areas that are very dangerous that don't have
21 guardrails. And I've submitted that information online.

22 Also, there was a question I had about the
23 number of vehicles that enter the Polebridge Ranger
24 Station and leave every year, although it didn't say
25 year. It uses the figure 4,000. It didn't say for what

1 period or how long, so I don't know where they got that
2 figure. But I've talked to Lani about it. And I gave
3 her some information that will help, because the true
4 number of the figures for the last fifteen years is
5 14,000 vehicles plus that go in the ranger station and
6 come out. So that's 28,000 vehicles that are going up
7 that road and coming back down that road for the sole
8 purpose of visiting Glacier National Park; 28,000
9 vehicles. Because they can't go anywhere -- they could
10 go down the inside road, but very few vehicles do that
11 because the road is pretty poor and so forth. So they
12 have to go somewhere, and what goes in must come out.
13 So it comes to a total of 28,000 vehicles. That's quite
14 a number. That's not counting any other kind of traffic
15 on the road, strictly visitors to Polebridge Ranger
16 Station in Glacier National Park.

17 I don't know what else I could say. I'm glad
18 to make some comments, and appreciate all the efforts
19 that are being made.

20 **MR. DOWNES:** Lee Downes, and I've been
21 driving that road since 1940. I'm a logger and a road
22 builder and things like that, and I'm in the forest all
23 the time. We paid so much a thousand per mile to
24 maintain that road, to dust coat it. And the money that
25 we wasted dust coating that road, you could have paved

1 it in silver dollars. You'd dust coat it and the right
2 weather conditions in two weeks you was out of the road.
3 Then we was out of money, so we just drove with a rough
4 road, things like that.

5 That piece of pavement that's up there now from
6 this north of Coal Creek to Hay Creek, that is money
7 that was appropriated by the loggers through road
8 maintenance that was left over when the county took
9 over. And it was designated for paving. And they paved
10 up there because they could get more done with their
11 dollar than anyplace else on the road, hoping to hook it
12 up all the rest of the way.

13 I think that's about it. I'm all for paving,
14 by the way, because that's the only way that's really
15 going to solve the problem.

16 **MS. BROWN:** I'm Representative Dee Brown in
17 Hungry Horse. I represent House District 3, which
18 covers the North Fork to Glacier area to the Columbia
19 Falls area. And I'm here to comment on the paving of
20 the road to Camas. I believe it will be a real boom for
21 the economy in Columbia Falls, in my House district.
22 But I also believe it will be a great alternate route to
23 get into Glacier National Park.

24 When I was at a meeting with Chas Cartwright,
25 the superintendent of Glacier National Park, in May, I

1 asked him why they did not support the paving of the
2 North Fork Road. And he answered that question to which
3 I asked let me be the Devil's advocate. If, in fact,
4 you want everything to go back to nature and be dusty
5 and everything like that, why are we using TARP funds to
6 repave Camas Road when, in fact, if you want it to go
7 back to nature, don't pave it at all and let it become
8 dusty and dirty like the North Fork is.

9 I know there are some concerns that there's
10 going to be huge developments in the North Fork if we
11 pave this road. But last I heard, the federal
12 government was not giving up any land. And the private
13 owners are the private owners. And I think this short
14 mileage to make a move into Glacier is the absolute best
15 thing to do for the economy and for the clarity of the
16 river and for our trees to remain only white with snow
17 in the winter instead of white with snow -- I mean white
18 with dust in the summer. Thank you.

19 **MR. BROWN:** My name's Ray Brown. I'm a
20 long time North Fork resident, thirty-two years living
21 up the North Fork conducting my business up there. My
22 whole life has been up there since 1978. And I'm going
23 to make a few comments about what I've seen in this
24 draft study.

25 I have a few points I'd like to make of my own.

1 I went through the study last night. And the first
2 thing that I noticed was on the cover page, the
3 photograph on the cover showed a very clear scene of the
4 North Fork Road with a beautiful view looking up the
5 road somewhere, which I don't know where it was, without
6 one trace of dust. Okay; and so just coming down
7 tonight on that ten-file mile stretch we're talking
8 about, I could not find one spot where there was not any
9 dust at all. The entire stretch was dust. And I'd like
10 for the study people in charge to actually add a second
11 photograph that shows actually the actual conditions at
12 this time in place, that shows actually -- because it's
13 not fair to show just one clear photo and then not show
14 what's really what we're talking about with this study.
15 That's the first thing I noticed.

16 I noticed on page three, on the introduction,
17 they were talking about people that own parts of that
18 road. And they said Glacier Park is part an owner of
19 that roadway. And it's stated that they were, and they
20 are not. The park boundary ends in the middle of the
21 river there. So they do not own any of that road. It
22 may be some sleight-of-hand or whatever. I'm not sure
23 what that's about.

24 Page nine of the study stated the fact that
25 early in the spring, as soon as they can, road

1 conditions allow, that Flathead County gets up and
2 starts grading and dust-abating the road. In all the
3 years I've been up there, that stretch of road since
4 it's been rebuilt and realigned, I have never seen
5 Flathead County on their own actually put any kind of
6 dust abatement on that road whatsoever, which is
7 misleading, that statement, that says they do. I know
8 they do other roads in the valley, and that's probably
9 what they said. But on that stretch, in all my years,
10 I've not seen it. And I think other people can
11 corroborate that fact. So I'd like that checked and
12 reapplied the correct terminology for that.

13 Page 22. I believe it's very misleading. They
14 were referring to development of private lands along the
15 North Fork Road. And they're talking about development
16 and whatever, you know, what may occur. I believe that
17 that that section of road in this study that we're
18 referring to, this ten-mile stretch of the road, I think
19 there's only three pieces of private property, and the
20 rest of it is either federal, state, or whatever. It's
21 not developable, basically, unless the federal
22 government decides to starts selling off, which would be
23 a little different story. So that sounded misleading to
24 me also. And I'd like to have that rechecked and redone
25 if possible. I could be wrong, there could be more

1 private properties. But I think there's only like three
2 or four at the most. And it's right at the very
3 beginning of that stretch at the south end there.

4 Page 25, they talked about the wildlife and the
5 threatened -- the bull trout that are threatened now. I
6 don't know if the study people understand or know that
7 part of the demise of the bull trout in the Flathead
8 River system was due to the introduction of the mysis
9 shrimp that were introduced in the '70s by the Fish and
10 Game which were trying to expand the population. And it
11 was certainly a turn-around effect on the bull trout.
12 So they have to understand that one of reasons we have a
13 problem with the bull trout is the fact that there's
14 been mismanagement there. I just wanted to point that
15 out.

16 On page 31 of the study, it talked about
17 Glacier Park's opinion that they feel that any kind of
18 improvement to that road would threaten the development
19 and create undue traffic or whatever. Well, I see that
20 Glacier Park, in my side of this, where they call it
21 pristine, does absolutely nothing to maintain a pristine
22 atmosphere on their own side of the river. They've
23 spent millions of dollars upgrading their entrances and
24 all the cabins. They've got state-of-the-art satellite
25 systems, which is fine and good. But I don't think they

1 should be dictating to the people on the other side of
2 the river to maintain a primitive state and value, where
3 on their own side they do absolutely nothing to maintain
4 that on their part of it. So that really bothers me to
5 have them do that. I would say if the Glacier Park
6 really wants to keep it primitive up there, they should
7 actually either close the bridge down at the Polebridge
8 entrance or remove the bridge altogether. And that
9 would certainly slow down things on the west side of the
10 road. Because at that point people would now be able to
11 go on the inside North Fork Road, which is the same type
12 of bad, unimproved gravel. And if people want a
13 wilderness-type experience on a bad road, that that's
14 still available there. So I think that's something the
15 Park really needs to think about.

16 On page 32, whoever wrote -- they were talking
17 about causes -- the problems with the dust being
18 airborne, the visibility, the haze, whatnot, somebody
19 wrote that dust was not likely to interfere with melting
20 of the glaciers or anything else. And I just want to
21 know who wrote that, because they're absolutely wrong.
22 That is just totally not true. And it says "not
23 likely." I mean, that is not a scientific statement of
24 fact. That's just somebody's opinion. And that needs
25 to be certainly rewritten. That really bothers me.

1 Also, in conjunction with that statement, I
2 want to go on record that in the June 2010 issue of
3 *National Geographic* they have a big article on
4 Greenland. And they're talking about the dust problems
5 melting the glaciers, the causes of that, what's going
6 on, how it's being affected. Led me read briefly. It
7 says here in the caption of the second large photo on
8 the melting glaciers in Greenland, it says "Black
9 blotches mingled with ice and meltwater above, called
10 cryoconite, powdery debris blow into Greenland from
11 often distant deserts, fires, coal plants, and diesel
12 engines. Cryoconite reduces the ice's albedo or
13 reflectivity allowing increased absorption of solar
14 heat." Same effect as what's happening in Glacier Park
15 on the glaciers. We have proof that's happening.

16 Also in the most current issue of *High Country*
17 *News*, the date of this issue is July 19th, 2010, article
18 title -- the title of the story says "Dust Takes a Toll
19 - Soil in the West Air Disrupts Health, Snow Cover, Even
20 Rainfall," is the title of the story. And the gal's
21 name is by Melanie Lenart. It's about a three-page
22 article. And one sentence starts on the second page if
23 page ten in the *High Country News*. "Urban dust
24 concentrated around cities and drifting into mountains
25 along with desert dust consists of not only soil

1 particles but also pollution from fireplaces and car
2 exhaust, including the small particles that are
3 particularly dangerous to human health." I'll go on.
4 "Tens of thousands of Americans die prematurely every
5 year from breathing in small particles, the science
6 notes, because the dust weakens the lungs which, in
7 turn, stresses the heart." It's a very good article.
8 And what's going on, Glacier Park is denying that the
9 dust from the surrounding areas of Glacier National Park
10 has any input on the effects of the air quality in
11 Glacier Park, as well as the expanded rapid melting of
12 the glaciers, which we know are a problem right now. So
13 apparently, according to the Park superintendent, the
14 dust that surrounds Glacier National Park is -- it's its
15 own type of dust, and it has no problem at all.

16 Page 48, the tables of estimated cost. I
17 believe that the people need to -- on the report, they
18 need to add a column next to the life-cycle cost showing
19 costs to the Flathead County taxpayers. Then as the
20 list moves to the bottom, should show how the costs
21 would be borne out by all users of the North Fork Road.
22 Right now, it's just the Flathead County taxpayers that
23 are paying for the upkeep and maintenance of that road.
24 And if they ever do pave it, you'll notice that the
25 costs will be borne out by everybody that uses the road

1 because the state will take over the road and it will be
2 a lot less restrictive than just the county taxpayers.

3 And then the last one, on page 58, they had
4 different options for funding. And my personal thought
5 was the Highway Safety Improvement Program. And it's
6 HSIP. And I'm guessing that might be the best option
7 for the North Fork Road for funding. That's my personal
8 choice.

9 Also lastly, I'm also the Chairman of the North
10 Fork Road Coalition for Health and Safety. Been in that
11 position for the last two years. And we're kind of the
12 group that's actually really got a lot of this stuff
13 going, as far as getting the word out about the North
14 Fork Road, the conditions and whatnot. And we had
15 passed off to the study group at the first meeting in
16 April a copy of the air quality study that we paid for,
17 conducted by Dr. Tony Ward at the University of Montana.
18 And the study was not mentioned whatsoever in the report
19 from the folks that did the study. So I'm curious why
20 that was not happening.

21 And then lastly, I'll close with saying at the
22 April meeting, too, I brought up the topic that the
23 USEPA has a mandated program about visibility and haze.
24 And the states, the counties, the national parks are all
25 required to come together and start putting a program

1 together to help reduce the visibility problems and the
2 haze problems and, of course, road dust being of them.
3 They just barely touched on it in the report. And I
4 think that should be expanded upon, because it's very
5 important that they know that that's part of their
6 mandate is to make sure that the air quality, the
7 visibility of scenic vistas and stuff are enjoyed by
8 more people where they weren't being obstructed by the
9 dust. Thank you.

10 **MR. LOCKWOOD:** My name is Steve Lockwood.
11 I live on Numa Peak Lane in Polebridge. I'm speaking
12 for myself alone, although I know a number of landowners
13 on the North Fork who share my sentiments. Others
14 don't.

15 I'm primarily concerned about improving the
16 road. And my two major complaints about that road are
17 one, it's so dusty that no reasonable person could
18 possibly claim to enjoy being in the dust. You can't
19 see, for one thing. You can't breathe. It's bad for
20 the health, bad for the environment, all those things.
21 It's just flat out unpleasant.

22 Second, the road itself is usually in such poor
23 condition that it beats to death whatever you ride;
24 bicycle, motorcycle, ATV, or car. I've got them all.
25 It's a horrible experience. In fact, I'm dissuaded from

1 visiting my neighbors who are only a mile away, because
2 I hate that road.

3 I have not heard anyone make any viable
4 argument in favor of a gravel road, except an economic
5 one. If it would cost money to improve it, I'm willing
6 to pay the money. But anything else, the wilderness
7 experience, more people coming through, all those, I
8 think, are specious. I don't think -- I think the
9 studies that have been done show that none of those are
10 actually arguments that have any validity. The economic
11 one maybe does. I'd be in favor of paving the entire
12 thing to the Canadian border and up to my driveway. In
13 fact, I'd love to have my driveway paved.

14 I mean, it's a beautiful corridor. It gets
15 rough. It gets down to rock real fast. Well then, you
16 have to spend -- if you're driving responsibly, you have
17 to spend all your attention and care watching the road.
18 So you can't enjoy anything. You can't have the windows
19 down because your car will fill up with dust, including
20 your lungs. There's a stretch that's about 5 miles long
21 right before Polebridge, about a mile from Polebridge,
22 that ends at about Hay Creek which was paved some years
23 ago, I don't know why. But there you can have the
24 windows down. You can smell the forest, you can
25 actually sort of peripherally watch for animals. That's

1 very pleasant, even though as a paved road it's in
2 terrible shape. But it's way better than that horrible
3 North Fork gravel and rock.

4 So I'm hoping that somebody will be able to tie
5 into some federal money, especially since the border
6 patrol and all their exercises -- and I'm grateful for
7 their presence, but they use that road heavily. In
8 fact, a lot of people use that road heavily that don't
9 live there, which is fine. Except it would be a lot
10 more pleasant for all of us who do live there if we
11 didn't have to breathe that dust. Thank you.

12 **MR. HEMP:** My name is Ralph Hemp. I live
13 at 5670 North Fork Road in the North Fork. I've been a
14 resident for about eighteen years, driven the road many
15 times. The road is continually getting worse, year by
16 year.

17 The study, I think, is interesting. But it
18 would be, I think, more effective if the study group,
19 and especially the county commissioners, were required
20 to drive the road, say, two days a week. And they could
21 observe the dust and the road hazards, the dust going
22 into the river.

23 I'm a retired attorney. And I would say this,
24 that the county should be very much aware, and I'm sure
25 they are aware, of the dangerous conditions up there

1 and the hazards. And sometime, someone is going to be
2 hurt and the county is going to get sued. And the
3 county will either at least have to defend that suit, at
4 a minimum, and the defense of not having any money to
5 improve that road will not be a defense to a serious
6 injury. So I think that the county commissioners should
7 one, maybe get an opinion from their county attorney.
8 Number two, I think they should get an opinion from the
9 sanitation department as to the health and safety issue
10 of people living around that dust. I think that's it.
11 Thank you.

12 **MR. HALL:** Gary Hall, former county
13 commissioner, former mayor of Columbia Falls, local
14 resident, born and raised.

15 I've been involved with the different studies
16 in the past and have tried to promote and encourage
17 paving of the North Fork road to the Camas Creek
18 turnoff. Several reasons are one, being that I have
19 watched in the many years of using the road, the
20 incredible plumes of dust that go into Glacier Park. In
21 places along the road where I've floated and the river
22 is less than 50 yards from the road, to see dust
23 sediment floating on the water has always concerned me.

24 The health and safety and welfare of people
25 that use the road, whether they're tourists or local

1 people, has always concerned me. It's a very unsafe
2 road because of the amount of dust that comes off of the
3 road. I've had in the past concerns, when I was a
4 government official, of just the air quality for Glacier
5 National Park and the wildlife that lives along that
6 road. And the other safety issue is the inability to
7 see traffic coming because of the volumes of dust that
8 are on the road when you travel it.

9 Recreation-wise, I feel that the opportunities
10 that could be afforded the public that likes to ride
11 bikes and hike, to have a hiking/walking/bicycle path
12 along the paved road to Camas Creek would increase the
13 tourist visitation for Glacier Park. I also believe
14 that the Flathead County will benefit greatly in the
15 maintenance cost to deal with that road, if it was
16 paved. It would reduce their overall financial
17 commitment because of the equipment wear and tear and
18 just the maintenance of keeping gravel on the road. And
19 with their stretched budget, it's becoming almost
20 possible to keep ahead of the condition -- keeping the
21 condition of the road good.

22 While I was a commissioner, I received letters
23 from people on the East Coast that said Please don't
24 pave the Going-To-The-Sun Road which, to me, made me
25 realize that Earth Justice and the other

1 environmentalist groups that are opposing the paving of
2 the road have sent -- have asked people that live on the
3 East Coast that have never been to Montana to comment on
4 something that does not affect their way of life and
5 their health, safety and welfare. These people that are
6 writing to the Forest Service and to the highway
7 department have never been here and they have no clue.
8 The absurdity of that point is that the many people that
9 comment against the paving of the road have never even
10 visited here.

11 I think economically, to reduce the amount of
12 heavy traffic at the entrance to Glacier Park, to have a
13 quality road from Columbia Falls, which is the gateway
14 to Glacier Park, and have an alternative route into the
15 Park, will be beneficial to the visitor numbers at
16 Glacier Park and enhance the experience of our visitors,
17 which is what this is all about.

18 Columbia Falls has, for decades, tried and
19 encouraged the paving of the North Fork Road to even
20 enhance the abilities of traffic through our community
21 to help create jobs.

22 I think, lastly, the federal government is
23 spending millions of dollars on the road around the
24 reservoir, which currently gets less traffic than what
25 the North Fork Road does. And it is time to pave the

1 nine miles to Camas Creek to complete the loop. Thanks.

2 MR. GROEBE: Dennis Groebe, 130 Rainbow,
3 Polebridge. Resident here since '99, or should say
4 part-year resident here since '99. Stayed out of the
5 road controversy for the first few years, but now we are
6 spending more and more time, and I do not understand how
7 the county, who has the opportunity to give up
8 maintenance of the road once they get it paved, has not
9 taken advantage of that opportunity to turn it over to
10 the state.

11 Second thing is, I was looking at Lani's study.
12 And she has some very interesting overall numbers for
13 the range from mile marker zero through mile marker 227
14 and from mile marker 9 to 22.7, but doesn't seem to have
15 information to show where the difference is. We
16 understand 755 vehicles in downtown Columbia Falls, but
17 where are those vehicles turning off the road? Lani
18 asked me to make sure that I made that comment so that
19 she would have it for her information.

20 The road in July, after their maintenance, was
21 wonderful. And now we're going through the Park because
22 the lower end of the road is starting to beat my cars to
23 death, again. And I really do not appreciate having to
24 do maintenance on my car because the county doesn't want
25 to step up and do what they should do.

1 I appreciate the study being funded and being
2 accomplished both by the Montana Department of
3 Transportation and by the company that Lani is working
4 for. I think it's PB America or something along those
5 lines. I hope that the county will take the information
6 that is generated and will realize the importance of
7 doing this, making it the highest priority and selling
8 it to the other nine counties that it's the most
9 important thing that they can do to get rid of this
10 problem so they don't have to fight it any more. Thank
11 you.

12 **MS. KARY MCDONOUGH:** I just wanted to
13 comment that the section of the road that is in question
14 is the best part of the entire road. And I think the
15 focus should be more on the road north of Polebridge
16 versus this particular section of road.

17 The next one was the improvement of the road
18 for the landowners.

19 **MS. KAREN MCDONOUGH:** Karen; just the fact
20 that when they did a survey of all the landowners in the
21 North Fork, over 62 percent wanted improvement on the
22 entire North Fork Road.

23 **MR. MCDONOUGH:** Gary. My concern is the
24 safety. The road's -- if it ain't potholed, it's
25 washboard, except for the new section they just finished

1 which is very nice. But we'd still like to see it
2 paved. But anyway, I'm getting sidetracked.

3 The dust and the washboard and the potholes is
4 hard on equipment. You get washboard makes your car go
5 sideways if you're not real careful and can't see where
6 you're going off in the ditch like that. And no
7 guardrails in places that they need to be. And I'd just
8 like to see the entire North Fork Road improved.

9 MS. KARY MCDONOUGH: The only other point
10 that I had was with the condition of the road, traffic
11 has steadily increased anyway.

12 MR. MCDONOUGH: The only other point that I
13 would make is the money they've already spent on
14 maintaining gravel road and studies, they could have
15 paved the road two or three times completely to the
16 border. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

17 MR. EDWARDS: My name is Tom Edwards. I'm
18 a resident property owner in the North Fork, also a
19 landowner in the City of Columbia Falls. I believe this
20 section of road needs to be paved so that it can be
21 maintained in an affordable, safe, responsible manner
22 for the taxpayers and the public at large.

23 It provides access for our tourists and the
24 people that live here to a beautiful part of the
25 country. Paving this road will not jeopardize wildlife,

1 and it's the only responsible position to take; the end.

2 **MR. BECK:** Roger Beck. I guess my concern
3 is with the water quality in the river, the dust getting
4 into the river and the contamination of the river from
5 the dust. And I am in favor of paving the road with a
6 bike path, or any other options that controls the dust.
7 I would think that we had the money once to do this.
8 Where did it go? They took it to Big Mountain. So it's
9 time to address it again. And we need to get the money
10 and take care of this issue once and for all.

11 I'm sick and tired of hearing about these
12 environmental protesters, these environmental groups.
13 We don't know if that's one person, if it's five million
14 people, if it's two people, if it's Ted Turner, you
15 know. Is it Ford Motor Company? Who the hell is it
16 that's always on these environmental protests and these
17 environmental impact statements. I want to see these
18 guys show up and tell us why they want to tell us how to
19 live in our country.

20 We've been good stewards of the land here.
21 I've been here my whole life. I've put out the forest
22 fires; I've fought fires; I've worked here; I paid the
23 taxes. And then I have somebody from what, Florida or
24 China telling me how to live, you know, and what we
25 should do with our roads and our tax monies and our

1 properties and our access to the rivers? I disagree. I
2 think it's time that we -- the people stand up and say
3 Who the hell are you people? Stand up and tell us why
4 you think you should tell us how to live. Leave us
5 alone.

6 **MR. FREDERICK:** My name is John Frederick,
7 conventional spelling. I'm the president of the North
8 Fork Preservation Association located in Polebridge,
9 Montana.

10 The importance of maintaining the existing
11 character of the area is understated in the corridor
12 study. This is a big deal, if you live in the North
13 Fork. You might as well live in Columbia Falls.

14 Remember that the paving options may be more
15 expensive because the possibility that bike paths, as
16 part of the paving, might be required.

17 Overemphasis is on emergency services. Paving
18 makes only a small difference in time for the emergency
19 services. Usually the Alert air ambulance is used. And
20 the difference in time between a paved road and a
21 nonpaved road is just a matter of minutes.

22 The Park, that is Glacier National Park North
23 Fork plan, is to keep the Park's northwestern corner
24 rustic. This would be negatively affected by the paved
25 road. This is probably a 4F issue, that is, road should

1 not negatively effect the Park.

2 The Camas Road in Glacier Park is often used as
3 a reason for further paving. The actual reason for the
4 paving was to stop a dam on the North Fork of the
5 Flathead River. The superintendent of the time
6 regretted that he had to approve the road, but it was
7 necessary to stop the dam. The rationale for the road
8 was what they considered at the time the road to
9 nowhere.

10 Why are most of the paving options still under
11 consideration when your own analysis indicated that they
12 should be dropped from consideration? The decision of
13 the MDT should be mag chloride. The county has proved
14 it works by their putting mag chloride and bentonite
15 between Camas Road and Polebridge. The bentonite keeps
16 the dust down. And with mag chloride, there is no dust.
17 Mag chloride's the way to go. Thank you.

18

19 (Proceedings concluded at 8:30 p.m.)

20

21

22

23

24

25

April 20, 2010

Natural Resources Defense Council * Great Bear Foundation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on future solutions for Highway 486 (Outside North Fork Road) including paving, and their potential impacts on the natural environment. Please enter our comments into the official record.

For more than a decade, it's been clear to us that the primary goal of those pushing the North Fork Rd. issue is paving the road at least to the Camas Rd. junction, and possibly on to Polebridge. Since we view this as potentially the most environmentally damaging alternative, our comments are focused there.

1. In 2000, the estimated cost to pave approximately 10 miles of this same road was \$3.3 million, including \$300,000 for the required environmental review – a Federal review we might add, which is required here. Given inflation, it's likely that today's cost would be closer to \$4.5 – 5 million.

2. Flathead County has nearly 1200 miles of roads – 800 miles of them unpaved. How many of those miles in the main valley, serving tens of thousands of citizens, could be paved with the same \$4.5-5 million tax dollars that some would squander on the North Fork Road – a “Road to Nowhere” serving a comparative handful of residents.

3. The North Fork Road Coalition for Health and Safety, would have us believe that their primary concern is for the water quality of the North Fork, or the air quality of Glacier National Park. Yet in 1999, Dr. Jack Stanford of the Yellow Bay Biological Station had the following response when asked if North Fork road dust was a significant threat to the river:

John,

“The dust probably has no measurable effect on the river, because the river carries a very high sediment load naturally plus whatever additional sediment load is related to the sum of all land use activities in the drainage (e.g., road berm erosion and accelerated river bank erosion related to increased runoff from clearcuts). Dust is an issue for Flathead Lake because some 30% of the nutrient load is atmospheric including a large portion from fugitive dust. I do not think that it would be possible to measure a similar effect on the North Fork because the surface area of the river is very small portion of the north fork river valley and the dust, on the summer days when it does plume up from the road, spreads out over valley floor and most of it probably comes down in the forested areas. I observed this very thing from a high point near Hidden Meadow this last summer with my ecology class. The dust was rising off the road and drifting out over the valley bottom away from the river. But, certainly some does go into the river.”

Cheers,
Jack

As for GNP air quality, it's likely that the hundreds of unpaved road miles in the main valley contribute infinitely more dust than the dozen miles of the North Fork Road south of Camas.

In addition, note Stanford's reference to runoff from road berm erosion and accelerated river bank erosion related to increased runoff from clearcuts. Yet is the Road Coalition pushing the Flathead National Forest to stop 15 years of foot-dragging on road decommissioning and habitat restoration in the North Fork, that could significantly decrease the movement of sediment into the North Fork River and its tributaries? Not that we've heard.

4. Various studies over the years have suggested that excessive speeds on the North Fork road by many (Most!) motorists contributes significantly to the dust problem, as well as undermining safety. Yet in 25 years of driving the road, we've only seen a County Sheriff's vehicle 3-4 times, and never with anyone pulled over for speeding. Regardless of the option ultimately chosen, it would seem appropriate for the County to increase safety, and lower dust, with a greater law enforcement presence – particularly in lieu of a multi-million dollars fix, at taxpayer expense.

5. In 1980, and again in 1982, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that paving this, or other stretches of the North Fork Rd., would create a "Jeopardy" situation for grizzly bears, in violation of the Endangered Species Act. Those jeopardy decisions are still in effect, and paving is therefore illegal.

FWS noted that part of its decision was based on the fact that the North Fork had no land use planning regulations to control expanded development in the valley bottom's private lands. Since then, the County has enacted a 20 acre minimum lot size for developments, however, there's no scientific evidence to suggest that grizzlies can survive a landscape dotted with 20 acres Ranchettes and the road networks to them.

In addition, the property rights group American Dream Montana has recently announced that they've set their sights on rescinding the County Growth Policy. If they succeed, every Neighborhood Plan in the County goes down the tubes as well, since they're inextricably tied to the Growth Policy. And with no North Fork Neighborhood Plan, goodbye to that 20 acre minimum.

Finally, it's important to note that while Hwy. 486 is managed as a County road, it traverses federally managed property over the vast majority of its length. This

provides a “Federal Nexus” for any road project, and requires the involvement of the Federal Highway Administration, the Flathead National Forest, and formal consultation under the Endangered Species Act with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. All federal agencies under the ESA are prohibited from Taking, Authorizing, or Funding any activity likely to jeopardize a listed species – and that includes provision of “in-kind” services, such as gravel, or providing the County a right-of-way over federal land.

6. The Road Coalition is quick to claim that they’re only talking about the portion of the road south of Camas Rd. and that this would provide an alternate route for those going to Glacier National Park. Yet if they’re correct, and this increases tourist traffic north to the Camas Rd. park entrance, it will also significantly increase travel on the still unpaved section of the road to Polebridge. This of course will make the dust on this 14- mile section even worse, and will lead to a further outcry to pave this as well – which has probably been the goal all along.

7. In 2000, USFS experts on carnivores and habitat linkage zones Bill Ruediger, Jim Claar, and Jay Gore released the report “Restoration of Carnivore Habitat Connectivity in the Northern Rocky Mountains.” It looked at 64 highways in the area and found that the North Fork Road was one of 27 key linkage zones endangered by a “High Potential For Upgrade.” It noted that going from a gravel road to a paved one entailed significant risks to carnivores generally, and listed species like the grizzly specifically. Since then, the lynx has been listed as well.

8. In 2001, Dr. John Weaver of the Wildlife Conservation Society released “The Transboundary Flathead, A Critical Landscape for Carnivores in the Rocky Mountains.” That report noted:

“A unique community of carnivore species resides in the transboundary Flathead region that appears unmatched in North America for its variety, completeness, use of valley bottomlands, and density of species which are rare elsewhere. Due to these unique characteristics and its strategic position as a linkage between National Parks in both countries, the transboundary Flathead may be the single most important basin for carnivores in the Rocky Mountains.”

9. Finally, it’s important to remember that the State of Montana and British Columbia have recently signed an MOU under which B.C. pledges to withdraw its portion of the Flathead drainage from mining, oil, and gas development, while Montana’s Senators Baucus and Tester have introduced legislation to retire future leasing on the U.S. side. In addition, during the recent UNESCO visit to study threats to the Flathead River, Glacier National Park noted specific objections to any paving of Hwy. 486, due to its impacts on wildlife.

In light of the above decisions, any move to pave the North Fork Road could

signal to British Columbia that the U.S. side is not willing to make the same protective commitments that they have – potentially undermining a North Fork protection deal that's been decades in the making.

Clearly, we should never consider sacrificing one of the jewels in the Crown of the Continent for the shortsighted paving goals of a few.

Sincerely,

Brian Peck for
Natural Resources Defense Council and
Great Bear Foundation



130 6TH STREET WEST
ROOM A
COLUMBIA FALLS, MT 59912

PHONE (406) 892-4391

FAX (406) 892-4413

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the City of Columbia Falls Council met on Monday, April 19, 2010 and declared their unanimous support of paving the North Fork Road to Camas Creek;

WHEREAS, the City of Columbia Falls Council recognized the importance of paving the road to encourage tourist traffic through the City of Columbia Falls;

WHEREAS, the City of Columbia Falls Council recognized the economic benefit to the community;

NOW THEREFORE be it resolved, that I, Donald W. Barnhart, Mayor, do hereby proclaim City Council Support for the paving of North Fork Road and encourage citizens to also support the proposed paving project to benefit our community.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Columbia Falls to be affixed this 20th Day of April in the year 2010.



Signature

Mayor

City of Columbia Falls



Public Meeting Testimony - MT HWY 486

My name is Rachel Potter and I live with my family here in Columbia Falls. We have owned a small old cabin 8 miles south of the Canadian border for 19 years, but have been recreating in North Fork for over 30 years.

First off, I support options the county has mentioned for reducing speeds on the lower road including narrowing the road bed and adding curves and I hope they will get sufficient attention in this study. And "Dusty" is great.

One option, however, seems to be getting the most attention and that is paving. So that's what I'm going to address.

First of all, even the idea of spending taxpayer dollars to pave the North Fork is absurd when there are hundreds of miles of dirt roads in the county where many more people are actually living and breathing the road dust day in and day out.

Even if there was unlimited money, which there is not, the advantages of a smoother ride and eliminating the dust that, yes, we all hate does not come anywhere close to balancing the irreparable damage that paving (even just the lower road) would inflict on the North Fork and Waterton Glacier International Peace Park, a true international treasure.

All over the world, paving has brought increased development, and it will happen here. Besides more residents, there will be more recreationists and businesses to cater to them. You think there are too many boats on the river now? And people will be staying longer. A paved road would make commuting to the Valley a cinche, much easier than many commutes in urban areas.

Air quality experts know that in Western Montana valleys, increasing winter residents and therefore wood smoke, is the surest way to destroy air quality. Far worse than road dust.

Even if there was unlimited money, which there is not, the advantages of a smoother ride and eliminating the dust that, yes, we all hate does not come anywhere close to balancing the irreparable damage that paving (even just the lower road) would inflict on the North Fork and Waterton Glacier International Peace Park, a true international treasure.

I am an officer of the Flathead Coalition. The Coalition formed in 1975 to protect the Waterton Glacier ecosystem from threats in the Canadian Flathead. As most of you know, the fight has lasted for 35 years. There was just a huge victory earlier this winter when first, BC banned mining and oil and gas development in the Flathead, then Governor Schweitzer and Premier Campbell signed a Memorandum of Understanding pledging to protect the drainage.

A paving alternative would violate certainly the spirit if not the letter of that agreement. When the IJC issued their opinion in 1988 that the Cabin Creek Coal mine should not go forward due to unmitigatable impacts on the ecosystem, they also listed other potential impacts. Development of private land south of the border was seen as the largest threat to the drainage in the United States.

I get really frustrated with one point that seems to always get overlooked. If you pave the lower road, the next section, from Camas to Polebridge will get that much more use, have that much more dust, and on and on.

Well, I could go on for a long time about the numerous ways paving would be harmful, but I guess I want to speak about something more personal.

One of the reasons my family chooses to live in the Flathead, and Columbia Falls in particular, is the presence of the wonderful North Fork Valley, the clean water, way of life, wildlife, solitude, everything. We and many other folks, landowners and not, treasure the North Fork just the way it is. Sure it will change, but only slowly if the road remains gravel.

So to sum things up, I know figuring out dust abatement alone and other maintenance options is a daunting task. Spending more than a few taxpayer dollars to even study paving as an option is questionable. When our precious taxpayer dollars are needed so desperately on other roads in the valley, seriously considering paving is just plain ludicrous.

Thank you,

Rachel Potter

Lani- I will also be sending you a more detailed written letter.



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

We have worked toward the goal of paving to Camas Rd. for years. It will provide an alternate route for visitors, especially during the slowdown of drivers on GTTS Rd. Construction. The economic benefits to the area will be great. Locals use this area more than others because of the multiple accesses to the river.

Name: Rep. Dee Brown

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

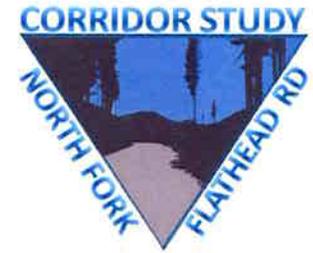
Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

is it possible to alleviate concerns about
development by zoning adjacent private properties.
Seems like a good compromise.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

If GNP gets its "wilderness" designation — how would it impact the Comes Bridge & Comes Road?
How does the road siltation impact fish quality in NF River?
Have seen numerous grizzlies all over from GLAER Rm to Foot's Hen Hill — How would this impact paving?

Name: Michael F. Shepard, City Councilman Col. Falls

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

I live in Whitefish & would love to buy some land near Polebridge & commute to work in Whitefish. But it's too dusty & unsafe now. Please pave this road so I can pursue my dream! I could get to work in less than hour by going 60-70 MPH.

Name: Spady Gonzalez

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

Improve safety & reduce dust by narrowing the width of the road, crowning the surface, and enforcing the speed limit. Do not try to make it easier & faster to go up the North Fork. The North Fork's special character is wildlife, wilderness, clean water & rustic, primitive nature... the opposite of most everywhere else in America. Why ~~we~~ try to take away this special character & make it like other places? Paving more of the North Fork will forever alter the wild character, encouraging higher speeds, more residents, more development & negative impacts to wildlife & other special values. Other points:

- During the dusty, busy season drivers can get to Camas faster on pavement & only 6 miles longer via Glacier's Camas Rd.
- We've convinced Canada to keep the NF wild - let's do the same

Name: Steve Thompson

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

1 WE NEED TO PAVE WITH SPEED LIMIT IT WORKS FOR GLACIER NATIONAL PARK AND ALL WILD LIFE.
2. PEOPLE BREATHE ALSO.
3. THE VALLEY NEED THIS
4. WHEN DO WE START.

Name: TOM E EDWARDS

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

The main concern is the dust on the road which creates pollution and visibility problems for drivers. PLEASE CONSIDER SOME TYPE OF OIL TREATMENT, IF PAVING IS NOT AN OPTION. Another issue is the fact that our county road grader can smooth out the road, but the grading only lasts for a few weeks, due to the heavy traffic load in the summer.

If the road had more gravel, and was sealed every summer its condition would improve.

Name: Jon Caldwell

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

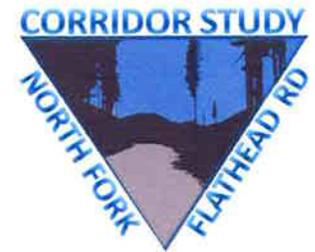
Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

I live on trail Ch. Rd. you named. I travel the Rd. at least once a week. I feel if the bottom portion was paved and turned over to the State. Maybe the County could take better care of the Rd from Camas to the Canadian border. The County did haul gravel from Camas to Polebridge, which really improved the road. But from Polebridge to the Canadian border the road is really bad!

Name: Gay Morris

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

The entire stretch needs to be maintained up to the border. Its extremely hard on the suspension of vehicles & human spines. Grading only causes the road bed to be much lower than the sides of the road causing water to stand on the lower flat areas causing more potholes. Where there is gravel, the flora & fauna are non-existent!

on 4/17 the Border Patrol broke down with a broken front axle on a 2009 vehicle. This is ridiculous!

If the road does not get paved, it should be maintained at the very least.

Name: _____
Address: C. Bergeron why did CP pave going to the Sun?
E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

My name is Bill Ohmsted I have owned
property up the North Fork for 34 years I have
been a resident for the past 5 years. In the
34 years that I have been coming to Polebridge - the
traffic has increased exponentially. The culture
has changed - more tourists, more river traffic
more Park Visitation. In the 1970-80s Polebridge
was a quiet sleepy little community - that has
all changed. Very exponentially

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

I can state an opinion in regards to the County Rd. Dept.
The condition of the road is due to the high traffic counts
This causes washboarding, potholes, rutting & dust. The gravel on this
stretch has very little fines left in it. Because of of this when we
blade the road it will not bind together and form any sort of hardpack.
The other problem is the road is too wide. You cannot maintain
a gravel road that is 40+ feet wide. It is nearly impossible to
make a crown to allow the water to run off. Since this is the
case the result is an un-maintainable section of road

Name: Ovila Byrd

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

With the limited amount of private land, along with zoning and a lot of areas where you CAN NOT put a Septic tank, there will not be a lot of development if this portion of @ road is paved.

(Example) Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina

Name: MARK BOYD

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

I refer you to the letter dated April 13, 2010, directed to Lani Eggertsen-Goff from Don Sullivan, chairperson of the North Fork Compact, of which I am one of the surviving founding members.

I agree completely with Don that to pave a road, particularly the only road to a critical area, endangers that area with regard to pollution, increased population pressure, and all that follows from that.

To sprinkle the fairy dust of environmentalism over the desire to make money (and that is what this particular effort to pave is) will not help the North Fork, which has such remarkable national value.

Name: Cecily R. McNeil

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

I would like to see the road paved - I have a business on Nucleus Ave & would enjoy more business from folks going to the park on the Camas Entry.

With increased traffic on Nucleus more businesses would open. More businesses might make a 2% tourism tax viable for Columbia Falls to improve infrastructure ^{amenities} for all our citizens.

CF's Chamber of Commerce ^{retail} &/or Nucleus Ave Businesses should be considered as Stakeholders on the project - also Uptown Merchants & retail marketing committee

Name: Cindy Shaw

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

We have been working for years to solve this problem,

- * Control Pollution for air, water, animals, fish, humans
- * 90% of road is on NFS land - No new development
- * NFS lands are used for public recreation and education
- * Alternative Loop to Glacier Park - More tourist dollars
- * Emergency Services Concerns

Name: Carol Pulle Executive Director of Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce

Address: _____

E-mail: _____



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

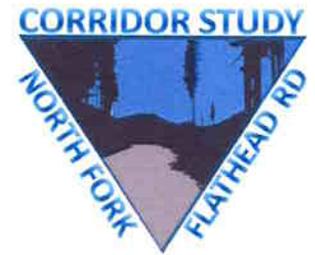
Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

SINCE GRIZZLY BEARS WERE NOT INVITED TO ATTEND, I WILL SPEAK FOR THEM. OUT OF 300,000,000 HUMANS IN AMERICA, THERE ARE ONLY 300 GRIZZLIES IN NORTHWEST MONTANA. THEY HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO ONLY 2% OF THEIR FORMER RANGE TO LIVE BY HUMAN INTRUSION INTO THEIR HABITAT. THE NORTH FORK AREA REPRESENTS THEIR BEST FOOD SOURCE/SUPPLY. PAVING THIS ROAD WILL INCREASE HUMAN INVASION INTO THIS PRIME LAND... RESULTING IN GRIZZLY-HUMAN CONFLICT, TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE BEARS. TO DATE, EVERYONE'S CONCERN IS WITH WHAT IS BEST FOR HUMANS AND THEIR FINANCIAL GAIN AND HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WELFARE. THE BEARS' NEEDS SHOULD BE GIVEN THE TOP PRIORITY INSTEAD. 10,000,000 TOURISTS PER YEAR COME TO MONTANA TO SEE GRIZZLY BEARS ON THEIR VACATIONS... NOT TO ENRICH MONTANANS.

Name: BILL BAUM

Address:

E-mail: _



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

I lived 2 miles up Trail Creek Rd from 1982-88 and still spend a couple of weeks at Forest Service cabins up the North Fork Rd every year, so I have an intimate knowledge of the road. I oppose paving the NF Rd from Glacier Pin to the Camas Rd junction.

- 1) It will increase traffic flow on the road which will adversely affect wildlife and the wilderness aspect of the area.
- 2) The notion of speed being controlled by an increased police patrols is noble but unrealistic. Flathead County does not have the man-power to adequately make significant presence in such a small area.
- 3) Any available money for paving roads would be better spent paving gravel roads in more populous areas.
- 4) The most "improvement" I can support would be a dust coat to reduce dust pollution.

Name: Frances Wade

Address _____

E-mail: _____

Sent: Saturday, April 17, 2010 12:50 PM
Subject: Secondary 486 (S486) Northfork Road
Commissioner Dupont, Sheila Ludlow, Lani Eggertsen-Goff, Doug Moeller, Shane Stack

My name is Lynn P Ogle, and I now live fulltime on the North Fork. I retired from Flathead County Sheriff's Office in 2003 and the Office of Emergency Services in 2005. I have been a member of the North Fork Improvement Association, and other groups on the North Fork since the 1960's and early 1970's. I have been on the board of the NFIA (changed to the North Fork Land Owners Association) and have held almost every position on that board. I have owned land in the North Fork since 1960.

Over the years in many groups and meetings the road issue has always been a topic of conversation. Over those same years we have had many surveys. Nearly all of them had the same result. The Landowners want something done with the road.

The corridor between mp 9.5 and 22.7, while in the North Fork corridor does not actually lay in the North Fork. All of the landowners own above the 22.7 mp.

It seems to me that the portion of the road in Question should have been paved when it was brought up to Federal Hwy Specs. The County then got money two more times to pave that section. That money was also siphoned off both times to work on other projects in the county.

Now again comes the Government doing a corridor study on Secondary 486. Nothing has changed. The road is currently kept up by the County. The road is **DUSTY** on a damp day. It and always will be a hazard to human and animal healthy. We say that we are worried about the particulate in the Air and Water, yet we do nothing. The Commissioners have had the road department put out signs that suggest 20 mph when dusty. What a joke. Few if any, except tourists follow that suggestion. The Sheriff's Office has a "Dust Deputy" for the summer months and that officer when not assigned elsewhere does slow the traffic some.

Now comes the question! Do we pave the Road between MP 9.5 and MP 22.7 or do we continue to follow the past and leave common sense behind and follow nature and continue with the cobble stone road. Common sense would tell you that paving that portion of the road would, without a doubt, lower dust particulate emitted into the air and river. It would also tell us that it would be cheaper to maintain, winter and summer if it were paved. The County could turn that section of Mt Secondary 486 over to the State Hwy Department for maintainece.

If you want to talk about health on any given day winter or summer, getting an ambulance into the North Fork, depending on where you needed one, would take from one to two hours. Landowners know that if they have a person in need of health care, they **MUST** load the person in need of care into their vehicle and go to the nearest phone then continue south to meet the Ambulance.

On a good day the time can be cut to about 30 minutes if you are able to get someone who can call ALERT and if they can fly or are not already on a mission. Then there is the cost, Alert is about \$20,000 or so, to fly to the North Fork. There have been many days that while it might be good in the lower North Fork I would be impossible to even fly to Polebridge. If the Golden Hour is the first hour, you-all can do the math.

In my ranting I nearly forgot about our neighbors, Glacier National Park. They are good neighbors for what they do. However when it concerns matters out of the Park, they should have very little to say. If they are impacted by the Dust and particulate in the air and water, then they have something to say. Just to be negative and state that they want people to have a Pristine Wilderness Experience while visiting the Park doesn't give them a voice.

I will close with the statement, **PAVE PAVE PAVE** the road from mp 9.5 to mp 22.7. Give us all a chance to live longer and in better health with safer roads.

Lynn P Ogle

Excerpts from
Flathead County Transportation Plan, Phase II
Prepared for Flathead County
by Robert Peccia & Associates Helena, MT

ROADWAY CAPACITY “When traffic exceeds 500 cars per day, the maintenance of the gravel road may become more costly and less effective than paving the road.”

AIR QUALITY “Under the Clean Air Act of 1970, EPA developed primary and Secondary National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for seven criteria which include particulate matter and fine particulate matter. These standards establish pollution levels that cannot be exceeded.”

SAFETY “...crash rates are generally higher for unpaved roads than paved roads for traffic volumes of 250 vehicles per day or more.”

*Note...*The North Fork Road Coalition For Health and Safety and the University of Montana conducted a dust study along the North Fork Road from July 17 through August 31, 2007. The majority of the test sites exceeded the E.P.A. standard for clean air.

Look at a commonly accepted statement about dust:

“ONE car making ONE pass on ONE mile of dirt or gravel road ONE time each day for ONE year created ONE ton of dust.”

**Please obey all posted speed limits
on the North Fork Road.**

**North Fork Road Coalition for Health and Safety
Polebridge, Montana 59928**



*North Fork
Road Coalition
for Health and Safety*

Welcome to the North Fork

* The North Fork Road is **THE ROAD** to adventure and recreation. How to make the road safe for all use has been a matter of concern and controversy for many years. The average vehicle count in the summer now often exceeds 400 per day.

Our group, the North Fork Coalition for Health and Safety, supports the following plan:

* Paving the lower section of the road from Canyon Creek to Camas Road (approximately 10 miles), and posting a 45 m.p.h. speed limit (same as on Camas Road in Glacier National Park.) Paving is a timely use of road stimulus funds. This will ensure a safe, dust free drive to the park on the North Fork road.

From Camas Road north to the border (approximately 35 miles), we support Flathead County's efforts to grade, gravel and dust treat as much of the road as their budget will allow. We feel that the "wilderness experience" is not enhanced by potholes or large volumes of dust that create visibility problems and pollution.

Please support our efforts for a better North Fork Road, by contacting one or more of the following people:

County Commissioners Dale Lauman
Joe Brenneman
James Dupont
800 South Main Street
Kalispell, MT 59901
406-758-5503

Public Works Director David Prunty
1249 Willow Glen Drive
Kalispell, MT 59901
406-758-5790

Director of Montana Department of Transportation
Jim Lynch
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001
E-mail Jilynych@mt.gov

Dust Related Complaints
Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Larry Alheim
406-444-2411
E-mail lalheim@mt.gov

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
488 East Winchester Street
Suite 400
Murray, Utah 84107

RECEIVED
APR 28 2010

PB America's, Inc.
Utah Office

Project Highway 486 Study in Flathead County:

The study of the lower section of the north fork road does need to be paved for the safety of animals and humans. The dust is so thick that you can not see 30 feet in front of you in the summer time. And where does the dust go right into the north fork river, plants, trees and in the lungs of the wildlife and human's. This is a beautiful area in the winter time when there is no dust. It is my understanding that this road is a wild and scenic highway , which in the summer is hard to believe because it is not GREEN but BROWN. This is not a safe road to drive on.

*Thank you,
Alice Caldwell*

April 14, 2010

Project Highway 486 study in Flathead County:

An excerpt from the Flathead County transportation Plan, Phase II released in 2007, states :

AIR QUALITY “ UNDER THE CLEAN AIR ACT OF 1970, EPA DEVELOPED PRIMARY AND SECONDARY NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARDS (NAAQS) FOR SEVEN CRITERIA WHICH INCLUDE PARTICULATE MATTER AND FINE PARTICULATE MATTER. THESE STANDARDS ESTABLISH POLLUTION LEVELS THAT CANNOT BE EXCEEDED. ”

Note: University of Montana conducted a dust study along the North Fork Road from July 17 through August 31, 2007. The majority of the test sites exceeded the E.P.A. standard for clean air.

DR. TONY J. WARD was in charge of this study, he can be contacted at:

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
SKAGGS BUILDING 173B
MISSOULA, MONTANA, 59812
PHONE (406) 243-4092
E-MAIL: cehs@umontana.edu

Mr. J. Caldwell

April 2010

Project Highway 486 study in Flathead County:

You will no doubt hear that the North Fork road is a road without a “destination”. Therefore it should not be paved.

The truth is, the road has several destinations: Camas road which leads to major attractions in Glacier National Park, further north the Polebridge entrance to Glacier Nation Park which receives 12,000 plus vehicle each summer, and also the North Fork road serves many access points for people to raft or fish the North Fork river. The road should be paved so local and tourist can enjoy the North Fork area.

Thank you,

Mr.& Mrs. J. Caldwell

April 14, 2010

Project Highway 486 study in Flathead County:

An excerpt from the Flathead County transportation Plan, Phase II Released in 2007, states on road capacity:

“WHEN TRAFFIC EXCEEDS 500 CARS PER DAY, THE MAINTENANCE OF THE GRAVEL ROAD MAY BECOME MORE COSTLY, AND LESS EFFECTIVE THAN PAVING THE ROAD”

The North Fork road traffic counts now exceeds 400, and continues To rise each summer season. The road should be paved.

Thank you,
J. Caldwell

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
Parsons Brinkerhoff
488 E. Winchester St. Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

RE: North Fork of the Flathead River

I would like to register my comments AGAINST paving the North Fork Road #486. This is currently a pristine wildlife corridor and a Wild and Scenic River. Paving this road will only lead to increased traffic and wildlife kills due to speed. The current 35 mile speed limit works to decrease speed. It has been mentioned that it is a route to Glacier, but the majority of visitors to Glacier Park go through the paved West Glacier entrance and don't need another paved entrance point. There are so few residents in the North Fork and a paved road would just encourage more development in this pristine valley. There are multiple unpaved roads in Flathead County that have high density residential and those roads should be paved, but paving the North Fork just doesn't have a benefit.

Flathead County has been doing a great job of keeping the road graded and that is all that needs to be done.

*Sincerely,
Linda Coolidge*

Linda Coolidge

Lee Dawson
Palbridge VT
59928

Corridor Planning Hy 484

I am a life long resident of Plakbed Co. My grand father and my Mother home stated in the Lower Vt. I have seen the road one lane a turnout about every half mile I am in favor of paving for the following reasons -

1. My concerns are safety, the heavy traffic makes it very unsafe and high maintenance costs

2. I am also concerned about the dust pollution of heavy traffic. From the mountain tops at sunrise you can trace the route of the Vt. road also the dust rise to the top of said mountain

This paving would have no adverse effect on Grps by bear of value
So lets pave it!

Lee Dawson

April 9, 2010

Lani Eggertson-Goft, Parsons Brinckeroff
488 E. Winchester Street, Suite 400
Murray, Utah 84107

Re: Hwy 486 Study in Flathead County

When you meet with Flathead County and Montana D.O. T. officials to discuss Hwy 486 plans on April 20, 2010 in Columbia Falls, I would like to have you consider my input regarding this section of road.

As a 46 year property owner and part-time resident of land North of the section being considered in this discussion which I have to use when going to or from my land, I would prefer to see the 13-mile section paved to prevent further deterioration of the expensive base that was originally put down with paving planned. This would also prevent further dust pollution which has been violating EPA standards for many years with the increased traffic.

Please consider these points in your deliberations and planning.

Thank you,



Linda Pittman

Flathead Co.
Hiway Study 486 rd

4/6/2010

%

Lani Eggertsen - Gulf
Parsons Brinckerhoff
488 E. Winchester St Suite 400
Murray Utah 84407

Dear folks,

What we need for the North Fork Road #486 is a list of the following:

- ① A paved dust free road and atmosphere - for Safety & visual pleasures, of scenery and mtns in Glacier Park.
- ② for issues on Safety: guardrails and more guardrails, meaning clear to the border.
- ③ and Naturally Speed Control and Signing

My letter is short and sweet: We lived in the North Fork for 33 years and the road is many things, mostly bad and unsafe at all seasons of the year. And yes folks and friends we know, have lost their lives on this road.

The road rattles by our house with lots of dust which is hard on lungs.

I'm now 74 and been in the North Fork off and on since 15 yrs of age, and lots of folks want to keep the road as "is". But every year the area gets more traffic and people, with some wishing to live here-forever. I don't want to see change - but it is already here. Let's do something, right. Pave the road, to the Canadian Border, by starting at Blankenship to Cama Cr. (QNP)

Sincerely
Marietta L. Downs

The NORTH FORK COMPACT

Established 1971

Lani Eggertson-Goff
Parsons Brinkerhoff
488 E. Winchester St., Suite 400
Murray, Utah 84107

April 13, 2010

Dear Ms. Eggertson-Goff,

Regarding; Feasible Roadway Improvements of Highway 486 in the North Fork of the Flathead Valley, Montana, from Mile Marker 9.5 to Mile Marker 27.7.

I am writing on behalf of the North Fork Compact, a civic organization comprised of landowners in the North Fork of the Flathead Valley who have, for the past 36 years, been working to conserve the unique culture and ecology of the North Fork Valley.

We understand that the State of Montana and Flathead County officials are studying feasible options for improving that portion of Highway 486 between Canyon Creek and Camas Creek (hereafter referred to as the North Fork Road) and hereby provide our position.

We support narrowing the road, grading it to create a crown for drainage and applying high quality gravel to the road bed. Gravel needs to be applied from year to year to mitigate dust caused by soil pulverization. In addition, the County should grade the road when conditions warrant, not just twice a year. Importantly, increased law enforcement is needed to reduce vehicular speeds which cause increased dust during dry periods. These improvements will mitigate dust problems without harming the environment and will be less costly than other alternatives.

We oppose paving any portion of the North Fork Road because such action has the potential – particularly over the long term - to degrade the land and water quality of this transboundary area and thereby adversely affect aquatic and wildlife species that are threatened or endangered.

1. Paving is, de facto, an infrastructure improvement that has –in both the short and long term - the potential to increase human presence and activity, increase residential development and spur commercial enterprise. Inevitably, changes of this type bring with them increased water and air pollution, increased housing and road density and loss of and interference with wildlife habitat. These changes pose substantial risks to the transboundary Flathead/North Fork ecosystem which includes Glacier/Waterton International Peace Park, a United Nations World Heritage Site, British Columbia Flathead ecosystem and Flathead National Forest.

2. It is important to recognize that paving the main access road into the North Fork/Flathead transboundary area, a road that has never been paved, represents a project initiative that is in direct opposition to the spirit and intent of the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of British Columbia and the State of Montana. The first of six principles of recognition underlying the MOU states the following;

“Recognizing the mutual commitment of British Columbia and Montana to sustaining environmental values in the transboundary Flathead River Basin, including its existing high water quality and aquatic biodiversity, and threatened and endangered species and species of special concern listed under United States and Canadian law;”

3. Equally important, any consideration of or action toward paving a portion of the North Fork Road imposes upon the State of Montana significant responsibilities under the MOU, to wit:

A. Paragraph I, Section C: “Collaborate on environmental assessment of any project of cross-border significance that has the potential to degrade land or water resources”

“On a reciprocal basis, provide for on-going involvement of interested federal, provincial, state and First Nations or American Indian Tribes and their designated scientists, in environmental assessments triggered under provincial or state law or regulation with respect to any development in the British Columbia and Montana transboundary area which holds potential to cause degradation of water quality or land resources...” Protocols for this requirement follow in the MOU.

B. Paragraph I, Section D: “Share information proactively”

“Share information proactively, subject to all relevant laws and regulations, exchange authorizations, permits, approval, licenses, tenures and draft planning documents on proposed projects that have potential cross-border, wildlife or water quality impacts; and develop early notification procedures to identify problems or sources of concern to residents, First Nations, Tribes or governmental entities in the transboundary areas.”

The MOU seems to require that, even at this early planning stage, the State of Montana has the obligation to notify British Columbia if paving is to be considered as an option in improving Highway 486.

4. Consideration of paving a section of the North Fork Road by the State of Montana could have the unexpected and devastating effect of losing the permanent protection against mining and oil & gas development to which the MOU gives promise;

A. Creating an infrastructure improvement in the North Fork which has the potential to spur development could cause doubt within elements of the government of British Columbia about the seriousness and reliability of the State of Montana in upholding its obligations to the MOU.

B. Paving in the North Fork by the State of Montana provides potentially dangerous arguments that Canadian mining, oil and gas companies could use against British Columbia enabling legislation that will be required to make protection of the Flathead/North Fork drainage permanent.

The potential risks to the MOU and the pristine Flathead/North Fork ecosystem are simply not worth any conceivable benefit of paving.

5. Apart from issues relating to the MOU, compelling reasons exist for taking the option of paving off the table when considering improvements to the North Fork Road;

A. When consideration of paving the section of road in question arose in the 1980's, the United States Fish & Wildlife Service issued a Jeopardy Opinion against paving in 1980 and in 1982, stating that to do so could jeopardize the continued existence of the grizzly bear, a threatened species.

B. Glacier National Park has stated its opposition to paving the section of road under consideration because doing so runs counter to the Park's Management Plan. The North Fork district of Glacier Park is managed as a primitive area.

C. Despite the occasionally loud rhetoric of a few, a large portion of North Fork landowners and residents simply **do not want this section of road paved**. In the most recent survey conducted by the North Fork Landowners Association, nearly half of respondents were opposed to paving the North Fork Road between Canyon Creek and Camas Creek.. And it is important to note that opposition to paving has grown with each past survey. Surely public monies spent on road paving should be spent on those Montana roads for which strong, unanimous public demand exists.

D. Paving the Canyon Creek-Camas Creek section of Highway 486 has the potential to increase the dangers of driving this twisty mountain road. Vehicle speeds – already too high - will undoubtedly increase further. The County has

acknowledged that it lacks sufficient law enforcement resources to regularly enforce speed limits in the North Fork. If paved, snow and ice during fall, winter and spring, are likely to become greater hazards for drivers. Unless the County is willing and able to afford snow removal and salting that keeps ice off the pavement, danger to drivers on this steep, twisty section of road will likely increase.

E. The North Fork Road carries very light traffic eight months of the year, as only about 100 residents live there year-round. It leads to Polebridge, a hamlet of fewer than 100 residents, and dead-ends at the US/Canadian border. Expending the millions of dollars it would take to pave the road to Camas Creek for the benefit of summer tourists is not a good or responsible use of Montana taxpayers' dollars.

F. With over 700 miles of unpaved roads in Flathead County, many with much heavier year-round traffic, the North Fork Road should rank at the bottom of the list of paving projects.

For these reasons, we urge the State of Montana and Flathead County to eliminate road paving as an option for consideration in the potential improvement of Highway 486.

Thank you for taking the position of the North Fork Compact into consideration.

Sincerely,

Donald Sullivan, Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D".

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov]
Sent: Monday, April 19, 2010 11:58 AM
To: MDT Comments - Project
Subject: Comment on a Project Submitted

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/19/2010 11:57:43
Project Commenting On: North Fork Flathead River Road Paving
Nearest Town/City to Project: Columbia Falls
Name: Joe Grabowski

Comment or Question:

I would like to state my position in support of paving the road for the North Fork of the Flathead River from the present end of pavement to the turn off for the Camas road into GNP. The present road has safety and serious dust issues.

In the winter the road is barely passable at times due to ice and ruts. In the spring the road can be so deep in mud making it difficult to travel. In the summer I have observed, from the mountains that adjoin this river corridor, a cloud of dust covering the bottom 500' of the valley. The dust coats the trees that adjoin the roadway.

Please consider paving this road. There was money appropriated for this project in 1999 but it was unfortunately taken away and appropriated to the Big Mountain road. This was a mistake.

Thanks for your consideration.

Comments: Dear Mr. Schweitzer,

I have an idea. Do you really want to know what the citizens of the United States of America think? If you do here's an idea: Figure out a list of questions you would like opinions on, hire in each county or state local printing companies to print this list and have the post office send it to all postal customers. Have it so that the citizens can send it back postage paid. Seriously if you send something to "Postal Customer" you will get to way more people than any other way including the internet. I think that the citizens of the U.S. would really appreciate being asked what they would prefer their tax dollars are being spent on. You would get a much more honest answer than if you ask the Senators or so called Representatives.

This idea helps local printing companies, the post office, and gives The People a true voice.

I am a rural mail carrier on a very rural route. The road I drive is dirt and rocks and potholes. I have an idea for stimulus money that would help in a lot of ways.

The main project is paving this horrible road through the beautiful river valley on the ~~west side of Glacier National Park~~

The work of paving the road would put a lot of people to work for quite awhile. The benefits of having the road paved are numerous. Starting with Glacier Park having an alternate route that would take pressure off of the Going to the Sun road, which is under constant construction with long delays and open up another section of the park.

It would stimulate the economy of the town of Columbia Falls by creating that a safe convenient route through Columbia Falls up to Glacier Park. The park could collect more revenue from two entrances to the park one in Polebridge and one half way up the North Fork road.

There is a border station, although it is closed, that the road leads to paving it would save the Border Patrol money in vehicle maintenance. And it would save me, the postal carrier, money in vehicle maintenance. I spend around \$6000.00 a year in maintenance.

Also there have recently been studies conducted on the road because of the dust produced by the traffic. It is harmful to everything. If you walk even a hundred yards off the road the foliage is covered in dust. The U.N. was just here checking out the North Fork of the Flathead River because of a proposed coal mine in Canada and it's possible impact on it. The U.N. is interested in the river because of an international issue and Flathead County just complains they don't even have the money to keep the road maintained. The local government has been fined by the EPA for pollution levels from the dust and gets out of it by hiring a dust cop, whom I have only seen a few times. I drive 35,000 to 40,000 miles a year on this road and I see this solution is not helping, people are still driving the speed limit 35 and creating dust. This option only puts one person to work part time. The locals in the North Fork valley have formed a coalition for health and safety. This group is the one that convinced the University of Montana to do a study on the dust content. They found it contained high levels of aluminum, silicon, potassium, calcium, and iron. The study showed that my health is at risk from just driving the road everyday. And being a postal contractor I am not in on any health benefits. I have to find my own which of course are so expensive that I can't afford it on the salary they allow me. Plus I have to maintain a vehicle that is not allowed to be more than nine years old and every four years at contract time it can't be more than five years old so I can never even pay one off. I spend around \$6000.00 a year in maintenance.

As for the safety factor, if the road were to be paved there would be fewer accidents due to bad road conditions and visibility. We have had one death this year and at least five accidents. We don't get highway patrol up there because of the condition of the road unless there is an accident. The side of the road is littered with beer cans from people coming up there to drive around and drink because they know there are no cops. It takes emergency vehicle at least two hours to get to Polebridge, which is only 35 miles from Columbia Falls because it is not safe for them to travel any faster. When there is a house fire too bad unless you can get a hold of, through the marine band radio because we have no telephones, the locals who have some training they might be able to help. When there is a forest fire they get together and grade it so they don't have to drive over the bumps.

The county has stated that they agree they would spend less money in maintenance per year if the road was paved but they don't have the money to pave it.

So in conclusion, paving the North Fork road would put people to work in the Flathead Valley that has seen several big plants close or cut back. Paving the road would help Glacier National Park in a couple of ways. It would also help two local towns Columbia Falls and Polebridge. Paving the road would save the Border Patrol and the mail carrier money. It would make it possible for emergency vehicles to respond in a timely manner and safely. It would protect the river, the plant life, and the wildlife from pollution. It would be safer and more enjoyable to drive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karin Craver

Concerned Citizen from Montana

REMOTE_HOST= 72.160.25.168

REMOTE_ADDR= 72.160.25.168

HTTP_USER_AGENT=Mozilla/5.0 (Macintosh; U; Intel Mac OS X 10.5; en-US; rv:1.9.1.3) Gecko/20090824 Firefox/3.5.3

Please submit for record

GRIZZLY BEAR CUBS remain parked and cautious, as one sounds the alarm for mom's assistance. Usually seen with one or two cubs, the nearby grizzly mom will have this trio of trouble in tow for two to four years, before each strikes out on its own.

4/26/2010



Regarding MDOT Corridor
study of North Fork
Flathead River Road:

I am a 20-year resi-
dent of Polebridge, MT
and I say NO to road
paving and yes to proper
gravel road dust abate-
ment. Talk to FS!! NFis
a gem, biologically.
Rick Kerr

POST CARD

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
Parsons Brinkerhoff
488 E. Winchester St.
Suite #400
Murray, UT 84107



▼ Please leave this space for postal use only. ▼



dear committee:

I am writing to submit comment that i am against paving or otherwise "improving" this road in west glacier. by making vehicle access to the North Fork and to the northwest part of glacier easier, the remoteness, wildlife habitat, and wilderness values would be compromised.

Please leave this road unimproved.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Koelle

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 9:57 AM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: Against paving

Categories: Orange Category

Dear Lani:

The proposal to pave the North Fork road (of Flathead River) is a perennial that keeps raising its head. It has always been a bad idea and still is. An aquatic ecologist friend on the west coast informed me that this is the largest remaining free-flowing river of its kind in the region and therefore serves as a reference point for ecologists attempting to rehabilitate drainages elsewhere. With or without that consideration, some areas need to be kept 'hard to reach' and paving the road would only serve to reduce this value and increase the amount of traffic, which is not a good idea in this rather fragile ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Alan

Alan Graham McQuillan

I would like to thank the persons responsible for securing a much needed feasibility study for improving Highway 486 aka North Fork Road, north of Columbia Falls.

I was County Commissioner when the Forest Highway program funded and built the North Fork Road. Upon completion the engineer wanted to pave the road. Funds were available. Objecting to the paving program was the Park Service, Fish and Game, and some folks in the North Fork area.

This road upon completion was a great improvement but after some weathering I could see real problems arising. After a few rains, "pot holes", wash boarding and dust became very evident. The engineer was right, something must be done. Over the years it has become very apparent as the traffic increases so have the problems:

1. The conditions of the road surface become hazardous, especially in July and August.
2. The dust becomes horrific. You have to drive through it to realize how bad it is!

There is a group of residents (NFRCHS), North Fork Coalition for Health and Safety that are very concerned about the effects of dust on health and on the environment, including water quality and fisheries. This group funded a study which found the ambient air quality in July and August to be unacceptable and the group feels that something must be done to alleviate the problem. I totally agree with them.

As we look to the future, public use will increase greatly. Federal use has increased by the Park Service, Forest Service and Border Patrol. All of these things are natural. We must act now to finish protecting the North Fork as Canada and the federal government have done. We can't stop traffic but we can prepare a road surface that will stop dust.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Allen Jacobson

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

Sent: Wednesday, April 07, 2010 8:46 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study comments

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Due By: Friday, April 09, 2010 3:00 PM
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff:

These comments are in reference to the Highway 486 Study in Flathead County, since public sentiment is one of the factors being considered.

I have been traveling up and down the road to Polebridge, which is a favorite tourist destination of mine, since 1994. Part of what draws me there is its remoteness, and its specialness because of that. It is important to me that the North Fork is one of the last places in the lower 48 that still has its predators intact, a sign of a healthy ecosystem. It is important to me (and it seems to the animals) that there aren't many people there, and that the ones who are there know how to live and survive there. If it were like other towns and areas, I might not be compelled to go.

It is too bad the road is so dusty and can be so potholed. My wish would be that there would be some environmentally friendly and viable way to control or at least mitigate the dust, and that the sections of the road that are paved and thus get potholed could be cared for every certain number of years. It's been great since the last time the potholes were fixed.

Everyone knows the road is a challenge. I simply roll up my windows and use my AC when on it in the summer, and go slower. Are these things that bad?

I had a friend who started to bleed internally up in Polebridge and had to be brought to the hospital in Kalispell. It was a painful ride down the washboard sections of the road. But he would not want the road paved, and Polebridge and the N. Fork to change. It was his choice, and his joy, to be there. I hope that with all our technology today, there are ways to recognize the importance of this area and the will and necessary funds to keep the road in good shape without paving it.

This is a nationally recognized pristine place. It is vital to protect it. Keeping the road unpaved is key to that. That keeps people from being as interested in fragmenting wild land by building homes up there; it keeps people from driving so fast.

There are other places in Montana that hanker for pavement for their roads. Let's spend the money for pavement there and spend our creative energy finding better solutions, solutions that fit, that are appropriate for the special circumstances of the N. Fork Road.

Thank you.

--

Beth Judy
Missoula, MT

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Monday, April 19, 2010 2:41 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study - B Puckett 19 April 2010

Paving Highway 486 (currently under a feasibility study by MDOT) results in all positive results....

Paving Highway 486 will result in a safer road for patrons to Glacier National Park and visitors to the North Fork. Currently this road is a hazard to drivers, bikers, hikers and wildlife. Even in dry conditions your vehicle slides all over the road. To avoid going off the road, because you can't see through the dust, people drive the middle of the road. Does it take loss of lives for you to realize this is unsafe?

Paving Highway 486 will result in cleaner air. Currently Montana and Flathead County is in violation of clean air regulations. They have been in violation since the inception of this law. Why do we have the EPA and create these laws for a cleaner and safer environment if we allow the State of Montana to continually ignore and violate this law. Struggling businesses are required to adhere to EPA regulations. Why don't we require the "big dogs" to adhere to the law? The citizens of Flathead County, the wildlife of the North Fork, the visitors and the landowners of the North Fork do not want to continue to breath in this polluted dusty air. I wonder if this violation would be acceptable in a more environmentally conscious state? Why does the state of Montana allow this to continue?

Paving Highway 486 does not negatively inhibit the wildlife. Paving does not have a negative impact on the wildlife. If this were the case, why does Glacier National Park pave the roads in the park? GNP is Highway 486's neighbor. If paving has such a negative impact on the wildlife, let's tear up all the asphalt in GNP and go back to gravel. I have been a visitor to GNP since 1982. I have not seen the wildlife negatively impacted. In fact, I have seen the wildlife increase. I see more grizzlies, big horn sheep, mountain goats, moose and others, than I ever saw back in the eighties. The argument that paving negatively impacts the wildlife just does not hold water.

Paving Highway 486 will allow for another entrance to GNP on the west side of the park. Visitors will have the option to choose either the Camas road or West Glacier entrance to the park. This new "gateway" to GNP through Columbia Falls can help stimulate the ailing economy of Columbia Falls and Flathead County. This new entrance can stimulate jobs in Columbia Falls. Visitors to GNP's west side of the park would prefer to spend their vacation in the park.... not sitting in a line for an hour waiting to get into the park through the West Glacier entrance.

Paving Highway 486 could stimulate the poor economy in Flathead County if the contract for paving required contractors to use people from Flathead County for this job.

Paving Highway 486 will not cause of flood of development in the North Fork. The twenty acre minimum was enacted many years ago for this purpose.

As a taxpaying citizen of Flathead County, I request you take the responsible action of recommending paving the section of Highway 486 being considered and take steps to get it done. I see no negative and all positive effects of this decision.

I thank you for considering the above and look forward to a common sense decision.

Beth C. Puckett
Polebridge, MT

Eggersen-Goff, Lani

Sent: Sunday, April 11, 2010 12:34 AM
To: Eggersen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

My name is Bob Riemer, I own 10 acres on the "Northfork"

Please enter my vote for "Paving The Northfork rd".

I had a bad accident and wreck my vehicle last year, I was luck not to have been seriously hurt. I don't believe this would have happen had the road been paved.

Regards,

Bob Riemer

To the MT DOT,

I am very concerned about the impacts that upgrading the Northfork gravel road to a paved road will have on wildlife and the loss of remoteness of the west side of Glacier National Park. I have been rafting the West Fork Flathead River for the past several summers, and while shuttling vehicles on that stretch of gravel road is slow and bumpy, I enjoy it every time! Forcing travelers, shuttlers, Park users to slow down is a GOOD thing. And it keeps a lot of the larger RV vehicles out of that area, which means local Montanans, and those who want to explore at a bumpier pace can enjoy the Park without a caravan of tourism to contend with. If the road is paved, what was once a reprieve from the summer tourism chaos in the heart of the Park, will end up resulting in an increase traffic, vehicle speed, wildlife collisions, visitor use, increase in noise & trash, and ultimately increased development, river crowding, and require more enforcement.

Please leave this remote are of the Park unpaved. For the wildlife, the clean water and woods, and the people who frequently enjoy it.

Thank you,

Cathrine Walters
Missoula, MT

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 6:41 PM
To: mdtntfteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road

All my girlfriends are prepared to lay across the North Fork Rd. as a speed bump if the North Fork is ever to be paved, and now my male friends are signing up too! This road does not need to be paved. Once paved the North Fork is GONE! I have traveled all over the world and seen what happens to a pristine area after the pavement. RUINED! FOREVER! There is no going BACK! As soon as the road is paved it passes to the State. The county is rid of thier responsibilities. Not that they have been very responsible. They have deliberately neglected this road for at least 35 years! Everyone who goes to GNP already passes thru Columbia Falls so I don't see any great benefit there. The only thing that will happen to those who live in C. Falls is that they loose their free entry into the park! And since the Roberts Fire this area has been ravished, once a florishing wildlife corridor, it needs many years to heal, not have road construction. Again, once this is paved it is GONE! BYE, BYE! It is one of THE LAST PRISTINE areas left in the lower 48. DON'T make it like anywhere USA! DUST BLOWS AWAY- Pavement doesn't! Cheryl Watts, Polebridge resident for 36 years

Dear MDOT,

I am a landowner near Polebridge, MT. My property is accessed by the North Fork Road. I am against any changes to the current condition and management of the road that would allow an increase in vehicle speeds. Animal deaths caused by cars are a major concern in this wild and pristine area. The current poor condition of the road forces drivers to go slowly, which is the major factor limiting wildlife deaths at this time. Paving the road will greatly increase both the speed and the volume of traffic on the road, and would destroy the traditional wilderness aspect of the entire North Fork Valley.

Sincerely,
Dennis Drayna

Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 3:39 PM
To: mdtntfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study comments - JCorday 5May2010

Sheila Ludlow, MT Dept of Transportation

Dear Ms Ludlow,

I have driven up to Polebridge at least 5 times in the past 25 yrs. The first time was in 1984 while on a college graduation road-trip. We first drove the Going-to-the-Sun road and visited Logans Pass, but were somewhat dismayed by how crowded the area was so we asked a ranger where to go to get away from the crowds. Driving up the windy gravel road on the west side of Glacier and arriving in Polebridge was like stepping back 50 yrs in time – such an incredibly special place, it felt so wild, remote. Almost 30 years later, not much has changed except for the addition of more vacation homes along the route, a stretch of paving, and the fact that a few more people make the pilgrimage up to Polebridge to experience the opposite of Logans Pass.

Now that I've taken a paragraph to be nostalgic, I'll get right to the point of my commenting upon the corridor study. I am opposed to any further paving of road 486, and would favor other less impactful methods of dust abatement for the following reasons:

1) Pavement = large increase in vehicle speed = more wildlife roadkill

The current gravel bumpy road keeps most drivers traveling around 20-30 mph. Paving would increase this speed to 45-65 depending on the curves (and driver of course). Many studies have shown that higher speeds equal a much larger amount of animals being killed by cars as the driver's reaction time is reduced to a fraction of the time of slower speeds. This is an area where almost every wildlife species that was here 200 yrs ago is still here next to one of the crown jewels of all National Parks. These factors should out-weigh any "convenience" time-saving factors of paving.

2) Pavement = reduced travel time = increased traffic = greater barrier to wildlife

Because paving significantly reduces travel time, dust, and wear & tear on vehicles, studies have shown that paving leads to increased residential development of rural areas. [Land Use Effects of Paving Rural Roads, http://www.headwaterseconomics.org/regional.php#paving](http://www.headwaterseconomics.org/regional.php#paving) In addition to the roads in this report, one only has to look at the Bitterroot Valley to see the dramatic impact paving some of the residential roads has had, like Hidden Valley Road for example. Additionally, the easier travel will increase the number of visitors to the NW section of Glacier National Park. The combined additional traffic will increase noise along the road, which impacts birds and wildlife, and also will lead to more roadkill.

3) Impacts of increased residential development to wildlife

In addition to the impacts of increased traffic on the road, more residential development also has negative impacts on the type of wildlife in this wild section of Montana. Black bear, Grizzly bear, wolves, bobcat, lynx, cougar, elk, & moose to name a few are all negatively impacted by increased residential development. Those impacts include loss of habitat, disturbance from humans and their livestock and pets, problems with garbage, outdoor storage of BBQs, pet food, bird food etc (bears and other animal attractants). [Habitat Protection Planning – Where the Wild Things Are](#), American Planning Association Report No 470/471 1997. In the book "[The Nature of Southwestern Colorado: Recognizing Human Legacies and Restoring Natural Places](#)" by Deborah D. Paulson and William L. Baker, both professors of geography at the University of Wyoming, the authors discuss the century-plus of environmental impacts of settlement in southwestern Colorado. They point out that rural sprawl "has inherent negative impacts, many of which cannot be overcome, not even by the most conscientious homeowner. The lower elevations around mountains provide critical winter range for big game, valleys are the most productive farmland, and streamside (riparian) habitat supports two-thirds of Colorado's plant and animal species. Yet these are the very lands where sprawl is concentrated because they are largely private and are preferred locations for home-sites." The authors note that, "Most insidious, roads fragment the landscape, increasing edges that favor generalist species such as skunks and coyotes and reducing large habitat blocks needed by more specialized species."

The authors cite a list of other problems, including of invasive, noxious and non-native plant species that proliferate in rural subdivisions due to the disturbance of the ground inherent in such development, as well as the overgrazing of subdivision parcels by horses and other livestock that their owners allow. They also catalog the increased killing of wildlife, some rare or threatened, by domestic cats and dogs in such rural subdivisions. The authors also point out that the presence of rural subdivisions in close proximity to public lands is compromising the ability of those public lands to be effectively managed, particularly in the area of fire management, prevention of fuel buildups, and prescribed burning.

In summary, the Corridor Study needs to carefully take into account the many negative impacts to wildlife that paving will have on the incredibly diverse and abundant wildlife that live in this area of Montana.

Sincerely,

Jacquelyn Corday

Dennis Groebe

15 April 2010

Ms. Lani Eggertsen-Goff
Parson Brinckerhoff
488 E. Winchester St. Ste. 400
Murray, Utah, 84107

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff

I am writing in response to a request for comments for a “Feasibility Study” related to the section of road between mile marker 9.5 and mile marker 22.7 on Highway 486, north of Columbia Falls, Montana. I am a land owner and part-time resident of Polebridge, Montana and as such I have listened for the past ten years to the rhetoric concerning the possible paving of the road north out of Columbia Falls.

Some say that paving the road will increase traffic and ruin the North Fork area; others vehemently argue that the paving will destroy the wildlife in the area, and others have actually said that we should let the road go back to the way it was in the early 1900’s. We all love the area and all probably want to do what is best for the area, but we need to insure some consistency in the decision making process for the area. It seems that it is alright to pave the roads inside Glacier National Park, but the same people report that paving roads outside the park will be detrimental to wildlife.

Traveling the road can at times be a pleasant experience, but most of the time it is very dangerous due to lack of maintenance and dust conditions. I feel that when the road is paved the elimination of the dust problem will make the road significantly safer for both the travelers and the animals. Additionally, the dust which is currently being generated on the road has to settle somewhere and since the road is adjacent to the North Fork of the Flathead River a large portion of that dust ends up in the river.

Another point is the number of commercial and service vehicle that are currently using the road to provide for the homes in the North Fork area. These vehicles are not allowed to travel through the National Park to get to the residents in the North Fork which adds to the traffic problems and the requirement for increased maintenance of the road. Additionally, if someone would spend the time to count the vehicles, I am certain that a large percentage of the traffic on Highway 486 is Government vehicles coming out of Columbia Falls.

The final point that I need to make concerns the “life cost” of the project. If the road is paved and then maintained the initial cost will be higher, but the overall cost of the road will be reduced because the maintenance costs will be much lower. If the road maintenance is continued in the present manner the costs will continue to grow and the road will not get better for any length of time.

Sincerely
Signed/Dennis Groebe/
Dennis G. Groebe

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Tuesday, April 27, 2010 5:18 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study - DHart 27 April 2010

Hello,

My comment is in reference to Highway 486 Study in Flathead County. My family has owned property on the North Fork of the Flathead since 1968. I grew up in the 59928 zip code. My wife and I spend at least 6 months a year at our family property north of Polebridge. We have intimate familiarity with the North Fork Road in all seasons and under all conditions. My entire family is adamantly opposed to any paving of any part of the North Fork Road. Our family has deep roots in both Flathead County and Western Montana. My mother served as County Commissioner in Missoula County for the better part of two decades, while my father was a professor at the University of Montana for an equal length of time. Neither of them want to see any paving on the North Fork Road in their life times. In fact to do so would ruin their well deserved and long-delayed retirement. My wife and I intend to spend the rest of our lives north of Polebridge and it would destroy our quality of life to see the road paved in part or in full. I am the chairman of the North Fork Land Owners Association (NFLA) History Committee and my wife is the web master for the NFLA. My father has served multiple times as president of the NFLA. We understand both the history of the community and what is at stake with this study. Paving any part of the North Fork Road would expand development and stress wildlife in an area that is unique to the lower 48 United States. This opinion is not that of radical environmentalists but endorsed in numerous studies and statements by National Park Service, the Forrester Service, and US Fish and Wildlife. The damage that paving and the inevitable development that would follow from paving all or some of the North Fork road will irreversibly compromise the local ecology and trample the wishes and rights of the local community who have spent their lives and their incomes to keep the North Fork unique and wild. This members of the North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study all share a very heavy burden of responsibility for the ecological and human costs to a truly special place that the results of your study could potentially involve. It would be both a professional and a moral failure on the part of those who will conduct this study and publish its results if the values and rights of long-term, multi-generational residents of our unique community are not fully taken into account.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. Hart

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 8:27 PM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study- Comment by a Commercial Interest - DMoss 21 April 2010

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Due By: Thursday, April 29, 2010 4:00 PM
Flag Status: Flagged

To Lani:

We attended the April 20 meeting in Columbia Falls and would like to offer the following comments about the North Fork study:

Our bed and breakfast is located just north of the intersection of Blankenship Road and North Fork Road. We have owned and operated it for six years. As such, we stand to gain a significant economic advantage should North Fork Road be paved, both in property value and income. However, ours is a green inn that caters to eco-tourists visiting Glacier Park who stay with us specifically for our wilderness location. Our property is a certified wildlife habitat, and we receive an award from the State of Montana every year for our chemical-free, organic business, so we have more than just property value and our livelihood at stake; we care deeply about the pristine nature of the North Fork and are doing our part to help preserve it.

We have been hearing about the paving issue on and off for years and have never formed an opinion about it, mostly because we thought it would never happen, so we came to this meeting with an open mind. We left with the following thoughts:

We are very much against having the road paved, despite the obvious advantages to us, due to the detrimental impact it would have to the area's wildlife and the unique pristine nature of the North Fork drainage. Specifically, were the road to be paved, it would become a popular destination for the thousands of motorcyclists who "Ride the Road" every summer. These groups of bikes make a horrendous racket and the noise pollution from those bikes alone would be highly detrimental to wildlife. Add to that the increased auto traffic and the impact would be significant.

Also, Hunter is a volunteer fireman who is called on a regular basis to respond to medical emergencies in Polebridge and beyond, so we are well aware of the difficulties involved in driving the North Fork under many adverse conditions. Paving ten miles still leaves another 35 to travel. The people of Polebridge have elected to live in the wilderness for their own reasons, however one must assume a degree of personal responsibility for doing so. The citizens of Polebridge have never undertaken to form their own volunteer response unit that could respond in emergencies, as opposed to waiting over an hour for the Blankenship responders to make their way out there. Ten more miles of paving won't make any difference in the outcome of their fires and emergencies.

The only remaining issue we heard regarding paving the road was dust pollution. Given that North Fork Road is nothing but dirt, and millions of tons of dirt flow down the North Fork every spring, we cannot see what difference blowing dust makes to the river itself, and paving tar and storm run off would likely be worse in terms of pollution. Enforcing a speed limit would work just as well.

We would also like to see the speed limit reduced to 55 on the paved portion due to auto accidents and animal deaths, however we realize most of the paved road is not under consideration.

Hunter and Debi Moss
Moss Mountain Inn

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

Sent: Monday, April 26, 2010 6:51 AM
To: mdtntfteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. I am strongly opposed to paving the North Fork Flathead Road. The reason this area remains safe for wildlife and a wilder kind of experience than you will find elsewhere is that the road is gravel--that forces people to drive slowly and as a consequence fewer deer, elk, bears, and other animals are killed by car traffic. We have plenty of paved roads in and near Glacier National Park. Please keep this one unpaved.

When I go up to camp at Bowman or Kintla Lakes or to hike from those trailheads, the drive up there is part of the experience that I value. Going slow and enjoying what's around us is a rare opportunity. Even if you put in slow speed limit signs, once a road is paved it encourages people to speed. I also have to question if paving might negatively affect water quality since in the North Fork since you would be adding an impermeable surface where rains would wash across it and send oil, antifreeze, etc into the river.

Deborah Richie Oberbillig

Hello!

I am a resident on the North Fork Road. I have been there since 1979. I am not in favor of paving.

In my opinion, paving would be detrimental to the character of the North Fork. The North Fork is unique and precious because it is remote and hard to get to because of the road. The road makes me take fewer trips to town and it makes me drive 30 mph or less. Paving would bring increased traffic and faster traffic. I believe that paving the road would make it less safe and would endanger the wildlife that we cherish. I fell in love with the North Fork because it is beautiful, remote, and has a terrible road.

I am not opposed to dust mitigation or grating the road a few more times in the summer, but I am perfectly happy with the road like it is. It was in much worse shape the first time I drove it in 1979!

I appreciate the efforts of the County to listen to the sometimes cantankerous voices of North Forkers. I hope that you realize that not everyone wants paving even though those voices are usually the loudest on this issue.

Warm Regards,

Debo Powers

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 12:46 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Cc: John Frederick
Subject: Re. Highway 486 Study in Flathead County - DSchwennesen 29 April 2010

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Re. Highway 486 Study in Flathead County.

Dear Study Team:

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the corridor study of the North Fork Road (Forest Highway 61). At this time I cannot support any plan to pave all or part of the North Fork Road. While this study is likely warranted, and while there appears to be significant local pressure to conduct it, the outcome could cast a long shadow over the future of the North Fork Valley of the Flathead River.

As a retired journalist, I studied and reported on issues affecting the North Fork for nearly 30 years. As a Realtor today, I am mindful both of the development potential for lands bordering Glacier National Park and of the weak record in Flathead County for land-use planning and environmental stewardship.

The corridor study will undoubtedly encounter strong, well-organized pressure to pave all or parts of the North Fork Road. I am opposed because such "progress" is highly likely to unleash a cascade of events that will forever compromise the valley and its unique natural attributes.

Dust abatement seems to be the primary declared objective for road paving. While road dust is an inconvenience to motorists, there is no evidence that it causes significant impacts to water quality or to the environment more than a few meters from the roadway.

However, land speculation cannot be ignored as an unstated objective, since a paved road will enhance access and encourage more motorized travel, making the limited private land holdings in the North Fork Valley much more valuable. That in turn will spawn determined efforts to undermine local planning, create subdivisions and other developments, and generally promote increased human settlement. Flathead County commissioners have stated repeatedly that they consider land-use plans advisory only, and the reality is that they have rarely met a development they didn't like. Most recently they have agreed to pay millions in county taxpayer money to a developer whose project was denied because it was located in an area that could be legally flooded by Flathead Lake and was projected to over-commit the local sewer system. When the developer sued, the commissioners capitulated without any satisfactory explanation to the public.

A paved road can be expected to revive past efforts to continue the road development into the Canadian portion of the valley, with the goal of creating a loop road through the Akamina to Cameron Lake in Waterton National Park. That idea, most recently revived in the 1970s and 80s, would complete a paved circuit entirely around Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Such a loop road could be expected to draw millions of trips per year, probably approaching the scale of Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park (with which it would link). Such traffic would attract commercial development and promote even more dense recreational development on private lands, severing wildlife movement corridors, encroaching on the wildlands interface,

and permanently altering the ecology of the North Fork.

Finally, as this development scenario progresses, the government of British Columbia can be expected to note the easing of interest in protecting the natural attributes of the North Fork and Glacier environs. British Columbia then can be expected to re-evaluate the potential of the upper North Fork for open pit coal mining and coal-bed methane development. There would be no reason to deny such development in light of the changed perspective on the U.S. side.

All of this could easily transpire within the space of a decade or two, transforming the North Fork from a priceless enclave of natural diversity into another center of human recreational and industrial activity that would have profound effects on Waterton-Glacier and the entire region.

Before paving of the North Fork Road is even considered, the entire drainage should receive a federal designation ending all future subdivision and placing very firm limits on future development. Such action probably will still cause North Fork land values to soar, as values of national park inholdings have soared, but at least the valley resources could be protected if traffic were largely confined to the road and the rest of the drainage was managed as something close to a national park.

Thanks for your consideration. Please keep me advised as to your progress on this corridor study.

Don Schwennesen

Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 9:26 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Cc: crmcneil@mac.com
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Due By: Monday, April 26, 2010 4:00 PM
Flag Status: Flagged

At last evening's meeting, you listed stakeholders but did not include the North Fork Compact. We are definitely stakeholders and our organization has a seat on the North Fork Land Use Planning Committee which advises the County on zoning and other issues. Would you please list the North Fork Compact as a stakeholder. Please let me know if there is a problem with this.

Thanks very much for your help. Don Sullivan, Chairman the North Fork Compact

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Monday, April 26, 2010 8:46 AM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Please do not approve the paving of the North Fork Flathead corridor. The historic character of the area and protection of the wildlife is much more important than being able to drive faster through this beautiful spot.
Emily Harrington

April 23, 2010

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff:

We are writing in regards to Highway 486 (North Fork Road) Study in Flathead County. We support a gravel road.

We have owned property in the North Fork since 1979 and lived there full time for nearly a dozen years. This is a special corner of Montana that's unmatched in natural beauty, clean water and rare wildlife that belong to all of us. The wild, rugged nature of the North Fork is key to maintaining our unique Montana way of life. It's a piece of authentic Montana, important both to locals and to all America. The recent agreement between BC and Montana and the 2009 UNESCO visit highlight the importance of protecting the North Fork to the international community. Even considering a paving option violates the spirit, if not the letter, of the BC-Montana agreement.

This is a "Road to Nowhere." Flathead County has hundreds of miles of dusty gravel roads. We need to put our limited tax dollars for road maintenance/improvement where the most people live and drive. Paving the "Road to Nowhere" is a waste of taxpayer money.

Paving will increase speeds and make the road more dangerous for both people and wildlife. We support other options that will improve safety and reduce dust such as reducing the width of the current gravel road and adding curves to slow down traffic.

There is little to gain by paving the road but lots to lose: millions in costs, increased development, and loss of habitat for grizzlies, wolves, wolverines, lynx and other threatened and endangered animals.

We urge you to look at options other than paving.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Vitale and Ellen Horowitz

Greetings:

If I am unable to attend the public meeting in Columbia Falls, I wanted to make sure my comments were documented for the study. I am in FAVOR of paving the North Fork Road. Residents in the area know the dust and poor road conditions that continue to plague this corridor. Sadly it disturbs me how much would have to be spent on an environmental study to allow this project to move forward. With many areas in MT, where do we see the wildlife, in town or close to roads. Last week when I traveled the North Fork, we finally saw deer near the homes, not in the remote areas. And we saw a fox, around a fence near a home. So realistically the environmental aspects, while necessary, are highly overrated and often exaturated. Once again for the safety of all who travel that road, I would FAVOR paving the road.

Respectfully
E. Scott Miller

Dear Sirs,

I support all the comments AGAINST paving the North Fork Road. Having lived in Montana since 1969 and having worked in Missoula County government, I have observed that paving is vital in urban areas both for security and functional needs. I know that paving the road will change the character and value of the North Fork area. That area is valued because it is somewhat remote and offers opportunities to maintain the pure river quality, the wild life, that is, it's wilderness value. It is not valued for fast food outlets, convenience stores, drive-in banks or even schools. When we have church services, we hold them in the Community Hall or in a cabin. The North Fork area is almost as precious as the Galapagos or the Australian out back. It has been defiled enough already.

Sincerely,

Fern Hart
Missoula and Polebridge

MDOT,

Please reconsider paving the road to Polebridge. The remoteness of Polebridge and the difficult access are part of what make it a special place. People move to the North Fork to get away from the throngs of people that inhabit the Whitefish/Kalispell area and paving the road would just turn polebridge into a half hour drive away. I spent my first summer in Montana living in the Ford Cabin in Glacier about 8 miles north of Polebridge. One of the most appealing parts of that part of Glacier was that I could spend 9 days on the trails and only see a handful of people, as opposed to Many Glacier where it can be tough to find a parking space.

I can think of nothing positive that would come from this.

Thanks for your time,

Grant Alban
Missoula, Montana

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Monday, April 19, 2010 2:26 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study - GPuckett 10April 2010

Comments regarding the North Fork Road from the end of pavement to the "paved" Camas Road entrance to Glacier National Park

The "big picture" regarding the North Fork Road is really quite simple. A minority of people have successfully used unfounded threats to wildlife and the environment as justification to not remedy the significant environmental health, human health and safety problems caused by the North Fork Road. The efforts by these people have been nothing more than attempts to keep the general public out of the North Fork while many of them continue to maintain their own homes there. The grizzly and wolf populations are doing fine so those arguments that were used years ago are baseless. It is likely some of these same people will again conjure up new baseless threats to wildlife. Let's not let these arguments take hold. Much of the push against paving has been targeted to prevent development but there has long been zoning in place to restrict the number of homes that can be constructed in the North Fork. The minimum cut size of a parcel of property in the North Fork is twenty acres, and with no utility electric anywhere in the North Fork and telephone service only in a small part of it, there is no chance of over development. The results of this approach used to prevent access has actually evolved the North Fork Road as a well known attraction. Some people like to think they are taking a driving trip into the wilderness, which of course, it is not. Do a little searching on the Internet and you will find a trip to the North Fork, Polebridge, Bowman and Kintla Lakes has become an attraction in and of itself. The result is this protectionist approach using a gravel road as a barrier has backfired on the environment. As unfettered vehicle traffic continues to expand into the North Fork it magnifies the dust pollution and safety problems associated with traveling a road that is nothing more than a hard packed gravel pit. All types of vehicles barrel up the road spewing dust, some pulling rigs such as those pulling river floats, that spew even more. Much of this dust ends up in the river. Much of it ends up in Glacier Park. A ton of it creates severe driving hazards, health risks and an awful gritty negative experience for travelers of the road. Like it or not the only feasible solution to the ever expanding environmental damage from the road is to pave it. Caving to the knee-jerk protectionist approach is costing the North Fork environmentally and has done nothing but attract more visitors. As the awareness of the North Fork continues to heighten, more people show up driving the gravel pit road and more dust is spewed. It is nothing but a vicious cycle where the issue amplifies. Paving to the Camas Road entrance to the park is a "no brainer" on many fronts. It resolves the pollution issues on the section of the road most heavily traveled. With guard rails added it will make the road safer. It distributes entry to Glacier Park through Columbia Falls saving on the bottleneck in West Glacier. The park may have to begin manning an entrance station at the Camas entrance but they should be doing that anyway since so many people sneak into the park through that entrance without paying an entrance fee. At the moment the Camas Road ends at a rubble road where park visitors have no idea what conditions they are driving into should they continue up or down the North Fork Road. Should the park tear up the Camas Road and revegetate it? Of course not. The wildlife is doing great in the park with all of its paved roads. That's a testament to the fact that paving the North Fork Road will not harm the environment or the wildlife. It will improve it. Not paving this section of the road is squandering economic opportunities for the areas outside of the west side of the park. Glacier Park is the largest economic driving factor in Northwest Montana. Not using it wisely on all fronts, including driving more economic benefits, is a mistake. Paving this section of the road improves the visitor experience. It provides an opportunity for Columbia Falls to position itself as a true gateway to Glacier Park. It protects water quality. It resolves a long-standing community issue

in the North Fork. Any of us who drive this road to visit the North Fork are offenders contributing to the dust pollution. Some of us want to solve it with a realistic long term solution that improves the environment. If a gravel pit existed in the North Fork causing this level of dust emissions there would be serious and legitimate outcry for a remedy. Paving is the environmental and community friendly solution for a road that is in serious violation of clean air standards.

Greg Puckett
North Fork Landowner
Polebridge, Montana

Sirs:

Would you please use the \$125,000 that will be spent on yet another NF Road study to improve the road instead. With less than that amount last year, significant improvements were made north of Camas. We North Forkers are grateful that steps were taken to improve the road.

The road should not be paved for the following reasons:

A paved road permits higher driving speeds which endangers people and animals. People already drive over 50 mph; imagine what the speeds would be if it is paved!

The dust from the road has been around for 100 years. The Bull Trout did not become an endangered species because of too much dust. Even excessive runoff from clear cuts didn't do it. The Bull Trout became endangered because people were greedy. They floated the river as often as 3 times/day, catching and keeping the trout. Bull trout were over fished.

Environmentally toxic chemicals may or may not run into the river from a paved road, but why take the chance? Dust, at least, is a natural ingredient of our world.

The main street of Columbia Falls discourages shopping. Having more people drive through it will not make a difference. The buildings are old, dirty and uninviting. Some are empty. Why should the rest of us pay to pave the road when CF hasn't done anything except install an anatomically defective moose and a silly "falls" to spruce up the town? (The proposed arch won't solve the problem either.)

Finally, and most importantly, with over 700 miles of unpaved roads in Flathead County, paving the North Fork Road with taxpayers' money will, and should, outrage the rest of the county.

Sincerely,

Gerry Stearns

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Sunday, April 18, 2010 6:54 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Attachments: NF_Road_Report-Donahue.pdf

For the Corridor Planning Study of Highway 486 in Flathead County:

The North Fork Preservation Association believes that Flathead County Highway 486 should not be paved any further. Many other improvements are generally welcome.

A literature survey (attached) by Shannon Donahue, formerly of the University of Montana, gives many of the reasons for not paving the North Fork Road. Please include this email and attachment as part of the written testimony.

Letter to follow.

Sincerely,

John Frederick, president
North Fork Preservation Association, Inc.

A Review of the Direct and Indirect Effects of Paving Flathead County Road 486 by Shannon Donahue of the University of Montana is part of the working file, but not included in this appendix.

To whom it may concern:

I wish to add my voice to those who do not want the North Fork Road changed. In particular, I believe paving the road (or any part of it) would have serious negative consequences. Wildlife would be far more vulnerable to more traffic and faster-moving vehicles, so we would see many more animal deaths. The beauty of that area west of Glacier Park is inextricably tied to its primitive, remote nature. I have spent time in the area over many years, on the lakes, floating the river, and hiking, and it would be irrevocably changed for the worse by opening it up to more visitors and development. Please leave the road as it is, keeping it rough, slow, and primitive.

Thank you,
Janet R. Allison

Sent: Tuesday, April 20, 2010 7:15 PM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Jerry Hanson

Thank you for the opportunity to submit input regarding the North Fork Road Corridor Study.

I've been traveling the North Fork Road for the past sixty or more years, and am always amazed that it is one of the last places in Montana to get the attention it needs. There are a number of reasons why I believe it should be paved, at a minimum, to the Camas Road.

- Glacier National Park is unique to the world, and is a tourism draw unparalleled in Montana. Yet we have a road that could serve to showcase a part of that unique beauty that is horrible to drive. I am embarrassed to think that this is the best Montana can offer its visitors in such close proximity to Glacier Park.
- The dust that coats the trees and shrubs on either side of the unpaved part of the road is precisely what the Clean Air act was intended to prevent. Yet we are decades from the passage of that act, and Montana still 'showcases' one of our natural treasures by masking it in a cloud of dust.
- We all complain about the heavy traffic through Glacier National Park on the Going-to-the-Sun Highway. Yet when the Park built Camas Road to offer visitors an alternative, we failed to complete the roads that were needed to permit them to enjoy that side of Glacier Park.
- Instead, we dump them onto the North Fork Road – substandard by any measure, whether you go north to Polebridge, or south to Columbia Falls.
- I am no scientist, but I do have a bit of common sense, and it's clear that the current condition of this road is detrimental to the ecosystem – water, vegetation, and wildlife. Where is the outrage from the environmental community regarding this disgrace?
- Lastly, I'll point out that it appears most of the opposition to paving the North Fork Road comes from a minority of folks who have a vested interest in their minute cosmos. The public, which owns 98% of the North Fork outside Glacier Park, and 100% of the North Fork inside Glacier Park, deserves to have reasonably safe access to the region, and the current road conditions do not offer that measure of safety. Some of the most beautiful parts of Glacier Park are accessible from the North Fork – if you can get there at risk of health and safety.

Paving of Highway 486 from Canyon Creek to the Camas Road should be a no-brainer when measured by every conceivable criterion. And the paving should be completed as rapidly as possible. There is no excuse for delaying any longer what should have been done decades ago.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerry Hanson |

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

From: jerry nicholls |
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 3:07 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: Sierra Club Comments on the North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study - JNicholls 30 April 2010

To: MDOT North Fork team; Sheila Ludlow, Shane Stack, Doug Moeller and Lani Eggertsen-Goff (PB Americas).

Subject: S.C. Comments on the North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

The Executive Committee of the Montana Chapter - Sierra Club, wishes to inform you at this earliest point in the NEPA/MEPA process that we are very concerned about the possibility of eventually paving the North Fork Flathead Road (Forest Highway 61). The entire corridor study area is within the Flathead National Forest and adjacent to Glacier National Park.

The portions that are currently graveled keeps vehicles limited to between 15-30 mph for the most part. Paving would likely increase driving speeds substantially, and thereby increase wildlife/vehicle collisions on the road. It would likely lead to more development in the area, and significantly affect the current remote feel of West Glacier. Increased traffic would also have other significant adverse impacts on wildlife such as habitat modification, alteration of existing wildlife use patterns, and an increase in potential for illegal poaching.

Please place our organization on your mailing list for this study and any future proposed actions.

Thank You,

Jerry Nicholls
ExComm Chair

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

Sent: Tuesday, April 20, 2010 10:04 PM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: Northfork Road comments

Hello Lani it was good to meet you at the meeting. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of our wonderful valley. I expressed some of this in comments at the meeting but thought that an email would help clarify what I was trying to say.

I am the mail carrier for the North Fork and Blankenship. I have also been a resident north of Polebridge for 15 years.

My concerns for the section of the North Fork road that is being considered at this time are thus: Health and Safety. My health as I travel the road everyday with the dust breathing it and the safety of driving in it. I pull up to a mail box and the dust rolls over my car and if there is a car coming they may not be able to see me on the side of the road. OK admittedly on the section of road you are dealing with the mail boxes are on the paved sections but the safety issue remains that if someone is pulled over to the side of the road and there are cars going by after the first one you can't see the car on the side of the road or any people who might be walking there either. Following anybody becomes an issue of I hope you know where the corners are. I do drive with my lights on, which helps about as much as if you were driving through really thick fog. You just hope to God the person coming towards you can see your lights and have theirs on, which rarely happens. I have almost ran into people because they had to stop for some reason and the dust was so thickly swirling around them as they stopped that I could not see their brake lights. These are just some of the safety issues I have seen with dust that and the cough I develop during the summer season.

While the dust is very bad and one of the most common issues discussed, so are the other conditions of the road very bad. Speaking directly to the section of road for this study the potholes and washboard are just as dangerous. I know that several people mentioned that people will speed more. Well coming from someone who is on the road as much as I am I can tell you that people already speed. Paving would make that speed safer. If there was say a 55 mph speed limit imposed and the cops were up there then it wouldn't be any more unsafe for everybody including animals than most other rural roads. And those of us who have a time limit to get a job done that requires us to drive that road could do it a little safer. Yes I am saying that since that is a section that I have fewer mailboxes I drive a little faster to make it to the areas that I do have more work. The potholes and washboard are very hard on vehicles of any kind. I have replaced my vehicle every two years for the last 8 years that I have been up there. Granted I drive an average 40K mile a year 80% on the North Fork road probably more than most others who travel that road. I spend an average of \$4000 on maintaining my vehicle a year almost all of that is on undercarriage work although some of it has been wire rubbing through because of all the bouncing. I am a bid contractor and am not paid by the hour or by how much money I have to put in to my vehicle.

My I would love solution is to have the whole North Fork paved. But since I know that is just a sweet dream I have while delivering the mail: I would say pave the section between Blankenship and Camas. Then maybe put up a toll booth to help pay for the maintenance on the rest of the road. Make it possible for the residents to buy a pass.

Thanks again for doing this study.

Karin Craver

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Tuesday, April 20, 2010 10:25 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study: Public Comment - KEdwards 20 April 2010

This letter is to express my support for road improvement efforts on the North Fork Road (S486) between the Blankenship turnoff and the Camas Creek road.

Since this segment of road was widened, straightened and graded, drivers have been inclined to travel at higher traffic speeds, kicking up voluminous dust clouds in their wake. Faster speeds combined with increasing use of the road, have resulted in a discernible increase in the amount of dust along the corridor, threatening air and water quality, fish habitat, and the scenic qualities of the area. These impacts are compounded by the safety hazard that dust causes when it compromises visibility along the road way.

While I am not in favor of significant change to S486 **above** the Camas Road, mitigating the dust pollution on the lower segment, while continuing to enforce reasonable speed limits on an improved road surface, makes sense. Additional improvement on this segment could counter the negative resource impacts currently occurring along the corridor and would facilitate a circular travel route for Glacier National Park visitors, encouraging tourist traffic through Columbia Falls. Should paving be accomplished, I feel that enforcement of a speed limit, similar to the limits set in the park would be appropriate to reduce the potential for wildlife/vehicle collisions.

As a recreationist, north fork landowner and a natural resource manager, I support the development of a comprehensive, long-range plan for the roadway that will protect the area's natural resources and support public safety along the travel corridor.

Sincerely,
Kearstin Edwards

Sent: Monday, April 26, 2010 9:39 PM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Road study
Categories: Orange Category

Hello,
For many years I have followed the efforts to pave the North Fork Road and have repeatedly commented about how such an action would greatly impact the rural character of the west side of the Park, wildlife habitat, and wildlife corridors between the Whitefish Range and Glacier NP. The North Fork Road should remain primitive and paved to protect these valuable resources. Please keep me informed as this study progresses.
Kim Davitt

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 7:18 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Corridor - KHunt 29 April 2010

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

I am against paving the road. If you build it they will come, and in this case, that is not good. Plus the Northfork feels like a special place because it harder to get to. Don't turn it into "just another place".

Kate Hunt

Sent: Friday, April 16, 2010 10:56 AM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

I would like to express my support & personal interest in the improvement and the long term, proper continued management of the North Fork Flathead Road.

For me the most important consideration for any improvements and continued management of this travel corridor would be to provide a safe travel / road surface for the local tax payers & visitors that use this road. The various road surfaces, the various road widths, the apparent randomness with which the road is maintained all demonstrate that the State and local governments and partnering agencies are not providing a travel corridor that has the safety of the driving public in mind.

In addition to improved travel safety; better access to Glacier Park, Polebridge and the residences beyond is in the best interest of everyone that uses NFFR.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to express my opinion.

Kary McDonough

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Sunday, April 18, 2010 12:40 PM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team; MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Categories: Orange Category

Dear Sirs,

I wish to express my opinions regarding the status of S486. First of all, I would like to commend the Montana Department of Transportation for its decision to re-examine the issues and needs of this road. I am a property owner in the "North Fork" and I have been driving this road for the past 10 years on an almost daily basis each summer. Each and every time I need to drive into town, I feel that I am taking a tremendous risk to my life as I find myself suddenly blinded by huge dust clouds. Once engulfed in one of the dust clouds, I never know what is ahead of me nor how big or long the cloud is. I find myself, at times, needing to suddenly brake and stop always fearing being rear-ended by another vehicle following behind and not seeing me. I drive cross country on an annual basis and I must say, this is the worst and most dangerous road I have ever encountered. Additionally, I have noticed the vehicle traffic on this road getting progressively worse with each and every passing year. The fact that the road is gravel does not appear to slow down the speed of cars and only appears to contribute to the increase in the number of accidents, spin outs and breakdowns I have witnessed. When I arrive at my destination, the interior of my car, as well as myself, is covered with dust. How can this type of air pollution be beneficial to the poor helpless wildlife that is forced to endure these conditions. Additionally, I would like to note that I kayak down the river and I have noticed dust drifting and settling over the river during the summer. The river and air is being polluted from the road dust.

I feel that paving this section of the road up to the Camas Creek Bridge would greatly improve the pollution and make driving this section of S486 much safer for all; tourists, residents and wildlife.

Thank you,
Katherine Korda

Sent: Monday, April 26, 2010 6:48 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study - LGriffin 26 April 2010

I am opposed to paving S486 (Road to Polebridge/ West side of Glacier). Leave it wild and remote. Paving will only threaten the abundant wildlife that crosses this road. I have seen many beautiful animals safely cross the road in this area, because the primitive nature of the gravel by-way forces autos, mine included, to drive slowly, with eyes peeled for Nature's creatures.

Lynn Griffin |

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

From: Karen Reeves [kbr@cyberport.net]
Sent: Sunday, April 25, 2010 1:19 PM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Flathead Rd.

Though I was a full time resident of the North Fork for 12 years and have owned and enjoyed the property for 35 years I have always stood firmly on the NO to pavement side of the issue. You have heard and, no doubt, read a lot of the arguments. This is sure; paving will increase traffic and development in an area prized for its wild, scenic, and wildlife values. Yes, there is only a small amount of private land up the North Fork but it is critical habitat along the river and creeks. There has been an effort by the community in the past to develop a neighborhood plan and install zoning. There was overwhelming support for the process and outcome in the North Fork. There is, however, a real and powerful movement afoot to abolish the Growth Policy and castrate the Planning Office in Flathead County. Two thirds of this county remains unzoned. There is no sure way to mitigate the problems that paving would bring.

Last year the county re-graveled the North Fork Road north of the Camus Bridge and added bentonite clay to bind it. The results so far have been very good. The road surface survived Spring break-up with little damage. It is too early to tell if dust will abate. The best solution after that is for folks to slow down.

Please make sure my comments are part of the record. I would also appreciate a quick confirmation that you received this. Thank you, Karen Reeves

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 12:00 PM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Road Paving (#486)

Categories: Orange Category

I would like to register my comments against paving the North Fork Road. This is a pristine wilderness road along a Wild and Scenic River. The current 35 mile speed limit serves to decrease speed and reduce wildlife kills. There are very few residents in the North Fork and a paved road would serve to encourage more development. There are multiple roads in the Flathead Valley that serve residents and need paving, but the North Fork is not one of them. Please consider the fact that British Columbia and Montana just declared the North Fork to be a special wilderness area worthy of total protection. A paved road would be in direct conflict with the nature of the area.
Sincerely,
Linda Coolidge

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

Sent: Monday, April 26, 2010 11:46 AM
To: mdtntffrteam@mt.gov
Cc: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: Comments on the "Corridor Study of the North Fork Flathead Road"

These are comments on the "Corridor Study of the North Fork Flathead Road"

My husband and I live year round in the North Fork. We chose to live here for the simple, rural lifestyle and the outdoors. We are very happy to be living here; the land and the people are just great. We also have no complaints with the current state of the road. It is not a "big deal" to us at all. Personally, we do not consider the road dangerous, nor do we feel there is a safety issue ("safe" and "dangerous" being subjective terms in this case). We believe safe and dangerous to be a function of speed.

It is obvious, however, that others of our community feel that there is a problem and dust seems to be the main focus. Most folks seem to reduce the solution of this issue to: "pave or not to pave". We feel an alternative solution that would satisfy most of our neighbors' concerns would be the implementing of some type of dust mitigation. A dust palliative or product that isn't harmful to the environment or people would seem to satisfy almost all of the concerns voiced in the paper and in person at your first public meeting. There are many products and options available (i.e. magnesium chloride, short term; Enviroclean, short term; Ottoseal, lasts many years; etc.). This is where I would hope the engineers involved with this study could come up with some options.

We do have two main concerns with any change to the proposed section of road: speed and change from a rural setting.

Speed

You can find out how many people went over the 35 MPH speed limit on the gravel portion of the road if you talk with the "dust deputy". It is easy to go 50 MPH or more when the gravel road is graded. On the paved section of the study area the speed limit is 70 MPH. This is anything but a rural road. The Camas road in the park is paved and the speed limit is 45. Most locals drive the speed limit there because it is strictly enforced. That will not be the case on the North Fork road. If the surface is smooth, there is a tendency to drive fast (especially if enforcement is intermittent). Folks run and mountain bike on the road and do not want vehicles passing at such high speeds. Nor is it safe for users of the federal lands to pull off and onto the North Fork road when cars are going that fast. Speed can also increase conflict with animals.

To help keep speed down, one suggestion would be to narrow the road. The county talked about doing this in an effort to save money. There was also a suggestion to maintain a bike/hike trail along the roadbed since the current road bed in the study area is extremely wide. Again dust would need to be mitigated for all users to enjoy the trip.

Change in rural setting

At the first public meeting, increased tourism due to paving came up as a benefit, but I question if increased people is indeed a benefit. What will the effects be on wildlife and the rural nature and lifestyle? More fragmentation will occur as more people use the area. When people talk about increasing money, economy and jobs, it is a legitimate concern for both "sides". But do you potentially jeopardize the North Fork, the last remaining area in the lower 48 of it's type, for these benefits? This is a difficult decision, because any permanent change will forever alter it. The very reasons people come to visit or to live here could be at risk if the right choices aren't implemented. Sometimes, convenience may need to be sacrificed.

We feel you can satisfy these tourism and business concerns without a permanent change to the road such as paving. Again dust mitigation seems to be a goal that could satisfy this. It appears there are

possible funding sources available, such as applying for WFLHD, Western Federal Lands Highway Division, money. In addition, last year, the county received a PILT payment of 2.1 million dollars. 35% of this payment was based on those acres of Glacier National Park that fall within Flathead county, all of which are in the North Fork drainage. The Forest Service has also paid into PILT and into the Secure Rural School and Community Self Determination Act. PILT money is based on the amount of federal acres within Flathead county. With all of the park service acres located within the North Fork and with a good portion of the forest service acres based in the North Fork possibly some of those dollars could be spent on the North Fork road. Combining PILT and the Secure Rural Schools and Self Determination Act funds, the county received close to 3.5 million dollars last year through these funds. Realizing the inherent value of this special area, perhaps various federal agency officials could somehow work out a funding source for an annual application of some kind of dust palliative.

If you look at our Neighborhood Plan which was recently completed to help regulate (not prohibit) long range growth in the area, you will see what the potential for development is in the North Fork. There is currently a lot of land that could still be subdivided and/or developed. Growth is inevitable but how do we manage it so it doesn't change the very place we value for its rustic character? I also believe by implementing a dust abatement treatment, the County and State would be demonstrating "support" for the current MOU with respect to the Canadian North Fork.

In summary, for dust abatement:

Advantages

- Lessens dust
- Lower speeds (if road is designed correctly)
- Retains rural nature of area
- Less likelihood of wildlife/vehicular collision
- Support of Columbia Falls tourism/business advocates
- Is in keeping with Park's philosophy of North Fork Region
- Meets most concerns and issues voiced by the public
- Many dust palliatives would satisfy environmental (fisheries etc.) and health concerns
- Demonstrates support of the MOU

Disadvantages

- Funding may be an issue (need to look at PILT funding, Secure Rural Schools and Self Determination Act and WFHLD sources)
- Not a "one time" fix like paving (though some treatments do not need to be reapplied every year)
- County most likely retains responsibility for maintenance
- Like any improvement, encourages more usage (tourism) and perhaps development

We think that the advantages certainly outweigh the disadvantages.

Thank you for taking our comments.

Margaret and Mark Heaphy

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

Sent: Saturday, April 24, 2010 10:08 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Cc: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Please receive and enter these bullet points for your consideration:

- 1) This section of the North Fork Road should be paved:
 - (A) For human safety and health reasons
 - (B) Due to only approximately 3-4% of the property in the entire North Fork Area being privately owned, along with zoning and due to the soil conditions that don't allow septic tanks in many locations (and small ones at that), this area will not become over developed due to paving this section of the road.
 - (C) When we need the Camas Road the most, it is closed.
 - (D) For environmental reasons
 - (E) Our area now depends a lot on the tourist trade and I feel this will become even more important to our general area and thus we need to make Glacier even more useful and easy to reach.
 - (F) According to some road engineers, this section of the road is now in a more desirable condition for paving due to the extra gravel and grading that has been done. In other words, it will cost less to pave now due to less preparation that will be needed as compared to several years ago.
- 2) A speed limit of forty five (45) miles an hour should be placed on this section. It works very well on the Blue Ridge Parkway on the East Coast and will work equally as well here. Once a few speeding tickets are handed out, the word will get around and will result in safe driving habits.

Let's move on and pave this section of the road as the positives far outweigh the few negatives. MB 4-24-10

Sent: Monday, April 19, 2010 11:45 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: north fork rd.

The fact that the North Fork Rd. is not paved has no doubt saved the area from population and kept both the land and animals in tact. I am very much opposed to paving the road. Maintaining Montana's beauty depends on it.

Mollie Kieran

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Sunday, April 18, 2010 6:57 PM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Categories: Orange Category

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my concerns about the condition of the North Fork Road that's involved in your Highway 486 Study in Flathead County. I first moved 10 miles north of Polebridge in 1975 and have lived in or visited our home adjacent to Glacier Park every year since that time. When we moved to the North Fork in 1975 the quality of the road was an issue, but it was an issue we could deal with. I never saw it as a safety hazard. In the past 20 years or so it has gotten close to unbearable. Countless times we have been traveling at slow speeds due to poor visibility caused by dust; and have almost been involved in head on accidents with other drivers who are also trying to maneuver the dangerous road conditions. It used to be that the dust was a "nuisance." It has now become a dangerous hazard. We used to be able to walk or bike along this section of the road and would come home a bit dusty, but it wasn't anything we couldn't live with. Tiny clouds of dissipating dust have turned into mushroom clouds (often many kilometers in length) of thick toxic dust due to increased traffic. Now the amount of dust is so out of control that the fear of damaging our respiratory system has caused us to discontinue our walking/biking anywhere close to the road's edge. Having stopped along side the road and headed to the bushes on several occasions it is quite apparent that the dust is coating the flora and fauna more than 20 feet on each side of the road easement. When looking down on the highway from above it is apparent that the air quality has to be causing damage to the environment as the clouds of dust billow into the skies and drift along with the winds. Something must be done to correct this situation. Choosing to do nothing in the hopes that people won't use the road is archaic thinking and is going to result not only in hazardous air quality for people and wildlife alike, but is going to lead to dangerous accidents. I'm not sure what the best solution is, but it needs to be fixed. Whether the road is paved or surfaced in some other way is fine with me as long as the road becomes safe and no longer contributes to the poor air quality of recent years. Please make a decision that is in the best interest of those who are affected by road conditions on a daily basis. Thank you.

Melissa Cloud
Landowner, Polebridge, MT

Sent: Wednesday, April 21, 2010 8:09 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: Additional Thought Question

Since Mr. Brian Peck spoke at the initial meeting....a question...."Since the local environmentalists love the animals more so than the people, are you willing to do all this work in establishing all this input, to have it shot down by the 19 environmental groups suing to never fix the North Fork Road...?" Mike Shepard City Councilman Col Falls

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Sunday, April 18, 2010 3:37 PM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Road Corridor Study

Categories: Orange Category

We understand you are seeking public comment for your upcoming meeting on April 20th regarding the North Fork Road Corridor Study, and we would appreciate having this email serve as our comments.

We reside full-time approximately 13 miles north of Polebridge. We make the nearly 100-mile round trip drive on the North Fork Road from our home to Columbia Falls an average of once a week.

We are supportive of any efforts to seek feasible, economically-viable ways to improve and maintain not only the 13.2 mile stretch of road that your study is concentrating on, but the entire paved and unpaved sections of the North Fork Road. However, we do not want to see the rural, rustic, remote character of the North Fork area changed by the increase in traffic and driving speeds which any further paving of the road will undoubtedly bring. One of the reasons we moved to the North Fork 13 years ago was because of the unpaved road and the lifestyle it affords.

There already exists a paved alternative from Columbia Falls to Camas Creek Road. Anyone wishing to avoid the bumps and dust on that section of the North Fork Road in the summer months, can use the Camas Creek Road through the Park. This route is a little longer mileage-wise, but takes about the same amount of time to drive, due to increased legal traffic speeds on the pavement.

Rather than pursuing options to pave a section of road that already has a paved alternate route, we would urge you to concentrate your efforts on coming up with a plan for an improved re-gravelled road all the way to the border, as the road north of Polebridge has been severely neglected over the years.

Thank you for allowing us to provide our input on this matter.

Sincerely,

Jon and Pat Cole

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 9:45 AM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Road

Categories: Orange Category

Sirs:

In spite of the push by developers and commercially motivated boomers the North Fork Road should not see any further paving than it already has.

We don't need a blacktop highway through some of the wildest country yet left in Montana. The gravel keeps speeds down to safe levels for grizzly and other wildlife and discourages those who would drive in at ordinary highway speeds, increasing unwanted traffic, real air pollution as opposed to large particle dust, and jeopardizing the abundant and in many cases endangered resident species.

Keep this expensive, unproductive and destructive notion off the table where it belongs. No further paving of the North Fork Road.

Paul Edwards
property owner in Polebridge

From: Rayna Eyster
To: mdtntffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road Paving- NO WAY
Sent: Apr 29, 2010 11:00 AM

Those of us who live there [in the N. Fork] some, or most of the year, and care about the remote, wild nature of this undeveloped gem, understand paving the road would directly lead to development and commercialization of all kinds. What a conflict of interest- "a cut off your nose despite your face" mentality. NO THANK YOU to paving!

Sincerely,
Erryl Eyster

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Moeller, Doug
Sent: Monday, April 19, 2010 8:11 AM
To: 'pj franchini'
Cc: Ludlow, Sheila; Stack, Shane
Subject: RE: north fork road study

Categories: Orange Category

PJ, thanks for your comments about the North Fork Corridor Study. As we move forward with this process, your comments will be included.

Thanks,

Doug Moeller
Missoula District Administrator

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Saturday, April 17, 2010 11:21 PM
To: Moeller, Doug
Subject: north fork road study

dear mr. moeller,

i have been a resident of the north fork for the past nine years. i go to school and work in the valley which means i travel the north fork road on a regular basis twice/week throughout the year. i live fifty five miles from columbia falls which means that most of my commute is on the dusty, seldom maintained gravel road. while some winters have been treacherous due to the amount of snow and lack of attention to the north fork road north of polebridge, i welcome the snow as it fills in the washboard, potholes and dust. yes, it's difficult to believe that one would prefer ice and snow to the summertime dust, but it's true. summer brings many tourists that are ignorant of what they will be dealing with or those who prefer to endure the road because of the beauty and outdoor activities the north fork provides. more people on the road in the summer equals more dust!

i have had my share of mishaps and have been stuck on the road on at least three occasions. the real danger occurs during the summer months when i have had to completely STOP my vehicle in the road due to lack of visibility due to the dust occurring from the vehicle in front of me.

there are those residents who prefer to leave the north fork road as it is thinking it will deter tourists and other folks from the valley from visiting the north fork. polebridge has an entrance in to glacier national park! why should anyone be deterred from a sight such as that? a ridiculous argument in my opinion. those same folks also think that a paved road will encourage folks to drive faster increasing the likelihood of killing wildlife or increasing accidents on the road. another ridiculous argument.

the study that was performed has already explicitly stated the dangers of the dust from the road to people, wildlife, vegetation and the river. what else is there to argue?

my position in this matter is for the State Of Montana and Flathead County to bring road #486 into compliance with the Montana Clean Air Act to improve human health and safety.

thank you for your attention to this matter.

sincerely,

pj franchini

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 8:22 AM
To: mdtntffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road – Rkenyon 28 April 2010

To Whom It May Concern,

As a long time landowner and part-time resident of the North Fork, I would like to formally oppose any consideration of paving the North Fork road. The reasons have been stated over and over the past 25 years, and they have not changed. Simply put, paving the road, even from the end of the pavement to Camas, will increase travel speed endangering health and safety, and promote development where services are essentially unavailable. And in light of hundreds of miles of unpaved county roads in the midst of high density development, it just doesn't make sense.

Sincerely,

Randy Kenyon

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 10:22 AM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Road

Dear Folks:

While I don't live in Polbridge, I've spent part of every summer there for the past 25 years. Because I also am an ICU attending at the UW Harborview Medical Center, I also understand pulmonary physiology well.

The North Fork is surely one of the last wild corners of the country. Paving the road will solve no one's breathing problems, but it will produce many new and unanticipated troubles in what is simply a glorious natural region. Those few who argue in favor of paving do so entirely for matters of their own convenience. This is selfish, promotes mischief, and is not necessary for any reason.

Please don't do it.

Sincerely,

Richard Rapport, MD
Clinical Professor
Department of Neurological Surgery
University of Washington School of Medicine

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 7:46 PM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Cc: Marylane Pannell
Subject: North Fork Road Comment - RKuhl 28 April 2010

At the April 20th meeting on the North Fork Road, opinions ranged from keeping it like it is to protect the remote, natural features of the area to paving the road so we create the equivalent of the Blue Ridge Parkway and get rich from all the tourists. Listening to the testimony it was clear that a consensus about the future of the entire North Fork drainage needs to be reached before any agreement about the condition of the road can be decided. This also means we should not be doing anything which will disturb the recent agreement with British Columbia.

Improvement proponents cannot have it both ways. If improved to provide for easier travel in order to attract more tourists there will be unintended impacts to the drainage as a whole. Added to these impacts will be the likelihood of more impacts from subdivisions and commercial development. The unique atmosphere will surely change. I suspect even some of the road improvement advocates will soon be mourning for the "good old days". It also needs to be determined if the increased human traffic and development will increase harmful environmental impacts greater than the current ones supposedly being caused by dust. In fact, are there any indications that the dust is more than a nuisance?

Any meaningful improvements to the road which could change the character of the North Fork will require an expensive EIS. Why are we spending so much money and time on the North Fork Road when there are miles and miles of similar dirt roads in the Flathead which everyone agrees should be paved? Why do newcomers buy land in the North Fork if they are troubled by the road? The total annual property tax from the North Fork probably does not cover the \$125,000 cost of this study alone. Given the tight budget facing Montana in the next few years how can it be justified to spend huge amounts of dollars just to study the road not even counting the millions it would take to pave it. A realistic economic analysis needs to be done which compares the potential costs of this project with road projects elsewhere in Flathead County which have unified public support. The City Council of Columbia Falls wants to pave the road in the hopes of increased tourist traffic. Would their possible gain be offset by comparable losses to the Canyon businesses which benefit from the present tourist flow on route 2?

I could keep listing more points of concern but most of them have already been recorded. The important thing to remember is that the condition of the North Fork Road is hugely responsible for maintaining the special quality of the North Fork. Changing the road will change the North Fork. Road dollars would be better spent elsewhere.

Please add these comments to the North Fork file.

Thank You,

Richard Kuhl

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Sunday, April 18, 2010 4:28 PM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team; jdupont@flathead.mt.gov; jbrenneman@flathead.mt.gov; dlauman@flathead.mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Attachments: Analysis of NFRCHS dust study.wps
Categories: Orange Category

Sirs:

I will be unable to attend the meeting regarding improvements on the North Fork Road (Montana 486) on April 20 in Columbia Falls.

However, since the subject of road dust and its alleged ill effects will no doubt be raised at the meeting, I would like to pass along to you my analysis of the dust study commissioned by the North Fork Road Coalition for Health and Safety in 2007. (See attachment.) I hoped you find the analysis helpful.

Thank you.
Richard E. Wackrow
Polebridge

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 10:46 AM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North Fork Road comments
Categories: Orange Category

Analysis of the 2007 "North Fork Road Ambient Particle Matter Research Study"-Tony Ward PHD-University of Montana's Missoula Center for Environmental Health Science, by Richard Wackrow is part of the working file, but not included in this appendix.

Sirs:

Thank you for holding the informational meeting regarding the North Fork Road (Montana 486) in Columbia Falls April 20. I hope you gathered some useful information from North Forkers.

I oppose paving of the North Fork Road for the following reasons:

- The harmful effects of increased traffic and development on endangered and threatened species on the North Fork (bull trout, grizzly bear, Canadian lynx)
- North Forkers should not sacrifice the serenity and wild nature of our area by paving the road to accommodate the desires of Columbia Falls businesses.
- Finally (and despite what you may have heard from proponents of paving) any negative effects of a gravel road to wildlife and Glacier National Park would be negligible compared to the consequences of increased traffic and the paving process itself.

For reports posted by the North Fork Landowners' Association Road Committee, go to the Home and North Fork Road pages of the NFLA Web site, www.NFLandowners.com.

Thank you.

Richard E. Wackrow
Polebridge

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 8:36 AM
To: MDT NFFR Project Team
Subject: North fork road

Categories: Orange Category

Lani Eggerts-Goff
Parsons Brinkerhoff
488 E Winchester St Ste # 400 Murray, Utah 84107

Please accept these comments on the North Fork Road draft that is being planned by MDOT.

The North Fork area will only suffer from paving the North Fork Road. It will increase traffic, harm wildlife, increase use and change the North Fork area in only negative ways.

People have for many years successfully stopped the paving of this unique road for many reasons. It is important to maintain the present character of this area that is adjacent to Glacier National Park. Please maintain the present road condition. Paving the road will increase traffic speed and does the state or county want to take on the costs to maintain a new paved road? Pot holes will become a bigger problem. Please leave this road in the present unpaved condition. I use this area often.

Thanks
Stephen Braun

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2010 12:03 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: north fork flathead river road comment - AKoelle 28 April 2010

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

dear committee:

I am writing to submit comment that i am against paving or otherwise "improving" this road in west glacier. by making vehicle access to the North Fork and to the northwest part of glacier easier, the remoteness, wildlife habitat, and wilderness values would be compromised.

Please leave this road unimproved.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Koelle

Kirkendall, Amanda

Sent: Tuesday, April 27, 2010 5:33 PM
To: mdtntffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road Glacier Park - TKilmer 27 April 2010

Please accept these comments for the record regarding your ill advised proposal to pave the North Fork Road. No. No. No. Please do not pave this road. Doing so would change a nice slow traffic road into a high speed corridor. Wildlife that cross this road would be in peril.

Many many more of them would be whacked by cars. Migration movement of wildlife would be adversely effected.

The evils of subdivisions and development would sprawl along the private lands near this road.

Can't you people just leave things alone? There is NOTHING wrong with having a dirt road.

Please keep me posted on this project.

Tom Kilmer

Sent: Tuesday, April 20, 2010 11:00 AM
To: mdtntffrteam@mt.gov
Cc: larchtreenorth@yahoo.com
Subject: Nork Fork Road: 'Blankenship' to Camas Entrance to GNP - T & V Sluiter 20 April 2010

Our thoughts are **PAVE IT** for the very reasons of which Robert Grimaldi wrote in his letter that appeared in the Hungry Horse News, April 15, 2010.

- it is the only unpaved state highway in the nation leading to a national park
- paving eliminates the dust, the pollution into the North Fork River, and the health hazard to people and wildlife
- it is a state highway, turn the road over the to state (which it already is a state highway) and let the state be responsible for maintenance, eliminating the county that expense

Year-round residents,

Thomas and Virginia Sluiter

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

From: Will Hammerquist
Sent: Friday, April 23, 2010 7:27 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: Stakeholder Participation Request for North Fork Road Corridor Study
Attachments: LuxReport.pdf

The North Fork Road: Possible Maintenance Alternatives and Landowner Opinions, by Colleen Lux of the University of Montana is part of the working file, but not included in this appendix.

Dear Lani & NF Corridor Study Team-

Thank you for the informative and well-run meeting earlier this week re. the NF Road Corridor Study. I am writing this email for several purposes. The first is to request that MDT and the project team include the non-profit National Parks Conservation Association as a formal stakeholder in the corridor study process.

Founded in 1919, NPCA's mission is to protect and enhance America's National Parks for present and future generations. Our membership includes over 340,000 Americans and we have a long history of being very engaged in transportation projects that have the potential to affect the recreational and/or environmental values of national parks. Several examples include; our participation as a stakeholder member of the Going to the Sun Road Citizens Advisory Committee and ongoing advocacy for its designation as a high priority project by MT's Congressional Delegation, our work on the Pathways Project in Grand Teton, and a long involvement in the North Shore Road project in the Great Smokey Mountains. As NPCA's Glacier Program Manager, I live in the Flathead Valley and have solid relationships in the tourism and conservation communities. I appreciate your consideration of this request. I also note that while NPCA's participation as a non-profit stakeholder will provide valuable public representation in this process, it is not a substitute for additional NGO participation specializing in wildlife conservation biology; and we believe there is a compelling need for this process to substantively engage non-governmental wildlife conservation biologists as formal stakeholders.

The second reason I am writing is to provide some very initial feedback on the scope of the corridor assessment and a few of the comments made in the meeting.

1) Attached are the results of a very comprehensive public opinion survey completed by Colleen Lux with the University of Montana. This is the only existing piece of statistically valid public opinion data re. landowner values on road options. Due to the fact that the limited budget of the corridor study prevents MDt or the consulting engineers from completing any new, statistically valid public opinion research re. the landowner values, careful review and inclusion of this reports findings would appear to be both practical and provide for an improved outcome document.

2) There is a need for the corridor study process to provide members of the public who have already determined a pro-paving alternative as their personal preference with clear factual data regarding both the best available science regarding the current environmental impacts of the road and potential transportation impacts of a pro-paving alternative. To my knowledge, there is no scientific measurement or quantification of the air and water quality impacts to Glacier National Park from PM-10 in the corridor study area. For folks to represent these impacts as real and adverse is pure conjecture at this point, and potentially interferes with study outcomes that clear fact-based as intended by SAFE-TEA LU.

Finally, under what SAFE-TEALU planning regulations is the corridor study being completed? I.e. 23 CFR Sections 450.212 (Statewide), 23 CFR Sections 450.318, or another authority?

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. Please feel to contact me.

Sincerely,

Will |

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Web Comment or Suggestion
Submitted: 04/18/2010 19:21:58
Name: Bill Breen

Comment or Question:

With all the much more heavily travelled unpaved roads in Flathead County it is absolutely ridiculous to consider paving the north fork road at this time. Please table this proposal until these other roads are paved.Thanks

Bill Breen

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/18/2010 19:32:58
Project Commenting On: North Fork Flathead
Nearest Town/City to Project:Polebridge
Name: D. L. Blank

Comment or Question:

Dear MDOT,
The valley of the North Fork of the Flathead River is of international significance for its biology, water quality, peace, quiet, recreation and slow pace of life. Making traffic flow more smoothly and faster would bring more people, along with their machines, houses, wildlife-eating pets, and weeds. These things would destroy what makes the North Fork special. Please save your limited budget for places where road maintenance would be helpful, not destructive.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/20/2010 08:19:23
Project Commenting On: North Fork Road Paving
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls
Project Milepost: From Canyon Creek to Camas Creek Bridge
Name: David Marx

Comment or Question:

Please leave the North Fork road unpaved. Increased traffic along this route threatens the "wild and remote" character of life in the North Fork. An improved road will lead to more traffic which is a direct threat to endangered animals like Grizzly Bears. Improving the road is also a threat to the whole ecosystem since it will make it easier to build new developments.

There are plenty of other areas within Flathead County that are a better use for pavement dollars. Instead of the North Fork road may I ask for pavement along the Blankenship Bridge road from Lake Five to the North Fork.

Thank you for considering my comments.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/19/2010 09:21:06
Project Commenting On: North Fork of the Flathead River valley
Nearest Town/City to Project:columbia Falls
Project Milepost: to Camas Bridge
Name: Dan and Jeanne Olson

Comment or Question:

We would urge you NOT to consider paving the section of the North Fork Road from the end of the current paving to the Camas Bridge. A paved road would lead to much more development in that area, which would harm the river, the wildlife, water quality, the isolation of the area etc. The North Fork is a unique area, and should be protected.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/20/2010 17:20:50
Project Commenting On: Paving of the North Fork Flathead road
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls
Name: Edwin Fields

Comment or Question:

I can not believe that MDOT is proposing again to pave the North Fork road. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has not changed its opinion that paving would harm Grizzly Bears. Paving would fly in the face of ongoing negotiations with British Columbia to protect the North Fork river. Opposition to paving has been the same for decades yet you keep bringing it up. Why don't you use the money wisely and pave roads in the populated valley that need it so badly.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/20/2010 06:58:01
Project Commenting On: Proposal to pave North Fork Rd from Columbia Falls to Camas
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls
Name: Emily Murphree

Comment or Question:

Paving the North Fork Road is contrary to the efforts of keeping the North Fork Corridor off limits from major development. If the road is paved, we will be encouraging more people to drive the road and at higher speeds. This will endanger the wildlife. My husband and I own property at 13875 North Fork Road. We have barely missed hitting a moose who crossed the road in front of us just north of Polebridge. Had we not been driving about 30 miles per hour, we'd have certainly not had time to avoid her. This is just one example. We see wolves and bears on or near the road and want their safety to trump the convenience of people in vehicles. Senators Tester and Baucus have worked hard to persuade the Canadians to ban mining on the Canadian side of the border. Let's live up to our end of the agreement by keeping the N.F. Road a crummy gravel road.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/12/2010 17:38:24
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Project State Highway No.: 486
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls
Name: Gerry Stearns

Comment or Question:
re: North Fork Road, Montana 486

The portion of Montana 486 from Columbia Falls to the Camas Creek Road into Glacier National Park is already the best part of the North Fork Road. Drivers often drive over 65 miles per hour on that section of the road --- and it isn't paved. Imagine the speeds if it were paved!! To pave that road would increase the danger to humans and wildlife without accomplishing any real improvement for tourists or residents.

Few tourists enter Columbia Falls with the idea of continuing into the park. Camas Road is not a main entrance and never will be. Spend the money paving the 750 some other miles of Flathead County that receive year round traffic.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/18/2010 09:28:37
Project Commenting On: North Fork Road paving
Project State Highway No.: MT
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls
Project Milepost: United States
Name: Gil Jordan

Comment or Question:
Don't pave the North Fork Road! It's a waste. Spend taxpayer money paving the many other Flathead County roads that get heavy use, not the North Fork where paving threatens Wildlife, Water Quality, and the North Fork's Rustic Character

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/18/2010 06:40:29
Project Commenting On: Paving the North Fork Road to Camas Creek
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls
Project Milepost: 13 miles from CFalls to Camas Creek
Name: Gail McLean

Comment or Question:
As a life long resident of Columbia Falls, I strongly favor the paving of the North Fork Road. I have driven it in the summer and have been appalled at the dust I see kicked up by large vehicles going 50 miles an hour on this gravel road. I watch the dust literally boil into the river and the air. Paving would improve air and water quality as well as open it up for the general public as opposed to the way it is now: enjoyed by a relative few with money who can afford those big SUV's with air conditioning so they can speed over the chuckholes down that dusty road with the windows closed. I have long wanted to enjoy the North Fork more, and especially think it is a great idea to pave the way at LEAST to the North Fork entrance to Glacier Park.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/15/2010 09:28:34
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy

Comment or Question:

I just want to comment that any paving on the way to Polebridge would be great. It is horrible and unhealthy for the lungs when driving to Polebridge not to mention what the dust does to your car and the surrounding vegetation. The dust is horrible sometimes resulting in whiteout conditons when another vehicle is front of you. And I think the locals since they know the curvy roads enjoy passing visiting vehicles at high unsafe speeds which has happenned on numerous occasions. Its a beautiful area and we all should be able to enjoy it with a nice paved road appropriate speed limit signs for wildlife in that area.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/15/2010 07:13:59
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Project State Highway No.: 486
Nearest Town/City to Project:Polebridge

Comment or Question:

The Northfork Road is a health and safety danger to residents and visitors. Paving this section of the road would be the most cost effective way to care for the problem. I have a cabin at 130 Rainbow Drive and would love to have this problem addressed.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/14/2010 11:42:36
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Project State Highway No.: 486
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls
Project Milepost: 9.5 Blankenship 22.70 Camas Cr. Rd
Name: Mr. Jan Caldwell

Comment or Question:

Regarding the North Fork road, your firm will likely receive many comments saying the road should not be paved, because that would ruin the North Fork area forever by allowing more visitors and tourists to drive up from Columbia Falls. The truth is, the folks in Flathead Valley and tourist are already here, and the road does need to be paved.

Thank you,
Mr. Jan Caldwell

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/21/2010 14:17:32
Project Commenting On: North Fork Road Pavement Proposal
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls/ Polebridge
Name: Jami Belt

Comment or Question:

The proposal to pave the North Fork Road near Glacier National Park is misguided. The wildlife corridor provided by that road is unparallelled in the U.S. Paving the road would increase collisions, decrease wildlife safety and increase traffic in this pristine area. Do not pave the North Fork Road.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/19/2010 13:42:20
Project Commenting On: North Fork Road paving study
Name: Jim Fiddler

Comment or Question:

I strongly oppose any project that would involve paving any portion of the North Fork road west of Glacier National Park. Paving is not the answer to keeping this one of the last remaining pristine valleys in the lower 48 states.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/19/2010 11:57:43
Project Commenting On: North Fork Flathead River Road Paving
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls
Name: Joe Grabowski

Comment or Question:

I would like to state my position in support of paving the road for the North Fork of the Flathead River from the present end of pavement to the turn off for the Camas road into GNP. The present road has safety and serious dust issues. In the winter the road is barely passable at times due to ice and ruts. In the spring the road can be so deep in mud making it difficult to travel. In the summer I have observed, from the mountains that adjoin this river corridor, a cloud of dust covering the bottom 500' of the valley. The dust coats the trees that adjoin the roadway. Please consider paving this road. There was money appropriated for this project in 1999 but it was unfortunately taken away and appropriated to the Big Mountain road. This was a mistake. Thanks for your consideration.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/14/2010 20:37:08
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy,
Project State Highway No.: 486
Nearest Town/City to Project:Polebridge
Name: Jon Elliott

Comment or Question:

As a regular user of the North Fork road since 1975 I am commenting on what I see as a need to improve maintenance on the road. Traffic has increased to the point that dust, road conditions, and visibility have reached intolerable and probably unsafe levels.

I believe that concerns that road improvements will lead to degradation of wildlife habitat due to increased development are based on bogus biology. The threatened and endangered species have recovered nicely "in spite of development". Most would agree that wolves and Grizzly Bear are at their maximum sustainable level in the North Fork.

Glacier National Park will object to road paving based on a GNP master plan from the 1990's that is outdated and has not kept pace with reality. GNP spends untold hundreds of thousands of dollars each year studying the demise of the parks glaciers yet denies that North Fork road dust has any effect in the melting! On the other hand the National Park Service is blaming dust from Arizona, Utah and New Mexico on the demise of the glaciers in Rocky Mountain Nat Park?? Sorry; but they can't have it both ways.

I support any reasonable approach to improving the road-- even if it means paving!

Jon Elliott

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/06/2010 18:53:08
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Project State Highway No.: 486
Nearest Town/City to Project:Flathead County
Name: Michael Kuehnert

Comment or Question:

As a landowner in Polebridge, I strongly urge the commission NOT to improve the road. The Flathead Valley is the greatest environmental jewel in the lower 48 states, and better roads mean more traffic, which is bad for wildlife and the environment.

Thank you.
Michael Kuehnert

Sent: Monday, May 03, 2010 11:06 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork road - MKuehnert 3 May 2010

Please do NOT PAVE THE ROAD. This is most intact eco-system in lower 48 states, everyone must see the larger picture and protect this environmental gem. Michael Kuehnert

Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 7:14 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

To North Fork Road Coalition for Health and Safety

I have driven the North Fork Road many times to go to Glacier Park and at other times up to and past Polebridge. I am very much in favor of paving this lower section from Canyon Creek to Camas Road. I think that this would cut down a lot of the dust that pose problems for those who have breathing problems or are allergic to dust.

Thank you. Peggy Green

Sent: Saturday, May 01, 2010 10:14 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study - Tom Edwards 1May2010

Dear State of Montana, The paving of the North Fork Road #Hiway #486 from Canyon creek (current end of Pavement) to Camus Creek bridge into GLacier National Park. This project is long over due . There are many good reasons to complete this section of the road.

- 1) cost effective maintence
- 2) compilance with EPA air standards
- 3) create a people friendly experience
- 4) road boarderd by mostly Forest Service
- 5) Safety
- 6) Water Quality

I am in favor of completing the paving of this project.

Your Truly Tom Edwards

Eggertsen-Goff, Lani

From: Grant, Paul [pgrant@mt.gov]
Sent: Monday, April 12, 2010 8:48 AM
To: Ludlow, Sheila; Murray, Pam; Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: FW: Comment on a Project Submitted

FYI

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov]
Sent: Friday, April 09, 2010 10:05 PM
To: MDT Comments - Project
Subject: Comment on a Project Submitted

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/09/2010 22:05:07
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Name: Ralph Hemp

Comment or Question:

This section of the road is a hazard to people because of the road dust, poor visibility, poor road maintenance, lack of guard rails. The road is also an environmental "night mare" because the dust blows into the river and onto the surrounding trees and wild flowers. The road cannot safely be used for walking, hiking or bicycle riding. This section of road if paved could be used as another way into Glacier National Park which would be a shorter distance from Columbia Falls and would spark greater economic activity in Columbia Falls .

I am a landowner and resident of the North Fork and have been for over 17 years. I have seen many accidents and have known of two people killed on the road because of these conditions. I have spoken with two attorneys who have observed these conditions and both commented that the "county is maintaining and has created a ultra hazardous condition ." They also commented that the "County is on notice of this dangerous situation which would enlarge their legal liability."

I am happy to see some one is looking into this road condition as I believe a solution is long overdue.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/12/2010 13:59:56
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Project State Highway No.: 486
Nearest Town/City to Project: Columbia Falls
Project Milepost: Camas Rd 22.7 to Canyon Creek
Name: Robert Grimaldi
Address Line 1:

Comment or Question:

In 2006 a survey was conducted by the North Fork Landowners Association. The survey was devoted to North Fork Road issues. 426 residents were surveyed. 261 responded for a 61.3 response

rate. Response choices were Yes, NO, or Undecided. One of the questions posed was as follows: Do you support paving the Canyon Creek (current end of pavement) to Camas Junction

(entrance to Glacier National Park) section of the North Fork Road ? 55.6 percent responded Yes, 41 percent responded NO and 3 percent were Undecided. This is the section of road being considered in this feasibility study.

Another question asked: Regardless of your position on the paving issue, do you support dust abatement on the portions of the road that remain unpaved ? 76.2 percent responded Yes, 14.6 percent responded No, 8.8 percent were undecided.

Clearly, an overwhelming majority see the dust issue as in need of control.

Although this survey is nearly 4 years old it remains a valid indicator of the preferences of persons who must use this road more frequently than others.

Please consider this survey during your study.

Thank you.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/18/2010 06:59:36
Project Commenting On: North Fork Road
Nearest Town/City to Project:Polebridge

Comment or Question:

I am in favor of leaving the North Fork Road unpaved to protect the wild nature of the area, and protect grizzly and stream habitat. Margaret Wolfe, Whitefish, MT

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/17/2010 15:53:04
Project Commenting On: North Fork paving
Nearest Town/City to Project:columbia falls polebridge

Comment or Question:

Please consider NOT paving the North Fork road. Driving the dirt road is part of what makes spending time in and around Polebridge a nice experience. Time and money could be better spent elsewhere.

Thank you

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/12/2010 12:50:01
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Project State Highway No.: 486
Nearest Town/City to Project:Columbia Falls
Project Milepost: Cmas Creek reference marker 22.7 to Canyon Creek
Name: Robert A. Grimaldi

Comment or Question:

How long will online or letter comments be accepted regarding this project ?

Is information being requested from local, state or federal agencies as part of the comment process ?

Is information being requested from any individuals or private organizations ?

Are comments received available for review by the public ?

Thank you.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/15/2010 13:24:41
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Project State Highway No.: 486
Nearest Town/City to Project: Columbia Falls
Project Milepost: Camas Rd milepost 22.7 to Canyon Creek
Name: Robert A. Grimaldi

Comment or Question:

The section of Montana secondary Highway 486 being considered for a feasibility study is, in its present condition, a danger to the public. At varying times of the year, depending on weather, traffic seriously degrades the surface and increases risk factors because it is unpaved.

In the mid-90s this 10-1 mile section of road was constructed to a standard supporting paving. The paving did not occur as planned. Since that time the gravel surface has been ground down with fines becoming fugitive dust during dry periods sometimes affecting traffic by obscuring vision. The ambient dust affects public health and the environment in general. Long stretches of straightaway exist which also encourages excessive speeding which in turn produces high volumes of dust.

This unpaved section becomes a major arterial for tourist and recreational activity during the period June through September when traffic increases significantly. A primary attraction is

the two entrances to Glacier National Park. 486 is also used to access many U.S. Forest Service recreational sites. The increase in traffic can also be attributed to the popularity of canoeing, kayaking, and raft-floating on many of the area lakes and streams, as well as the North Fork of the Flathead River, which has Wild and Scenic designation. Large buses and raft trailers use 486 to ferry commercial customers on rafting trips permitted by the U.S. Forest Service. Another high use segment is by official vehicles belonging to Glacier National Park, The U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Border Patrol, Montana Department of Natural Resources, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. To this we can add the fleet of service and construction vehicles required to maintain and service the many homes in the North Fork Valley.

This heavy use of an unpaved road for six months of the year during periods of extreme dryness causes the unmeasured environmental damage adding silt to the river and occluding the clean, clear water needed for successful bull trout spawning. Safe travel is further jeopardized by urban tourists not used to driving on a graveled roadway where traffic is frequently obscured by dust opacity. The uneven road surface and undulations are also a threat to safety. The lack of significant law enforcement and few traffic warning signs are other unsafe factors.

Glacier National Park operates its Camas Entrance, located at the milepost 22.7, on the 'honor system'. While it is illegal to enter the park without the payment of a \$25.00 entry fee, the absence of a manned collection station provides visitors an opportunity to enter without payment and is another reason for increased traffic on unpaved 486. Glacier uses its 1992 management plan to discourage road improvements outside its western border in order to reduce the threat of commercial development both inside and outside the park. Seemingly, it wants park visitors to use an unimproved secondary state highway to maintain an image of difficult accessibility to primitive park areas. Much has changed since 1992 making the management plan somewhat of an anachronism when considering threats to Glacier's interests. Glacier National Park's current superintendent has publicly voiced his opposition to paving of the unpaved portion of 486 in advance of official input requested of Glacier National Park and the National Park Service. Glacier National Park has a road within the park which could be used to access the park's primitive northwest area, but declines to maintain this road in a serviceable condition except for the most adventurous.

Montana is currently the only state in the union with an unpaved state highway accessing a major national park. This condition is hardly in consonance with a stated purpose of the Montana Clean Air Act (75-2-101): "It is the public policy of this state and the purpose of this chapter to achieve and maintain levels of air quality that will protect human health and safety and, to the greatest degree practicable, prevent injury to plant and animal life and property, foster the comfort and convenience of the people, promote the economic and social development of

the state, and facilitate the enjoyment of the natural attractions of this state." I submit that the unpaved surface of Highway 486 contributes nothing in support of this law and Montana tourism.

A concern expressed by paving opponents is that a paved road will adversely affect wildlife and in particular threatened and endangered species. Our national parks, including Glacier National Park, have many miles of paved roads. This begs the question, do these paved roads adversely affect wildlife and threatened and endangered species any less because they are in a national park. I submit that they do not.

Please complete the process of paving the unpaved portion of Highway 486. Post a speed limit of 45 mph (as in Glacier National Park) and increase law enforcement presence along the highway especially during summer months.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/12/2010 15:07:42
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Project State Highway No.: 486
Name: Richard E. Wackrow

I am writing to express my opinion that the North Fork Road (Montana 486), from Columbia Falls to the Camas Creek entrance to Glacier National Park, is not in need of improvements other than routine maintenance.

The road was widened in the 1980s in preparation for its being paved. However, after costly litigation, the proposed paving project was abandoned after it was determined that paving would have a severe environmental impact on the river.

I think taxpayer money would be better spent improving some of the other 700 miles of unpaved road in the county. In addition, paving the road is an issue that seriously divides North Forkers. The subject should not be broached when the possibility of such a project progressing beyond the courts is next to zero.

Thank you for your consideration.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/05/2010 10:05:49
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Name: robert nelson
Comment or Question:

I would prefer that this section of the road be paved, with a separated bike path so that a person could ride a bicycle from Columbia Falls to Apgar via the North Fork and Camas Roads.

Perhaps a bike path could later be added from West Glacier to Columbia Falls to complete the circle. I currently live in WI but have a home in Polebridge where I plan on living 6 months of each year beginning in 2011.

If there was any paving material or resources left over, paving the short road from the North Fork Road to the Polebridge Merchantile would reduce a significant health and comfort problem.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/17/2010 11:14:41
Project Commenting On: North Fork of the Flathead
Project Milepost: Columbia Falls to Camas Bridge, 13 miles
Name: Robin Vogler

Comment or Question:

I am opposed to paving the North Fork of the Flathead roadway. The North Fork is a rare corner of Montana - unmatched in natural beauty, clean water and rare wildlife that belong to all of us. The wild, rugged nature of the North Fork represents our unique Montana way of life. It's a piece of authentic Montana, important to locals and the world alike. Even considering a paving option violates the spirit, if not the letter, of the B.C. Montana agreement to protect Waterton-Glacier World Heritage.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/17/2010 23:27:39
Project Commenting On: north fork rd paving
Name: SHANNON HARPER

Comment or Question:

I would like to let the MDOT know that I do not support the paving of the North Fork Road (486) in the North Fork of the Flathead Valley. Although it gets dusty, all gravel roads do and I believe paving the road is a bad idea. Plus, this is one of the best sections of the gravel road to Polebridge (least pot holes and least dust, especially on the big straight away in the middle of the section proposed for paving).

Most locals have access to Glacier and if they want a paved road they can drive on the Camas road when it's open. When it isn't the North Fork Road is usually snowy and the pot holes are filled with ice and it isn't as dusty. I think paving only the dozen or so miles doesn't make sense when there's many other roads in Flathead County that are a higher priority to pave. The roads closer to town that get more traffic year round would make more sense to spend money on paving. There are also more people living in these areas that would benefit more from less dust than the few folks living on that stretch of 486. Thank you for taking my comment into consideration.

Shannon Harper, Columbia Falls resident and North Fork explorer

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/19/2010 16:58:46
Project Commenting On: North Fork Road
Name: Samuel Neff

Comment or Question:

I strongly oppose the paving of s486 (known locally as the North Fork Road). Paving it would lead to extensive use, and pressure for development, in a mostly wild area which is home to grizzly bears and other endangered Montana icons. Improving the road initially would benefit a few land owners on the road, but at the same time open up a western access to Glacier Park. The road would quickly become popular and overused, and the land along it would stimulate the greed of many developers from Montana and beyond. The consequent damage to a unique environment would be catastrophic. Please leave access to the North Fork as it is. Those who presently live there have no need or right to road development. There are many other dusty Flathead County roads which are more deserving of MDT attention.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/20/2010 16:07:01
Project Commenting On: Highway 486 Study in Flathead County
Name: Kristin Servatius

Comment or Question:

From an economic standpoint paving this section of the road would be good for Columbia Falls. It would draw more traffic up through Nucleus Avenue which in turn would generate more business. More business would create more jobs which are badly needed with the unemployment rate in Flathead County at 14 percent. I also believe that paving this section of the road would help alleviate the financial burden that the County has for maintaining those 13 miles of roadway.

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/17/2010 12:04:21
Project Commenting On: North Fork Paving project
Name: Susan T. Evans

Comment or Question:

The North Fork Road Paving project is a waste of taxpayer's money. We have many gravel roads that could use improvement, right here in Lake County. There are roads that connect Polson to Pablo that turn to gravel only a few miles out of Polson. We need better roads WHERE WE LIVE, not out in the middle of nowhere. We need roads that serve the maximum of people, not into wilderness areas that would serve a few tens of people. Worse yet, we don't need roads into wilderness areas that would open an area to more stupid development. We have areas out of Polson, where developers have put in roads and building sites that are a nightmare for public services such as fire and police to reach. We don't need more of that.

Susan T. Evans

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/16/2010 16:05:18
Project Commenting On: north fork road paving

Comment or Question:

I support paving of the North Fork Road from the end of the pavement north of Columbia Falls to the Camus Creek road leading into Glacier Park. It will enable many more people to enjoy that access and pollute the Flathead River less with less dust. And I believe it will be safer to travel on it. I don't support paving all the way to Polebridge to support the isolation those living in the North Fork prefer.

Thanks, Johanna Bangeman

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/18/2010 17:09:24
Name: Woody and Dani Nedom

Dear MDT Staff,

Please accept, and make part of the record, this email communication in opposition to any plan to pave any portion of the route commonly known as "The North Fork Road". Previous studies on this subject have generated convincing arguments to leave the road unpaved and this data has resulted in repeated decisions against paving. The justifications for leaving the road unpaved not only remain but are more compelling than ever because of the increasing pressure from a growing population and the threat to flora and fauna that this pressure presents. In addition, this route borders Glacier National Park, one of the great wild treasures of our overcrowded nation, and its paving would inevitably diminish the existing wilderness experience.

In this age of age of sprawl, disappearing farmland and wildlife habitat, and increasing urbanization we should, especially in the so-called "Last, Best Place", do everything in our power to prevent this from continuing and to preserve the last vestiges of the continent as we inherited it. Please do not pave the North Fork Road.

Sincerely,

Woody and Dani Nedom

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 04/13/2010 07:43:02
Project Commenting On: NorthForkStudy
Nearest Town/City to Project:polebridge

Comment or Question:

As a woman traveling alone from my home in Polebridge to town, and as a tax paying and voting Montanan, I deserve better than the often risky condition of the lower North Fork Road from Big Creek to the end of the pavement. I have been broken down due to the rock in the road, have had to report a rollover of a rental car which caused injuries, and have suffered side effects to vocal chords from the uncontrolled dust during the years I sang with the Glacier Chorale.

Sent: Tuesday, June 15, 2010 12:40 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road Issue Summary

Dear Lani Eggertsen-Gof:

I am writing concerning the summary of the North Fork Road Study reported in your newsletter dated June 10, 2010. The newsletter asks on page 4, "Did We Get It Right?" I have to answer, emphatically, 'No!'

Why? What did you miss?

You list only the complaints about the road and not a single summary of many people's thinking that the road should remain the same to protect existing wildlife, water and recreational values.

Road surface and dust issues may actually exist but these don't necessarily override a large segment of the public's thinking that other values are much more important.

You also fail to mention as a summary the public concern of so much tax money going towards a study of a road used by only 280 vehicles per day (compared to 450 state average). Actually implementing an 'improvement' plan (dust abatement, paving or other options) represents even more tax expense for a remote county road. Public tax dollar accountability is a very big issue and should be mentioned.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I hope to see a more balanced summary presentation in future documents.

Sincerely,

Dave Hadden

From: john snell
Sent: Thursday, June 03, 2010 8:29 AM
To: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Lani Eggertsen-Goff,

I am a landowner in the North Fork and have been going to the North Fork since 1959. My property is 1 mile south of Polebridge. I have operated heavy equipment most of my life and have some understanding of the amount of maintenance it takes to take care of a gravel road. With the amount of traffic that travels the North Fork Road, I really believe that a paved road would be much better than a gravel road from a maintenance point. The traffic is here and we are not going to reverse that. Let's do what is best for the environment and the people who use the road and try to get it paved. I didn't always feel this way but the time has come to do what is right with all the traffic that comes to the North Fork now.

Thank You,
John Snell

From: Grigg, Jamin
Sent: Tuesday, May 04, 2010 1:15 PM
To: mdtnfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

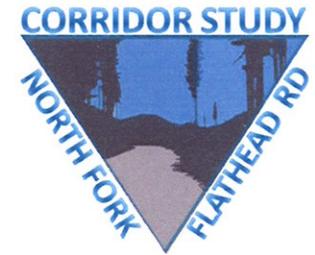
Hello,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the potential paving of the North Fork Flathead road. My family has visited that area annually from Colorado since I was a boy and it's a very special place to us. The virtues that that make it so special are its remoteness and difficulty to access, abundant wildlife, lack of electricity, and general isolation. These factors are in many ways the area's saving graces and paving the road puts them all in jeopardy. Pavement will increase traffic rates and speed, encourage development, permanently damage the area's charm, and endanger wildlife. Please don't pave the Northfork Flathead road!

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jamin Grigg



Comments: Your Issues, Concerns and Questions

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

6/11/2:10

Hello, Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important issue. The North Fork of the Flathead River drainage is an incredibly diverse and beautiful area. The most highly inhabited area in the lower 48 for Grizzly bear and the area that Gray wolves naturally returned to their traditional home land. A snowy country with little snowdrifting areas for deer & elk. In that light, the North Fork is lucky, for it has lots of things, wildlife, scenery, fishing, timber, coal and a road. Lucky in that if we had any one thing in quantity, no doubt the North Fork would have been exploited and in many minds ~~the~~ worth while to work toward the non-exploitation of the North Fork. we have a road for access, some would say not a very good one, but its plenty good for us. I've lived & worked in the N. Fork for 35 years, the best part of living here is the solitude. A paved road would bring more people here than the N. Fork doesn't need!

Name: Lee Secret

Thank you
Lee Secret

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

May 5, 2010

Lani Eggerston-Goff
Parsons Brinkerhoff
488 East Winchester St.
Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

RE: North Fork Road 486 Study Team
In Support of NOT-Paving the North Fork Road in NW Montana

Dear Lani Eggerston-Goff,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter which supports not paving the North Fork Rd. for the following reasons:

- The North Fork area along the west side of Glacier National Park is unique in the lower forty eight states because it preserves a portion of the old, authentic Montanan way of life. It's rare and should be preserved.
- Visitors from all over the world come to our area specifically because it's still wild and beautiful.
- Many people like us have invested a good portion of their life savings in order to live a way of life in which we are connected physically and spiritually to the land, the water and wildlife. There are few places left where that's still possible in the lower forty-eight. We want the deer, bears, wolves, lynx and elk and all the rest of the wild animals which give us so much pleasure when they come onto our property.
- One reason wildlife is still plentiful in the area is our dirt road which necessitates low speed limits. It allows for time to take steps to avoid maiming or killing an animal that happens to venture into the road.
- Our road goes nowhere except to our houses. Consider investing hard-to-get tax dollars for roads in areas where more people live. There aren't many of us up on the North Fork.
- Small businesses on the North Fork rely on the wild nature of the area which is why tourists come.

Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Carol Vuchetich

*Strutten postmark indicates
winter residence*

May 5, 2010

Lani Eggerston-Goff
Parsons Brinkerhoff
488 East Winchester St.
Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

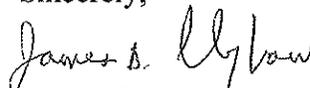
RE: North Fork Road 486 Study Team
In Support of NOT Paving

Dear Lani Eggerston-Goff,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. What follows are reasons I do not think it would be wise to pave the North Fork Road:

- The North Fork area, along the west side of Glacier National Park, is unique in the lower forty eight states because it preserves a portion of the old, authentic Montanan way of life. It's rare and should be preserved.
- Visitors from all over the world come to our area specifically because it's still wild and beautiful.
- Many people like us have invested a good portion of their life savings in order to live a way of life in which we are connected physically and spiritually to the land, the water and wildlife. There are few places left where that's still possible in the lower forty-eight. We want the deer, bears, wolves, lynx and elk and all the rest of the wild animals which give us so much pleasure when they come onto our property.
- One reason wildlife is still plentiful in the area is our dirt road which necessitates low speed limits. It allows for time to take steps to avoid maiming or killing an animal that happens to venture into the road.
- Our road goes nowhere except to our houses. Consider investing hard-to-get tax dollars for roads in areas where more people live. There aren't many of us up on the North Fork.
- Small businesses on the North Fork rely on the wild nature of the area which is why tourists come.
- A physician friend and North Fork visitor has told us that the road dust is not potentially harmful.

Sincerely,


James D. Cleghorn

NORTH FORK PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

6 May 2010

To the Members of the North Fork Road 486 Corridor Study and Lani Eggertsen-Goff:

The North Fork Road north of Canyon Creek to Camas could benefit from more frequent maintenance. Dust coating would be welcome as well. Other than keeping it well maintained, leave it pretty much alone – no pavement please.

The dust on the North Fork is of heavy particles (PM 10 and larger) that settle relatively quickly compared to the super fine particles (PM 2.5) from wood stoves and other sources that travel great distances causing regional haze. The smaller particles are particularly harmful to people not the larger ones. Few people are stupid enough to stand in the road on summer days when traffic and dust are the heaviest. Most are in cars with the windows closed and the air conditioning on.

For a multitude of reasons it should not be paved. Increasing numbers of people will start using the North Fork Road if paved to Camas Junction and spill further north at least as far as Polebridge which won't help Columbia Falls much if at all, but it will start the decline of wildlife as the number of cars on the road continue to fragment habitat. If you have not read Shannon Donahue's report on the effects of paving the North Fork Road which I sent earlier here is the link:

http://www.gravel.org/articles/NF_Road_Report-Donahue.pdf. Speeding and accidents are other obvious problems which will happen with a paved North Fork Road.

Also note that there is a jeopardy statement in place by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the North Fork Road for Endangered Species. This will need to be updated and that alone may take several years along with the Environmental Impact Statement which takes millions of dollars in addition to more time. It seems inappropriate to incur these additional costs to fund a road to nowhere for the comfort of a hundred or so year-round residents when many people living on the 700 miles of gravel roads in Flathead County are begging for pavement.

I cannot help but comment that the \$125,000 for this study would pay for a lot of maintenance on the North Fork Road

Sincerely,

John Frederick, President

A non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving the integrity of the North Fork of the Flathead Valley on the western edge of Waterton/Glacier International Peace Park.

Janet Slack

County Commissioners, Flathead County
Public Works Director, Flathead County
Director of Montana Dept. of Transportation

May 10, 2010

RE: North Fork Road Paving Debate

#486 FLATHEAD County

Dear Sirs:

I am voicing my opinions regarding the on going debate of whether to pave the lower ten (10) mile section of the North Fork Road from Canyon Creek to Camas Road and the necessity of posting a 45 mile speed limit. In addition, I agree with and support the maintenance of the Camas Road north to the border (app. 35 miles) by Flathead County.

My immediate concern is the traveling time required for emergency vehicles and personnel to reach residents and visitors in need of immediate help. Decreasing the travel time would be accomplished by paving this stretch of road.

Needing to be addressed is the unhealthy amount of particulates released into the air and into the North Fork portion of the Flathead River. Each time this 10 mile portion of road is traveled, it is my understanding that the airborne particulates released exceed federally regulated levels.

I also believe Columbia Falls and surrounding businesses stand to benefit from the tourism dollars generated by providing an easy alternate paved entrance into Glacier Park.

I am requesting that you fully support paving the 10 mile section of road from Canyon Creek to Camas Road. I also encourage the use of road stimulus funds. I believe this is a win-win situation for all involved.

Sincerely,

Janet Slack

Janet Slack



Gateway to Glacier National Park
PO Box 312 - Columbia Falls, MT 59912 - (406)892-2072

May 6, 2010

North Fork Flathead River Corridor Study
Attn: Lani Eggersten-Goff
Study Consultant
488 Winchester St, Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

Dear Ms. Goff,

Please accept the following comments for your consideration and analysis in the North Fork Flathead River Corridor study on behalf of the Columbia Falls Area Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee. From the earliest discussions of paving this section of road, we have provided input.

The current condition of this segment of road is unacceptable and this may be the only point that you will find broad agreement upon. However, we feel strongly that using the poor condition of the road as a defacto limiting factor to help prevent unchecked development in the North Fork area is the wrong tact to take. The North Fork neighborhood plan, along with myriad other state, local and federal regulations provide reasonable assurances that the natural environment and traditional social mores in the North Fork will be protected.

It is undeniable that the resource impacts of the dust are measureable and real, not only to the aquatic resources, but also to the plant and animal habitats that are impacted far from the roadway. Health and safety of the visitors and residents of the North Fork is impaired by the current condition of the road. As user numbers will likely show, local traffic continues to increase, in spite of the road condition. Speed differentials between people familiar with the road and conditions and those not familiar coupled with poor visibility due to dust is a recipe for disaster for much of the summer season. To continue to ignore the situation is not acceptable.

It is undeniable that the condition of the road limits the accessibility of the recreational opportunities within the North Fork both for locals and visitors alike. The Columbia Falls area works hard to serve as a gateway community for the Flathead National Forest and Glacier National Park. The draw of these two treasures only continues to increase, in spite of the poor road conditions. It would seem to make sense that improving the North Fork road would result in ***FEWER*** impacts on the environment and more manageable use of the North Fork area. It seems odd that the Camas road within Glacier National Park is paved, yet once it leaves the borders of

the park, paving apparently becomes unacceptable. Obviously the resource impacts and impacts on the visitor experience of an unpaved Camas road was unacceptable to the Park, hence the pavement.

The concerns over higher speed and increased road kill of wildlife need to be studied. None the less, those two issues are manageable within the Park boundaries, so it would seem reasonable to be able to mitigate and manage those issues outside of the park as well. Surely with the amount of Boarder Patrol, USFS Law Enforcement, Park Law Enforcement and County Sherriff traffic on the road, speed control could be handled.

Lastly, we must consider the real economic impacts of the current condition. The cost of maintaining this standard of road, receiving the current and growing traffic volumes, as a gravel surface road is unsustainable. As has been mentioned, due to lack of adequate maintenance, the current road is easily 10-15 feet wider in many areas than necessary for the type and volume of traffic received. This translates directly into increased maintenance costs, including grading, dust abatement and snow removal. Flathead County does not have the financial resources to maintain this road. With the steep decline in timber sale receipts on USFS lands, the county is burdened with a road system designed and built to access National Forest lands without any meaningful financial support. The multiple federal agencies (USFS, NPS and Border Patrol) have all but washed their hands of any maintenance responsibility. So the only long term viable long term solution to reducing cost of maintenance seems to be paving. We feel that an economic analysis will show the upfront costs of paving will be recovered quickly in maintenance savings.

The potential for positive economic impact is great, not only to the Columbia Falls area, but to the park in increased gate fees, to the USFS in increased user fees, private and public campground fees and increased tax revenue to Federal, State and County governments. Improving the North Fork access would provide at least another full day's activities for visiting tourists where they could spend one more day and night in the Flathead Valley, thereby proportionately increasing tourism income. Being able to offer another access point to the Flathead National Forest and Glacier National Park would be a real asset and boost for the economic development of the Columbia Falls area. As our traditional industries continue to decline, it is imperative that we consider any new economic opportunities seriously.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and look forward to continued participation in the Corridor Study. Please include us in any notice or outreach activities associated with this project. Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Paul R. McKenzie
Chairman
Economic Development Committee
Columbia Falls Area Chamber of Commerce

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Murray, Pam
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2010 11:46 AM
To: Kirkendall, Amanda
Subject: FW: Comments on your newsletter

From: Mark and Margaret Heaphy
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2010 11:23 AM
To: MontanaDeptTransportation NorthForkFlathedRd
Subject: Comments on your newsletter

Hi,

I feel like you have really missed a major opinion of how landowners/stakeholders feel about changes to this section of road.

Under the multiple stakeholders summary where you summarize the concerns and issues you only heard negative issues and concerns. You should have heard just as loudly... we want to preserve the natural area, the rural way of life and the rich historical culture of this remote valley. This is both a landowner view and park service view. The end treatment can greatly affect these values that North Forker hold dearly.

The road condition is not a deterrent to all people who use it.

I just don't feel like you represented all landowners when you listed your issues and concerns.

Under your need section you have 4 points:

- do something for dust
- narrow the lower section of the road
- improve maintenance
- shorten travel times for emergency services. This seems insignificant. The current speed limit is 35 MPH. If the speed limit were to be raised to 55 MPH for a distance of 9 miles, it seems the time saved in those 9 miles is insignificant. And I would hope the speed limit would not be raised to 70 MPH as it is on the paved section of this study area. Speed was listed as a concern/issue in the stakeholders summary.

Maybe there should be listed under the need section the need to preserve the"wide open, uncrowded place, with pristine water, clean air, dark night skies, abundant wildlife, quiet and solitude with incredible scenic vista,.... values residents of the North Fork hold dear. These are the values North Fork residents wish to preserve and protect" taken from the Neighborhood Plan.

These are my thoughts. I'm a little disappointed in these initial results.

Thanks for your work.

Respectfully,

Margaret Heaphy

The New Busy is not the old busy. Search, chat and e-mail from your inbox. [Get started.](#)

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Murray, Pam
Sent: Friday, May 14, 2010 4:43 PM
To: Kirkendall, Amanda
Cc: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Manning
Sent: Wednesday, May 12, 2010 8:37 AM
To: mdtntfrteam@mt.gov
Cc: John Caratti
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

The North Fork of the Flathead River is a very special place. I worked up there doing riparian surveys in some of the tributaries (Whale and Shorty Creeks) years ago, for the Forest Service. I have been going to Glacier Park and specifically to Kintla Lake and Polebridge, for over 15 years, all times of the year. We love to canoe Kintla lake and to ski into the park. I have also stayed at the Ford Cabin and skied around on Forest Service land. Just this fall, we were lucky enough to see a wolf crossing the road. If this road gets paved, people will drive much faster, and there will be more wildlife deaths. Why would anyone want to do this given that this road basically borders the park (I realize there is private land along the eastside of the road also). But, this special place, which has just been released from mining activity, is not an appropriate place to have a paved road. When I worked up there and stayed at the Wertz Cabin (now a rental), my sense from the local residents is that they did NOT want the road paved, for many reasons. Mainly they felt it would completely change (ruin) the character of the area, increase wildlife deaths, and encourage much more development. While the latter reason is not anything you can control, the other two can and should be considered. This is a rural remote area. The border crossing has been closed for years. There is no reason, other than dust abatement (and believe me, I've been up there when the visibility is bad due to dust), to pave this road. I know there are ways to treat the dust that don't include paving. I also have noticed that the potholes in the paved section are much worse than those in the unpaved--you are driving faster on the paved section and the potholes have very abrupt edges that can really throw you around in your vehicle. Regarding washboard...well, that's just part of being on a rural road, and people can just drive a little slower. The road as it is has not prevented the UPS people or others from going up there. So why "improve" what's already there....as the saying goes: "Don't fix it if it ain't broke". I agree!

Thank you for considering these comments.
Mary Manning

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Oliver Meister
Sent: Sunday, May 02, 2010 6:44 PM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study - OMeister 2May2010

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

North Fork Road Study Group

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
Parsons Brinckerhoff
488 E. Winchester St. Suite 400
Murray, Utah 84107

Comments to North Fork Road Study Group:

My name is Oliver Meister and I own the North Fork Hostel & Inn in Polebridge. Operating a year round business accessed by dirt road only has it's own challenges.

However, from a business standpoint I oppose ANY improvements on the North Fork Road!
So, and here is why:

Columbia Falls City Council wants the North Fork Road paved, hoping to attract more traffic through the downtown area; if they are correct that will also increase traffic from the Camas junction north towards Polebridge, which will of course lead to a further outcry for paving that part of the road. And here we go, some would think that increasing traffic means increasing business for Polebridge, but not so fast: the majority of visitors that come to a place like Polebridge and actually spend any significant amount of time(more than just a few hours) and thus probably spend a more significant amount of money in the local economy, come exactly for reasons, for what this place still is: "Old Montana!"
These longterm visitors feel like having earned the right to be in this magical place by navigating the long gravel road, that road improvements as well as more development in general will take away the magic of a place that still looks and feels like a Montana long gone!

We all moved here by choice, well aware of the road conditions, most of us should be conscious that there is none or limited emergency, civic, phone and other services- and most people like to come here to experience just that! If our health fails us or once we get older we have the choice to move to a place that has services available rather than scream for improvements, thus ruining it for all!

Also I'd like to add following points:

1. In 1999, Dr. Jack Stanford of the Yellow Bay Biological Station debunks the myth of fugitive dust affecting water and air quality in the North Fork. "The dust probably has no measurable effect on the river, because the river carries a very high sediment load naturally..." In addition, note Stanford's reference to runoff from road berm erosion and accelerated river bank erosion related to increased runoff from clear cuts...
Wood smoke is the one factor most likely to degrade air quality in Western Montana valleys, including the North Fork, an improved North Fork Road will increase numbers of winter residents! The Clean Air act mandates that regional haze be monitored and controlled around

class 1 airsheds, including Glacier Park. Regional haze is composed primarily of small PM2.5. Road dust is mostly larger (PrM100 and larger). The larger road dust particles, while certainly a huge impact to visibility, and yes air quality, on the immediate road corridor, settle out quickly, and therefore do not contribute much, if at all to regional haze. Therefore, road dust impacts air quality little in the Park.

2. In 1980, and again in 1982, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that paving this, or other stretches of the North Fork Rd., would create a "Jeopardy" situation for grizzly bears, in violation of the Endangered Species Act. Those jeopardy decisions are still in effect, and paving is therefore illegal. In 2000, USFS experts on carnivores and habitat linkage zones Bill Ruediger, Jim Claar, and Jay Gore released the report "Restoration of Carnivore Habitat Connectivity in the Northern Rocky Mountains." It looked at 64 highways in the area and found that the North Fork Road was one of 27 key linkage zones endangered by a "High Potential For Upgrade." It noted that going from a gravel road to a paved one entailed significant risks to carnivores generally, and listed species like the grizzly specifically. Since then, the lynx has been listed as well. In 2001, Dr. John Weaver of the Wildlife Conservation Society released "The Transboundary Flathead, A Critical Landscape for Carnivores in the Rocky Mountains." That report noted: "A unique community of carnivore species resides in the transboundary Flathead region that appears unmatched in North America for its variety, completeness, use of valley bottomlands, and density of species which are rare elsewhere. Due to these unique characteristics and its strategic position as a linkage between National Parks in both countries, the transboundary Flathead may be the single most important basin for carnivores in the Rocky Mountains."

So, please leave the road to nowhere alone!

Oliver Meister
North Fork Hostel Team

From: Murray, Pam
Sent: Monday, July 12, 2010 12:09 PM
To: Kirkendall, Amanda
Cc: Eggertsen-Goff, Lani
Subject: FW: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov]
Sent: Monday, July 12, 2010 10:03 AM
To: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study Submitted

A North Fork Comment form has been submitted via the "North Fork" web page.

Action Item: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Submitted: 07/12/2010 10:03:15
First Name: Donna
Last Name: Pridmore

Comments:

I have no issue with long-range planning for the Northfork road.

Concerns about access for Glacier National Park, wildlife issues and etc within the corridor study are well thought out but.....

My comment concerns the prioritization in choosing the Northfork road instead of choosing the Whitefish Stage road(592). I think this is mismanagement of taxpayer and federal dollars. Whitefish Stage accesses many more subdivisions and carries much more traffic. There are no shoulders. There is no turning lane in the center. There is no place for pedestrians or bicyclists. That road kills and injures more folks. At least on the Northfork road, folks have to drive slow. The Whitefish stage road is a racetrack for commuters trying to avoid the intersection of Hwy93 and W.Reserve. This situation will only get worse when the bypass funnels even more traffic into that intersection.

Please put the limited taxpayer and federal dollars where the most good can result - on the Whitefish Stage road.

Thankyou

Kirkendall, Amanda

From: Murray, Pam
Sent: Friday, May 07, 2010 3:06 PM
To: Kirkendall, Amanda
Subject: FW: MDT Feasibility Study for North Fork Road

From: Robert Grimaldi
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2010 2:43 PM
To:
Subject: MDT Feasibility Study for North Fork Road

Mr. Opper: I am contacting you regarding the feasibility study being conducted by MDT. This study concerns the North Fork Road Corridor which is an unpaved 10.1 mile portion of secondary State Highway 486. Complete details can be obtained by accessing www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork.

As you are well aware, unpaved roads emitting fugitive dust are a violation of the Clean Air Act of Montana and the Administrative Rules of Montana. This road is a responsibility of Flathead County and is one of the roads collectively identified by DEQ as in violation of clean air standards. The road closely borders the North Fork of the Flathead River for a number of miles and much of the dust disturbed by traffic is blown into the air and also into the pristine waters of the river.

I am requesting that DEQ actively support the paving or mitigation of dust on this heavily traveled road during the late spring-early fall time period, when it provides access to two entrances to Glacier National Park as well as other recreational opportunities such as river rafting, kayaking and Flathead National Forest recreation resources. It would seem support of dust control by DEQ is the right thing to do and I would appreciate whatever attention you might bring to this need.

Comments can be made to: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov

Thank you.

Robert A. Grimaldi

The New Busy think 9 to 5 is a cute idea. Combine multiple calendars with Hotmail. [Get busy.](#)

From: Steve Gniadek
Sent: Friday, June 11, 2010 5:33 PM
To: mdtntffrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Road Corridor Study

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the North Fork Road Corridor Study. I attended the public meeting at the Columbia Falls council chambers on April 20, and made a few comments at that time, but would like to offer additional comments here.

I am still uncertain why this study is needed and if this is the best use of limited state funding. The salient issues have been identified over the past 30+ years. The most significant changes have been improvements to the road, such as the work at Fool Hen Hill. Surely there are county roads with higher traffic volumes in greater need of improvements.

While you are required to collect and weigh public comments, this should not be a "vote" on whether or not to pave Secondary 486, also known as the North Fork Flathead Road (NFFR) or Forest Highway 61, from the Blankenship Road to the Camas Road. Opinions expressed need to be weighed against the facts. For example, claims that paving the road is needed to provide emergency services to the people living north of the Camas Road have no merit; paving and even increasing the speed limit on the segment under review will have no significant effect on travel time to areas near the Canadian border. Furthermore, medical emergencies are routinely addressed not with ground-based ambulance but with the Alert medical helicopter; this is true for traffic accidents on the major (paved) highways in the county, such as US 2 in Hungry Horse or US 93 within a few miles of a hospital. It is unlikely an ambulance dependent on road access would be dispatched to the North Fork, regardless of road conditions. Please don't allow spurious arguments to inform decisions about this project.

By now, you should have gathered some basic facts about traffic volume and how it varies by season and road segment (e.g. how many vehicles go only as far as Glacier Rim or Big Creek), and traffic accident rates and locations. This should be the foundation for further analysis. Then consider how road conditions contribute to accident rate and location. Also consider how improved road conditions may lead to increased speeds that contribute to a higher accident rate.

A significant concern regarding any improvements will be impacts to wildlife. Increased traffic volume will displace some wildlife and fragment habitat effectiveness for many species, including for grizzly bears. This has been demonstrated by research in the South Fork of the Flathead, in the Highway 2 corridor, and elsewhere in North America. Literature citations are available on request. Thresholds for displacement are graduated; any increase will have concomitant impacts. Even if the grizzly bear is removed from the list of federally threatened species, efforts to minimize or reduce impacts will be required by state and federal agencies. Concerns about NFFR improvements expressed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service 25 years ago, regarding

grizzly bears, are still pertinent today. Traffic volume has documented impacts on other species of wildlife, such as elk and small mammals. Increased traffic volume and speed as a result of road improvements can result in increased mortality to wildlife, and increased risk to humans, as a result of collision. This must be considered in any analysis of human safety.

The road dust issue must be placed in the context of all other concerns. Investigate all solutions including reduced speed (highly effective in my experience), bentonite, or other treatments. Compare road dust concerns on this road segment to concerns on other county roads; most other gravel roads in the county receive higher traffic volumes and have more residents living along and using those roads. The perceived effects of road dust must also be considered in the context of other health hazards. Is road dust along this section of road a significant hazard to anyone using the road?

In considering the option of paving, evaluate not only the initial cost of paving, but the cost of annual maintenance of paved segments. The worst section of the road to Polebridge is the section of paved road in the Home Ranch Bottoms, where deep potholes can break axles. This section may have been paved to a lesser standard than contemplated for the section under review, but it illustrates that without routine maintenance paved roads can deteriorate into hazardous conditions.

Finally, consider the aesthetic issue, for lack of a better term. I grew up along a gravel road that has long since been paved. Gravel roads are becoming relics of the past. Gravel roads into the more remote areas of the county are what help make those areas unique. The condition of the NFFR contributes to the unique character of the North Fork. People who live there, and especially people who have recently moved there from elsewhere, who want the road paved lack appreciation for what makes the area unique. If they are so unhappy with life in the North Fork, maybe they should move to an area with paved roads and local WalMarts, and leave the North Fork to people who appreciate it for what it is. MDOT builds and maintains roads, so is unlikely to care about aesthetic qualities. But please don't trash this area in the name of "progress".

Steve Gniadek, Certified Wildlife Biologist

Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 3:39 PM
To: mdtntfrteam@mt.gov
Subject: North Fork Corridor Study comments - JCorday 5May2010

Sheila Ludlow, MT Dept of Transportation

Dear Ms Ludlow,

I have driven up to Polebridge at least 5 times in the past 25 yrs. The first time was in 1984 while on a college graduation road-trip. We first drove the Going-to-the-Sun road and visited Logans Pass, but were somewhat dismayed by how crowded the area was so we asked a ranger where to go to get away from the crowds. Driving up the windy gravel road on the west side of Glacier and arriving in Polebridge was like stepping back 50 yrs in time – such an incredibly special place, it felt so wild, remote. Almost 30 years later, not much has changed except for the addition of more vacation homes along the route, a stretch of paving, and the fact that a few more people make the pilgrimage up to Polebridge to experience the opposite of Logans Pass.

Now that I've taken a paragraph to be nostalgic, I'll get right to the point of my commenting upon the corridor study. I am opposed to any further paving of road 486, and would favor other less impactful methods of dust abatement for the following reasons:

1) Pavement = large increase in vehicle speed = more wildlife roadkill

The current gravel bumpy road keeps most drivers traveling around 20-30 mph. Paving would increase this speed to 45-65 depending on the curves (and driver of course). Many studies have shown that higher speeds equal a much larger amount of animals being killed by cars as the driver's reaction time is reduced to a fraction of the time of slower speeds. This is an area where almost every wildlife species that was here 200 yrs ago is still here next to one of the crown jewels of all National Parks. These factors should out-weigh any "convenience" time-saving factors of paving.

2) Pavement = reduced travel time = increased traffic = greater barrier to wildlife

Because paving significantly reduces travel time, dust, and wear & tear on vehicles, studies have shown that paving leads to increased residential development of rural areas. [Land Use Effects of Paving Rural Roads, http://www.headwaterseconomics.org/regional.php#paving](http://www.headwaterseconomics.org/regional.php#paving) In addition to the roads in this report, one only has to look at the Bitterroot Valley to see the dramatic impact paving some of the residential roads has had, like Hidden Valley Road for example. Additionally, the easier travel will increase the number of visitors to the NW section of Glacier National Park. The combined additional traffic will increase noise along the road, which impacts birds and wildlife, and also will lead to more roadkill.

3) Impacts of increased residential development to wildlife

In addition to the impacts of increased traffic on the road, more residential development also has negative impacts on the type of wildlife in this wild section of Montana. Black bear, Grizzly bear, wolves, bobcat, lynx, cougar, elk, & moose to name a few are all negatively impacted by increased residential development. Those impacts include loss of habitat, disturbance from humans and their livestock and pets, problems with garbage, outdoor storage of BBQs, pet food, bird food etc (bears and other animal attractants). [Habitat Protection Planning – Where the Wild Things Are](#), American Planning Association Report No 470/471 1997. In the book "[The Nature of Southwestern Colorado: Recognizing Human Legacies and Restoring Natural Places](#)" by Deborah D. Paulson and William L. Baker, both professors of geography at the University of Wyoming, the authors discuss the century-plus of environmental impacts of settlement in southwestern Colorado. They point out that rural sprawl "has inherent negative impacts, many of which cannot be overcome, not even by the most conscientious homeowner. The lower elevations around mountains provide critical winter range for big game, valleys are the most productive farmland, and streamside (riparian) habitat supports two-thirds of Colorado's plant and animal species. Yet these are the very lands where sprawl is concentrated because they are largely private and are preferred locations for home-sites." The authors note that, "Most insidious, roads fragment the landscape, increasing edges that favor generalist species such as skunks and coyotes and reducing large habitat blocks needed by more specialized species."

The authors cite a list of other problems, including of invasive, noxious and non-native plant species that proliferate in rural subdivisions due to the disturbance of the ground inherent in such development, as well as the overgrazing of subdivision parcels by horses and other livestock that their owners allow. They also catalog the increased killing of wildlife, some rare or threatened, by domestic cats and dogs in such rural subdivisions. The authors also point out that the presence of rural subdivisions in close proximity to public lands is compromising the ability of those public lands to be effectively managed, particularly in the area of fire management, prevention of fuel buildups, and prescribed burning.

In summary, the Corridor Study needs to carefully take into account the many negative impacts to wildlife that paving will have on the incredibly diverse and abundant wildlife that live in this area of Montana.

Sincerely,

Jacquelyn Corday



Comment
Submitted by Tom
Edwards

Road Committee 2008-2009 Final Report

Posted Nov. 5, 2009—The NFLA Road Committee has been working hard throughout 2009 meeting their charge to:

1. Explore dust abatement and maintenance options and potentially recommend solutions,
2. Make relevant information available to the NF community, and
3. Receive and process member suggestions and concerns about the road.

All of the Road Committee's activities have been summarized in a single document entitled "Final Report 2008-2009." A complete copy of this report maybe be downloaded from [here](#).

This final report provides an overview of meetings that have taken place throughout 2008-2009. Following are a list of these meetings with links to their summaries:

Options discussed for the North Fork road

Posted Nov. 4, 2009—Over the last several months, members of the road committee have been busy identifying options for the North Fork road dust abatement. The following are a series of stories summarizing these activities.

Talk on dust control options

Posted Nov. 4, 2009—**Laura Fay**, a research scientist from the Western Transportation Institute (WTI), spoke on dust control options for the North Fork road at a special meeting held at Sondreson Hall on Sept. 8, 2009. The meeting was arranged by Margaret Heaphy, who chaired the meeting and introduced the speaker.

The **WTI** is a National University Transportation Center that focuses on rural road issues. Originally founded in 1994 by Caltrans, MTDOT, and MSU, the WTI is now part of the Engineering Dept at MSU.

Ms. Fay has a degree in environmental

Hwy 486
FLATHERD
COUNTRY

- Dec. 12, 2008—First meeting of the NFLA Road Committee
- Jan. 16, 2009—Phone conversation between members of the NFLA Road Committee and Dave Sanches, Alaska Department of Transportation
- Jan. 16, 2009—Phone conversation between members of the NFLA Road Committee and Frank Elswick, Midwest Industrial Supply Inc.
- Jan. 21, 2009—Meeting of the NFLA Road Committee with Flathead County Road & Bridge Department (Road Department) personnel
- Feb. 20, 2009—Meeting of the NFLA Road Committee
- Mar. 10, 2009—Meeting of the NFLA Road Committee with invited guest Larry Wilson
- Apr. 6, 2009— Meeting of the NFLA Road Committee with Chas Cartwright, Superintendent of Glacier National Park
- Apr. 21, 2009— Meeting of the NFLA Road Committee with Ben Conard and Scott Jackson from U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Apr. 23, 2009— Meeting of the NFLA Road Committee with Jim DeHerrera from the U.S. Forest Service and Earl Applekamp from Flathead National Forest
- May 11, 2009— Meeting of the NFLA Road Committee with Flathead County Public Works Director Dave Prunty and Operations Manager Guy Foy
- May 27, 2009— Meeting of the NFLA Road Committee with County Commissioner Jim Dupont

Road Committee provides a mid-year report

Updated July 5, 2009—Six months of diligent work by the North Fork Landowners' Association Road Committee came to fruition June 6 at Sondreson Hall, as committee members

sciences and is an expert in winter road maintenance as well as dirt road dust abatement. Much of the information presented at her talk came from the first international dust conference entitled "2008 Road Dust Management Practices and Future Needs Conference" in which she participated. Rodger Surdahl of Central Federal Lands Highway Division headed this conference that identified four research priorities, all relevant to the North Fork road:

1. Best Management Practices - Identify
2. Performance measures - How to build roads
3. Products - Specifications and Protocols
4. Education clearing house, outreach and training.

A web search should bring you to one place. Ms. Fay began her talk at Sondreson Hall with basic definitions and findings from the proceedings of this conference:

1. Dust suppressants are chemical additives applied to the surface of an unsealed road which temporarily reduce airborne particles but do not strengthen the road.
2. Soil stabilizers are material additives, which add strength and density to the road surface.
3. Dust abatement is anything that inhibits the creation of dust.
4. A palliative keeps dust out of the air.
5. Particle size of less than 10 microns are indicated by the symbol PM10, less than 2.5 by PM2.5. The EPA regulates at the PM10 level. Air quality standards for EPA are regulated at the PM 10 level and not at the PM2.5 level which means there are smaller particles floating around in the air but they are not being monitored by EPA.
6. Average daily traffic (ADT), is the total traffic volume for a period divided by the days in that period.
7. The long term safety and health issues of newer suppressant and stabilizers are not well known. Communities should check material data sheets for known information.

Betsy Holycross and Margaret Heaphy reported the results of the committee's exhaustive research at the association's first business meeting of the year.

Holycross is chairperson of the committee; Steve Berg is deputy chair. Also on the committee are Ed Heger and Steve Weber. We have been reporting on the committee's progress since it first met Dec. 12.

The committee's e-mail address is northforkroad@live.com.

Road improvements underway

Posted Oct. 21—Dave Prunty, Public Works Director for Flathead County, reports that the Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) project for North Fork road improvements is well underway this fall. Although everyone traveling the road has seen the preparations for weeks, Prunty confirmed that the heavy equipment was moved in last Tuesday, Oct. 13th. The plan is to complete the project this fall, weather permitting.

Archived Road Committee articles

Following are a series of road committee articles that have been archived but are still available for viewing.

Ms. Fay went on to explain that although there is still much to be learned in the area of dust suppression, some things are known including: how to measure dust, how to model dust plumes, that all suppressants and stabilizers work to some degree, and that road construction is critical including blade maintenance, type of gravel, shape and shoulder, and the crown should be near 1/2 inch per foot or 4%.

Ms. Fay discussed commonly used products including:

Dust palliatives/suppressants - apply to surface

- wetting
- salts, MgCl₂ & CaCl₂
- lignosulfonates -byproduct of resin
- synthetic polymers
- synthetic oils
- bitumen, tars- coal, asphalt

Surface Stabilizers

- synthetic polymer emulsions
- synthetic oils
- sulfonated oils
- Bitumen, asphalt and tar

There are no established standards for testing products to determine the environmental impacts.

Ms. Fay reviewed some basic options for the North Fork road including: 1) do nothing and 2) apply suppressants or stabilizers such as chip/seal and 3) paving.

She also raised the idea of using a feasibility

- May 18, 2009 - Paving North Fork Road a bumpy process
- Apr. 29, 2009— County County plans rockin' time for North Fork Road
- Apr. 12, 2009—Glacier superintendent emphasizes primitive values of west side of park
- Mar. 31, 2009—County requests \$175,000 from feds to improve road from Camas to Polebridge
- Mar. 4, 2009—County seeking applicants for \$100,000 cost-share dust-abatement program
- Mar. 2, 2009—County pondering narrowing road south of Camas Creek
- Feb. 11, 2009—North Fork Road candidate for paving, county officials say
- Feb. 5, 2009— Commissioners briefed on dust-mitigation efforts; 'dust deputy' diligent
- Feb. 3, 2009—Road Committee, Commissioner Dupont begin dust dialogue
- Dec. 31, 2008—Road Committee defines role, duties, makes 2009 plans
- Dec. 6, 2008—Flathead County establishes dust-abatement fund
- Sept. 28, 2008—Road-dust issue dominates September NFLA meeting
- Jun. 12, 2008—North Fork Road in the news
- Jun. 3, 2008—Dupont pondering tax to fund road maintenance
- Dec. 22, 2007—Wildlife collisions costly
- History of the North Fork Road
- A road most studied
- Results of road survey

study as a tool to look at potential options.

Ms. Fay said that a feasibility study:

- Considers all options - no option more important than another,
- Highlights the best options for the North Fork road,
- Incorporates community concern (i.e., if vehicle corrosion is a concern than the salt options would rate low on the list),
- Provides information on cost,
- Looks at the lifespan, effects and impacts of each treatment, and
- Tries to find out what is important to the community and where the community is willing to compromise.

In summary, a feasibility study looks at every option for a given road and highlights options. This type of study also provides information on the cost and liabilities of each option, making it a potentially valuable tool for decision makers.

Several options were discussed regarding the funding of such a study and other investigations. For example, the WTI could be asked to set up some test treatments, a mile treated section with a mile buffer between. WTI is federally funded and can give some matching dollars, up to 1/4 cost of a project. In addition, the Western Federal Lands (WFL) is performing road research and might be interested in either using the North Fork road as a case study or funding the feasibility study. A feasibility study could also include an independent evaluation of the NF road bed. Another option might be participating in a scan tour during the summer of 2010 headed by Roger Surdahl of the Central Federal Lands Highway Division. The intent of this tour is to go around the country to study different dirt roads and find effective dust control treatments.

Questions were taken from the audience.

One NFLA member asked Ms. Fay what she thought would be the best solution for the NF road. She replied, although she does not live here, nor is familiar with the history and complexities of our situation her personal opinion would be to pave it.

The meeting adjourned with a thank you to Ms. Fay and a Happy Birthday chorus for Val Cox and the sharing of coffee and a delicious birthday cake.



Discussions on a feasibility study

Posted Nov. 4, 2009—On Oct. 2, 2009, Margaret Heaphy and Jim Lynch of the Montana Department of Transportation (MTDOT) had a telephone conversation to discuss a feasibility study for the North Fork road. During this conversation, Mr. Lynch said:

- A feasibility study is transparent and professional (consensus with majority).
- Allows county and community to look at different alternatives.
- Allows you to narrow alternatives based on what comes out of the feasibility study.
- Looks at the cost of doing each alternative and what financial opportunities are out there.
- Informs the county of all the possibilities.
- Looks for a direction that the community supports.

In addition, a feasibility study makes no commitment to go in any direction, but gathers as much information as possible, usually non-confrontational, looks at what are the issues, looks at what are the opportunities, and is there consensus to move in any direction (e.g., maybe gravel is way to go).

Mr. Lynch further said that: the State is willing to do the work if the county so requests,



June 23, 2010

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
488 East Winchester Street, Suite 400
Murray, UT 84107

Re: Montana Secondary Highway 486/North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Planning Study

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff:

I am writing on behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association to comment on the ongoing Corridor Planning Study for Montana Secondary Highway 486 ("S486"), also known as the North Fork Flathead Road. Founded in 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association is a national non-profit corporation with more than 300,000 members. The National Parks Conservation Association's mission is to protect and enhance America's national parks for present and future generations. The S486 Corridor Planning Study presents the potential for significant impacts to Glacier National Park because S486 is the primary vehicular access corridor to the North Fork region of the park, and the entire corridor study area is adjacent to the park.

As set forth in detail below, the close nexus between the S486 Corridor Planning Study and potential impacts to Glacier National Park triggers the statutory requirements commonly referred to as Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 to the extent that any alternatives emerging from the study would seek funding from the Federal Highways Administration. Accordingly, I request that the Corridor Planning Study consider statutory obligations under Section 4(f) as you work to develop a comprehensive long-range plan and improvement alternatives for the North Fork Flathead Road corridor.

I. The Requirements of Section 4(f)

Section 4(f) requirements significantly restrict federally supported road projects that would impact public park lands, reflecting a congressional judgment "that protection of parkland was to be given paramount importance." Citizens to Preserve Overton Park v. Volpe, 401 U.S. 402, 412-3 (1971). Originally enacted as section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, the relevant provisions have since been recodified at 23 U.S.C. § 138 and 49 U.S.C. § 303, but are still commonly referred to as Section 4(f).

Section 4(f) declares a "national policy that special effort should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites." 23 U.S.C. § 138(a). In support of this policy, Section 4(f) mandates that the Secretary of Transportation

shall not approve any program or project ... which requires the use of any publicly owned land from a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, State, or local significance as determined by the Federal, State, or local officials having jurisdiction thereof ... unless (1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land, and (2) such program includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such park, recreational area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from such use.

Id.; see also 23 C.F.R. § 774.3 (same).¹

“The term ‘use’” under Section 4(f) “is to be construed broadly, not limited to the concept of a physical taking, but includes areas that are significantly, adversely affected by the project.” Adler v. Lewis, 675 F.2d 1085, 1092 (9th Cir. 1982); accord D.C. Fed’n of Civic Ass’ns v. Volpe, 459 F.2d 1231 (D.C. Cir. 1971). “Even off-site activities are governed by § 4(f) if they could create sufficiently serious impacts that would substantially impair the value of the site in terms of its prior significance and enjoyment.” Adler, 675 F.2d at 1092. This concept of “constructive use” of public park land was developed through federal case law but is now embodied in the Federal Highway Administration’s Section 4(f) regulations. See 23 C.F.R. § 774.15.

Section 4(f)’s application to any proposed improvements to S486 would be triggered if funds from the Federal Highway Administration were sought to implement such improvements. In this regard, your Corridor Planning Study website states that the portion of S486 “from Columbia Falls to the Camas Road intersection is eligible for ... the Forest Highway Construction Program funding through Western Federal Lands Highways Division, a branch of the Federal Highways Administration.”² Authorization of such federal funding would constitute approval of a “program or project” by the Federal Highway Administration necessitating compliance with Section 4(f). 23 U.S.C. § 138(a). See Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, 401 U.S. at 405 (Section 4(f) “prohibit[s] the Secretary of Transportation from authorizing the use of federal funds to finance the construction of highways through public parks if a ‘feasible and prudent’ alternative route exists.”) (footnote omitted).

¹ Section 4(f) requirements do not apply to “any project for a park road or parkway under section 204 of this title.” 23 U.S.C. § 138(a). However, the portion of S486 under study constitutes a “forest highway”—“a forest road under the jurisdiction of, and maintained by, a public authority and open to public travel,” 23 U.S.C. § 101(a)(9)—not a “park road” or “parkway.” See <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/faqs.shtml> (acknowledging that relevant section of S486 “is also designated as Forest Highway 61”). A route qualifies as a “park road” only if “maintenance responsibilities [are] vested in the United States,” 23 U.S.C. § 101(a)(19), but the portion of S486 under study “is maintained by Flathead County,” <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/faqs.shtml>. A “parkway” means only “a parkway authorized by Act of Congress,” 23 U.S.C. § 101(a)(20), and no such authorization applies to S486.

² <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/faqs.shtml>

II. S486 Improvements Threaten a “Constructive Use” of Glacier National Park

Because S486 lies adjacent to, rather than in, Glacier National Park, the Corridor Planning Study does not pose any prospect of a direct “taking” of National Park land. As discussed above, however, this fact does not render Section 4(f) inapplicable to the consideration of alternative proposals through the Corridor Planning Study process. To the contrary, more than 30 years of public analysis and debate about proposed improvements to S486 have generated substantial information demonstrating that any alternatives that would significantly increase traffic volume and speed and/or facilitate further recreational use and residential development of the North Fork area—including, specifically, paving the road—would constitute a “constructive use” of Glacier National Park under Section 4(f). The Federal Highway Administration’s regulations provide that “[a] constructive use occurs when the transportation project does not incorporate land from a Section 4(f) property, but the project’s proximity impacts are so severe that the protected activities, features, or attributes that qualify the property for protection under Section 4(f) are substantially impaired.” 23 C.F.R. § 774.15(a). Such substantial impairment occurs “when the protected activities, features, or attributes of the property are substantially diminished.” *Id.* A constructive use determination requires “[a]n analysis of the proximity impacts of the proposed project on the Section 4(f) property.” *Id.* § 774.15(d)(2).

In the case of S486, alternatives that would significantly increase traffic volume and speed and/or facilitate further recreational use and residential development of the North Fork area would substantially impair the protected activities, features, and attributes of Glacier National Park. The entire corridor study area is adjacent to the western boundary of Glacier National Park and directly abuts the park boundary in numerous locations. This is well within the range of proximity that courts have relied upon to reach constructive use determinations. See Stop H-3 Ass’n v. Coleman, 533 F.2d 434, 439, 445 (9th Cir. 1976) (holding that freeway passing within 100 to 200 feet of Section 4(f) site constituted constructive use); Brooks v. Volpe, 460 F.2d 1193, 1194 (9th Cir. 1972) (encirclement of campground by freeway deemed constructive use).

The close proximity of the corridor to park land means that substantial improvements of the corridor threaten to disrupt key features and attributes of the park. The “fundamental purpose” of Glacier National Park “is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” 16 U.S.C. § 1. According to the park’s own management plan, Glacier’s distinctive qualities include “opportunities to listen to natural sounds”; “strikingly diverse habitats that sustain plant and animal populations, including threatened and endangered, rare, and sensitive species”; “natural populations of all indigenous carnivores and most of their prey species”; and “one of the largest areas where natural processes predominate.” Nat’l Park Serv., Glacier Nat’l Park Gen. Mgmt. Plan 6 (1999) (“Glacier Mgmt. Plan”). The plan calls for the North Fork area in particular to “be managed to preserve the wild character of the area and the important linkage to the entire North Fork Valley, including the Canadian portion, for wildlife conservation.” *Id.* at 34.

Significant improvements to S486 threaten to substantially impair these park resources and objectives. A well-developed body of scientific evidence documents that road improvements pose serious and wide-ranging environmental impacts, including:

Wildlife avoidance and fragmentation of wildlife habitat: Improvements to S486 that significantly increase traffic volume and speeds would cause wildlife avoidance, fragment wildlife habitat, and disrupt key wildlife movement corridors, all of which would substantially impair major attributes and features of Glacier National Park. Scientific studies document avoidance of roads by grizzly bears, wolves, elk, moose, cougars, and other wildlife species. See Glenn P. Frederick, Effects of Forest Roads on Grizzly Bears, Elk, and Gray Wolves: A Literature Review (April 1991); Christian Dussault et al., Moose Movement Rates Along Highways and Crossing Probability Models, 71 *J. Wildlife Mgmt.* 2338 (2007); Brett G. Dickson et al., Influence of Vegetation, Topography, and Roads on Cougar Movements in Southern California, 69 *J. Wildlife Mgmt.* 264 (2005); Stephen C. Trombulak & Christopher A. Frissell, Review of Ecological Effects of Roads on Terrestrial and Aquatic Communities, 14 *Conservation Biology* 18 (2000). Moreover, road width and traffic density are the most important factors in animal avoidance of roads. See Richard T.T. Forman & Lauren E. Alexander, Roads and Their Major Ecological Effects, 29 *Ann. Rev. Ecology & Systematics* 207 (1998). Accordingly, scientists have documented avoidance of roads by grizzly bears as traffic volume increases, Richard D. Mace et al., Relationships among Grizzly Bears, Roads and Habitat in the Swan Mountains Montana, 33 *J. Applied Ecology* 1395 (1996), as well as avoidance of paved roads by cougars, Dickson et al., *supra*. Similarly, roads disrupt lynx travel and hunting patterns such that scientists recommend that roads should be maintained to minimum standards in lynx habitat. Gary M. Kochler & J. David Britnell, Managing Spruce-Fir Habitat for Lynx and Snowshoe Hares, *J. Forestry*, Oct. 1990, at 10.³

Such impacts are of particular concern in the North Fork Flathead River area because this area “offers important low elevation habitat and is critical for wildlife movement west out of Glacier National Park.” American Wildlands, Priority Linkage Assessment: Crown of the Continent 88 (2009); see also U.S. Fish & Wildlife Serv., Biological Opinion Concerning Proposed Improvement of North Fork Flathead River Road, at 2 (July 14, 1980) (“FWS 1980 Biological Opinion”) (“Grizzlies are commonly seen near and crossing the existing North Fork Road near McGinnis Road and the Big Creek and Great Northern Flats area.”). A recent assessment of the conservation status of this critical wildlife movement corridor by the group American Wildlands deemed “the potential paving of the North Fork Road” to be “[o]ne of the greatest threats in this linkage area.” American Wildlands, *supra*, at 88. The same assessment identified potential improvement of the North Fork Road as a significant threat to the integrity of three additional key wildlife movement corridors encompassing the western portion of Glacier National Park—the Camas Creek, North Whitefish Range, and Haskill Basin corridors. *Id.* at 61-62, 80-81, 90-92.

Facilitation of increased human activity and residential development: Significant improvements to S486 also would substantially impair protected activities, features, and

³ Scientific publications and other documents referenced in this letter are provided on the accompanying CD-ROM.

attributes of Glacier National Park by facilitating increased human activity and residential development in critical wildlife habitat areas along the North Fork Flathead River. As the Fish and Wildlife Service determined in assessing an earlier proposal to pave S486, “one of the major impacts to [grizzly] bears will be cumulative, indirect impacts resulting from road improvements which would facilitate increased human activity throughout the drainage,” including “rapid subdivision of private lands in the northern part of the drainage.” FWS 1980 Biological Opinion at 3. The Service agreed with the Federal Highway Administration’s assessment that increased human activity in the North Fork area “would probably result in increased bear depredation on property, increased bear-human confrontations, increased illegal killing of bears, loss of high quality grizzly habitat, and interference with grizzly behavioral and physiological requirements for isolation.” *Id.* (quotations omitted). The Service’s 30-year-old assessment correlates closely with more recent, peer-reviewed scientific research documenting that “[h]uman intolerance, inadequate management of access” and “food attractants” remain major contributors to known grizzly bear mortalities. Bryon Benn & Stephen Herrero, Grizzly Bear Mortality and Human Access in Banff and Yoho National Parks, 1971-98, 13 *Ursus* 213, 218 (2002).

The Service’s assessment of the earlier S486 paving proposal catalogued similar impacts to the gray wolf, along with additional impacts from “interference with resident ungulate populations on which wolves depend” and interference with wolf movement from “areas of British Columbia/Alberta southward through the Glacier Park-wilderness areas-national forest wilderness corridor straddling the Continental Divide.” FWS 1980 Biological Opinion at 5. Consistent with this latter point, the recent American Wildlands assessment of wildlife movement corridors recognized that “[t]he close proximity of Glacier National Park makes second home development a threat in the linkage area” encompassing the North Fork Flathead River, and stated that “[t]he most pressing opportunity identified for the North Fork linkage area was preventing paving of the North Fork Road.” *American Wildlands*, supra, at 89.

Significantly, the aforementioned impacts associated with increased human activity and residential development constitute effects of improved highway access to the North Fork Flathead River area that are likely to occur regardless of road engineering measures that might typically be applied in an effort to mitigate harms to wildlife. For example, the Fish and Wildlife Service determined in assessing a second, subsequent proposal to pave S486 that “[s]igning the road (which if paved would handle vehicular speeds of 50-miles-per-hour and greater) to a 35-mile-per-hour speed and reducing the width of the paved shoulders by a foot will have little or no effect in reducing the direct and indirect impacts on bears and wolves” from “increased subdivision,” “development of private lands,” and “increased recreational use” in the North Fork area. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Serv., *Biological Opinion Concerning Proposed Reconstruction of Forest Highway Route 61*, at 3 (Apr. 28, 1982).

Vehicle-wildlife collisions: In addition to the severe indirect impacts discussed above, significant improvements to S486 threaten direct impacts to Glacier National Park’s wildlife species through vehicle-wildlife collisions. Such collisions are documented sources of mortality for species ranging from grizzly bears and moose to reptiles and amphibians. See Trombulak & Frissell, supra; FWS 1980 Biological Opinion at 4 (identifying “increase in road kills of grizzlies” as likely consequence of paving S486). Research documents that higher vehicle speeds—often made possible by highway improvements—are an important factor contributing to

such collisions. See Ricky Lee Langley et al., Risk Factors Associated with Fatal Animal-Vehicle Collisions in the United States, 1995-2004, 17 *Wilderness & Env'tl. Med.* 229 (2006).

Spread of invasive plant species: Beyond impacts to wildlife, S486 improvements threaten to facilitate the spread of invasive plant species that undermine Glacier National Park's role as a refuge for native plant and animal communities. Roads contribute to the spread of exotic species by altering habitat conditions, stressing or removing native species, and allowing easier movement by wild and human vectors. Trombulak & Frissell, *supra*. Research documents that plant communities adjacent to paved and improved-surface roads contained a greater richness and cover of exotic species than less developed routes. Jonathan L. Gelbard & Jayne Belnap, Roads as Conduits for Exotic Plant Invasions in a Semiarid Landscape, 17 *Conservation Biology* 420 (2003).

While all of these impacts are significant, the wildlife impacts discussed above are particularly important for the Section 4(f) constructive use analysis because the Federal Highway Administration's constructive use regulations specify that

a constructive use occurs when: ... [t]he ecological intrusion of the project substantially diminishes the value of wildlife habitat in a wildlife and waterfowl refuge adjacent to the project, substantially interferes with the access to a wildlife and waterfowl refuge when such access is necessary for established wildlife migration or critical life cycle processes, or substantially reduces the wildlife use of a wildlife and waterfowl refuge.

23 C.F.R. § 774.15(e)(5); see also Letter from Eugene W. Cleckley, Federal Highway Administration, to Bruce Blanchard, U.S. Dep't of the Interior (Oct. 5, 1987) (Federal Highway Administration agreeing with Interior Department assertion that constructive use arises "where the proximity of a highway alters a habitat area in a wildlife refuge or interferes with the normal behavior of wildlife populations" so long as impacts "are sufficiently severe to substantially impair the resource") (emphases omitted). The Federal Highway Administration's Section 4(f) Policy Paper explains that a "wildlife and waterfowl refuge" means "publicly owned land (including waters) where the major purpose of such land is the conservation, restoration, or management of endangered species, their habitat, and other wildlife and waterfowl resources." Fed. Highway Admin., FHWA Section 4(f) Policy Paper 23 (Mar. 1, 2005) ("FHWA Section 4(f) Paper").

Glacier National Park satisfies this definition because its statutory purpose is "to conserve ... the wild life therein." 16 U.S.C. § 1; see also *id.* § 162 (authorizing regulations for "the care and protection of the fish and game" in Glacier National Park). The park's specific management plan for the North Fork region calls for "preserv[ing] the wild character of the area and the important linkage to the entire North Fork Valley, including the Canadian portion, for wildlife conservation." Glacier Mgmt. Plan at 34; see also FHWA Section 4(f) Paper at 23 (determination of purpose of park land as wildlife refuge must consider "lands with special national ... designations" and "the management plan for the land"). Moreover, Glacier National Park was designated in 1976 as a biosphere reserve under the Man and Biosphere Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. See Glacier Mgmt. Plan

at 8. This designation was applied “to conserve for present and future human use the diversity and integrity of biotic communities and to safeguard the genetic diversity of species.” Id.; see also FHWA Section 4(f) Paper at 23 (requiring consideration of “lands with special ... international designations” in determining wildlife refuge status). Accordingly, Glacier National Park constitutes a “wildlife and waterfowl refuge” under the Section 4(f) regulations, such that improvements to S486 that would “substantially diminish[] the value of wildlife habitat” in the park, “substantially interfere[] with the access” to the park by wildlife, and “substantially reduce[] the wildlife use of” the park, as detailed above, constitute a per se constructive use of park land under 23 C.F.R. § 774.15(e)(5).

For all these reasons, alternatives that would significantly increase traffic volume and speed on S486 and/or facilitate further recreational use and residential development of the North Fork area constitute a constructive use of Glacier National Park. Therefore, any such alternatives trigger Section 4(f)’s statutory requirements for the conservation of park land.⁴

III. Incorporating Section 4(f)’s Requirements Into The Corridor Planning Study

Section 4(f) mandates that improvements to S486 may not cause a constructive use of Glacier National Park land “unless (1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land, and (2) such program includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such park ... resulting from such use.” 23 U.S.C. § 138(a); accord 23 C.F.R. § 774.3(a). As these provisions make clear, “only the most unusual situations are exempted” from Section 4(f)’s basic prohibition on use—constructive or otherwise—of park land for highway projects. Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, 401 U.S. at 411.

Given that an express purpose of the Corridor Planning Study for S486 is to “recommend potential improvement options (if any) for [the North Fork Flathead Road],”⁵ it is imperative for Section 4(f) requirements to be applied at this early stage of project analysis—not put off until a subsequent environmental impact analysis process. “The potential use of land from a Section

⁴ The Corridor Planning Study is not eligible for application of one of the Federal Highway Administration’s “programmatic Section 4(f) evaluations,” which are a “time-saving procedural alternative to preparing individual Section 4(f) evaluations.” 23 C.F.R. § 774.3(d). Such programmatic evaluations are available only “for certain minor uses of Section 4(f) property.” 23 C.F.R. § 774.3(d) (emphasis added). For example, the Administration has issued a programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation for “Federally-Aided Highway Projects With Minor Involvement With Public Parks, Recreation Lands, Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges, and Historic Sites.” Id. n.1. This programmatic evaluation applies only where “[t]he amount and location of the land to be used shall not impair the use of the remaining Section 4(f) land, in whole or in part, for its intended purpose,” <http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/4fmparks.asp>—a finding that could not legitimately be reached here because of the impacts discussed above—and even then only if “officials having jurisdiction over the Section 4(f) lands ... agree, in writing, with the assessment of the impacts of the proposed project on, and the proposed mitigation for, the Section 4(f) lands.” Id.

⁵ <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/faqs.shtml>

4(f) property shall be evaluated as early as practicable in the development of the action when alternatives to the proposed action are under study." 23 C.F.R. § 774.9(a) (emphasis added).

Incorporation of Section 4(f) requirements in the ongoing Corridor Planning Study for S486 necessitates a searching analysis of alternatives that would avoid impacts constituting a constructive use of Glacier National Park lands. Section 4(f)'s requirements mean that "the Secretary cannot approve the destruction of parkland unless he finds that alternative routes present unique problems." Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, 401 U.S. at 413. Moreover, "[i]n order to demonstrate that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of 4(f) land, the evaluation must address both location alternatives and design shifts that totally avoid the 4(f) land." FHWA Section 4(f) Paper at 4. In this case, options that avoid constructive use of Glacier National Park in the manner discussed above must be considered.

In sum, Section 4(f) requirements represent a critical limitation on alternatives that may legitimately be considered in the ongoing Corridor Planning Study, dictating avoidance of impacts to the irreplaceable natural resources of Glacier National Park to the maximum extent possible. Accordingly, I urge you to incorporate consideration of Section 4(f)'s mandates at the earliest possible stage of your planning process.

Please contact me with any questions about any aspect of this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Timothy J. Preso

Earthjustice is a non-profit public interest law firm dedicated to protecting the magnificent places, natural resources, and wildlife of this earth, and to defending the right of all people to a healthy environment.

cc: Chas Cartwright, Superintendent, Glacier National Park
Chip Weber, Supervisor, Flathead National Forest
Clara Conner, Division Engineer, Western Federal Lands Highway Division
Kevin McLaury, Regional Administrator, Federal Highway Administration
Sheila Ludlow, Project Manager, Montana Department of Transportation



National Parks Conservation Association®
*Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations**

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June 23, 2010

Lani Eggertsen-Goff
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Re: Montana Secondary Highway 486/North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Planning Study

Dear Ms. Eggertsen-Goff:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study founded in 1919, National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) is a national non-profit with over 300,000 citizen members; our mission statement is "to protect and enhance America's national parks for present and future generations."

Preserving over one million acres along the Continental Divide, Glacier National Park is a crown jewel of the United States' national park system. In 1932, acts of Canadian Parliament and the US Congress formally recognized Glacier and adjoining Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta as the world's first international peace park. In recent decades the international recognition of Waterton-Glacier has continued with designation in 1976 as a World Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage site in 1996 by UNESCO.

We note high level of public concern and interest in protecting the values of the North Fork portion of Glacier National Park, to which S486 provides access. Protection for this portion of the park has been the subject of attention at an international level. For over three decades, the Canadian headwaters of the valley were subject to numerous proposals for the development of large open pit coalmines. In February of 2010, Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer and British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell signed an MOU that banned mining and oil and gas development in both the US and Canadian portions of the watersheds. Montana's Senators have introduced companion legislation in Congress (S. 3075) to withdraw federal lands in the US portion of the watershed.

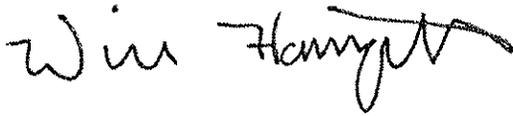
These steps were taken with strong public support in both countries. In June of 2009, over 50,000 comments from members of the public in both countries were sent to officials in both countries asking that concrete steps be taken to protect Glacier National Park and the North Fork of the Flathead Valley from industrial fossil fuel extraction. Public support for protecting the existing natural values of Glacier National Park is evident and national in scope. Waterton-Glacier is recognized globally as a UNESCO world heritage site, it is the world's first peace park, and is protected by the Organic Act of the National Park Service. Both countries have clear statutory and treaty-based mandates to protect the natural values of the national park and adjacent landscapes that are in close proximity to the protected resource.

Page 2

Our comments are based on the fact that any studies pertaining to S486, which is the primary route for vehicular access to the remote northwestern third of Glacier National Park, must not diminish the integrity of the natural values of Glacier National Park. Clear statutory obligations support this position and provide a legal mandate of non-impairment for any alternatives that may result from this corridor study or any subsequent studies.

Please reference the attached companion comments prepared by Earthjustice on our behalf, which provide a detailed summary of the existing wildlife data, documented park values, and the legal rationale supporting our position that any alternatives resulting from the S486 corridor study must not impair the values of Glacier National Park and are subject to the most rigorous review provided under Section 4 of the Transportation Act.

Sincerely,



Will Hammerquist
Glacier Program Manager

CC:

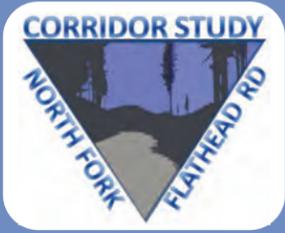
Chas Cartwright, Glacier National Park Superintendent chas_cartwright@nps.gov
Chip Weber, Flathead National Forest, Supervisor cweber@fs.fed.us
Clara Conner, Western Federal Lands Highway Administrator clara.conner@dot.gov
Sheila Ludlow, MT Department of Transportation, Project Manager sludlow@mt.gov

Glacier National Park
Park Headquarters
Attn: Chas Cartwright
PO Box 128 West Glacier, MT 59936

Flathead National
Forest Supervisors Office
Attn: Chip Weber
650 Wolfpack Way Kalispell, MT 59901

Montana Department of Transportation
Planning Division
Attn: Sheila Ludlow
PO box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Western Federal Lands Highway Division
Attn: Clara Conner
610 E 5th Street
Vancouver, WA 98661



NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD

CORRIDOR STUDY



Please join us...

at a public open house to review the
Draft Corridor Study Document for the
North Fork Flathead Road
(Highway 486 - RP 9.5 to 22.7)

Tuesday, July 27, 2010
6:30pm - 8:30pm

Discovery Square
Sperry Auditorium

540 Nucleus Avenue
Columbia Falls

This public meeting will be an
open-house format where members of
the public can ask the study team
about the draft document and provide
comments to be incorporated into the
final document. Attendees may come
and go any time during the meeting.

For reasonable accommodations to participate in
this meeting, please contact Paul Grant at
406/444.9415 at least two days before the meeting.

For additional information, please visit:
www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/

PUBLIC MEETING





**Public
Meeting**



**Corridor Planning Study - Hwy 486 in
Flathead County
Open House Meeting
Tuesday, July 27, 2010
Meeting Begins at 6:30 p.m.
Discovery Square - Sperry Auditorium
540 Nucleus Avenue, Columbia Falls, MT**

Flathead County, in partnership with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), will discuss a Corridor Planning Study regarding 13 miles of Highway 486 (aka North Fork Flathead Rd. (NFFR)) north of Columbia Falls, beginning at reference post 9.5 (Blankenship Rd.) and extending to reference post 22.70 (Camus Cr. Rd.). The purpose of this meeting is for the public to review and give comment on the Draft Corridor Study. This public meeting will be an open-house format where members of the public can ask the study team about the draft document and provide comments to be incorporated into the final document.

The meeting is open to the public and the community is urged to attend. Flathead County and MDT attempt to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any department service, program or activity. For reasonable accommodations to participate in this meeting, please contact Paul Grant at (406) 444-9415 at least two days before the meeting. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or (800) 335-7592, or Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request.

Comments may be submitted in writing at the meeting, by mail to Lani Eggertsen-Goff, Parsons Brinckerhoff, 488 E. Winchester St., Suite 400, Murray, UT 84107 or online at www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/ Please indicate comments are for project Highway 486 Study in Flathead County.



July 12, 2010

xx
xxxxxx
xxxxx

Dear xxxxx,

You are invited to a public meeting to review the North Fork Flathead Road (NFFR) draft Corridor Study document and give comments. The meeting will be held at **Discovery Square in the Sperry Auditorium, 540 Nucleus Avenue in Columbia Falls, on July 27, 2010 at 6:30 p.m.**

The purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive long-range plan for managing the corridor and determine what, if anything can be done to improve the corridor based on needs, public and agency input, and financial feasibility. The study is a collaborative process with Flathead County, other agencies, the MDT Missoula District, and the public to identify transportation needs and potential solutions given funding constraints. The Corridor Study limits are the intersection of State Highway 486 and Blankenship Road north of Columbia Falls (approximate Reference post 9.5) north to the junction with Camas Creek Road (approximate Reference post 22.7).

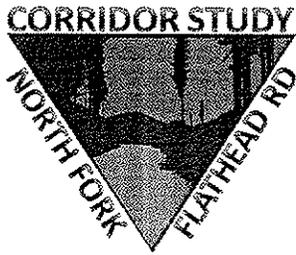
The meeting will be an Open House format; you may come and go as you choose until the meeting ends at 8:30 p.m. Community participation is a very important part of the process, and the public is encouraged to attend. For more information and to review the draft Corridor Study document please go the study website: www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork.

Comments on the draft Corridor Study document may be submitted prior to the July 27 meeting, or at the meeting in writing or verbally with the court reporter. Comments may also be submitted by mail to Lani Eggertsen-Goff, 488 East Winchester St., # 400, Murray UT, 84107 or online at: www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/comment_form.shtml. Comments must be received by 5 p.m. on August 10, 2010 to be incorporated into the final Corridor Study document.

MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any service, program or activity of our department. If you require reasonable accommodations to participate in this meeting, please call Paul Grant at (406) 444-9415 at least two days before the meeting. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592, or call Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request.

Sincerely,

Lani Eggertsen-Goff, Project Manager
Study Consultant - P.B. Americas, Inc.



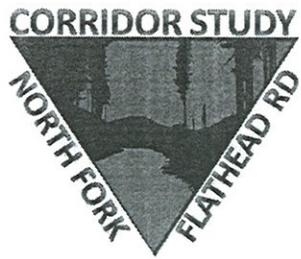
Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
Richard Kohl			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: <i>e-mail</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Jerry O'Neil Candidate, HD-3			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
K.J. Has call Hungry Horse News			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Karen McDonough			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Bob BIGLER			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
GARY HALL FORMER COUNTY COMMISSIONER			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Cecily McNeil			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you
CALEB SOPTLEAN			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
MITCH BURGARD			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Erin Cole Flathead Beacon			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you



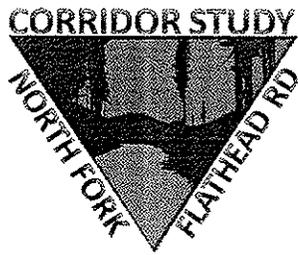
Sign-In

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Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
Lynn P Cogle			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
JOHN COLLINS			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
DEBRA GROOBE			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
KARY MCDONOUGH			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Zac Perry			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



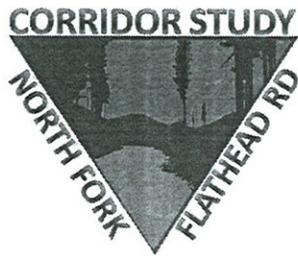
Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

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LON J. BURCARD			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Rep Dee BROWN			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Steve Gniadek			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Kevin Ramey			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
John Frederick			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other: ewar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



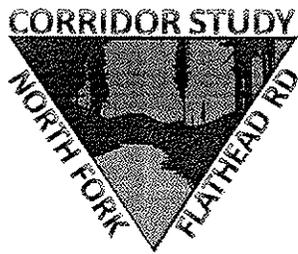
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Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
Doug Barnes			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Debo Powers			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
David Hadden			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Wendy Upton			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: E-mail	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Linda Pittman			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



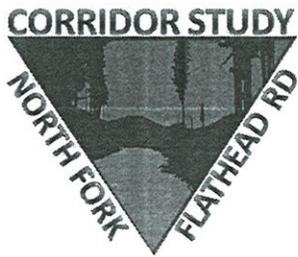
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Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

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R.A. GRIMALDI			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
JEAN GRIMALDI			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Lee Dawmes			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Alice Caldwell			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Ralph C Hemp			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



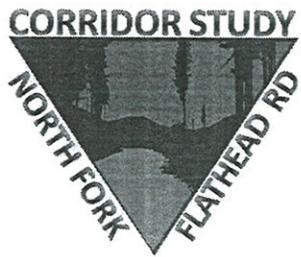
Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
GARY McDONOUGH			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Molly Shepherd			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Jane Benson			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Carol Pike Columbia Falls Area C			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
RAY BROWN NFRCHS			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
TOM EDWARDS			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Roger Beck			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
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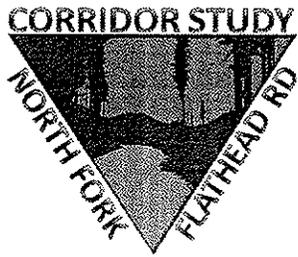
Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
Rachel Potter			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Corwyn Wyman			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
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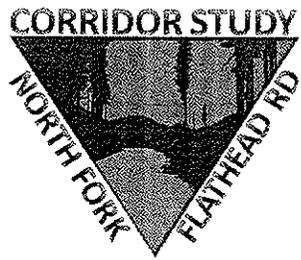
Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
NFRCHS			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Erik Bodeen MT Dist Council			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Annemarie Harris			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
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			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



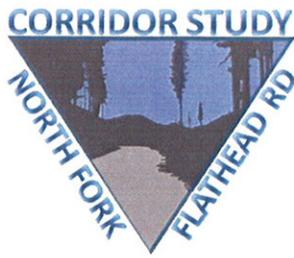
Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square

Date: 27 July 2010 6:30 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
<i>Rich Wigness Montana Inset Control</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
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			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



3 minutes!

Sign-In for Court Reporter

Meeting Name: Public Meeting Location: Columbia Falls, Discovery Square Date: 7-27-10 6:30pm

	NAME / ORGANIZATION	Time	Complete
1.	DON BARNEZ	6:10 PM	
2.	ALICE CALDWELL		
3.	ROBERT BRIMALDI	6	
4.	Lee Downes	6:29	6:30
5.	Dee BROWN		
6.	RAYMOND BROWN	6:37 P	6:45
7.	STEVE LOCKWOOD		
8.	Gary Hall		
9.	RALPH C. HEMP		
10.	Gary Hall		
11.	DENNIS GROEZE		
12.	KARY McDONOUGH		
13.	KAREN McDONOUGH		
14.	GARY McDONOUGH		
15.	TOM E. EDWARDS		
16.	Roger L. Beck		
17.	John Frederick		
18.			
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32.			
33.			



Public Meeting

Draft Corridor Study
Open House

July 27, 2010

At the meeting tonight.....

Tonight's meeting will be an Open House. As you arrive please sign-in. You are invited to have discussions concerning the Draft Corridor Study Document with study team members. They will be near the boards that describe each of the sections of the Draft Corridor Study Document, however they may not be able to answer all questions tonight. These sections include:

Existing Conditions
Improvement Options
Public Involvement

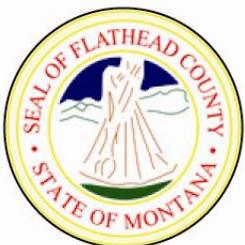
The goal of tonight's meeting is to gather comments on the Draft Corridor Study Document. To facilitate this process comment forms are available to fill out which will be collected here, in the comment box or you can mail them in to Lani Eggertsen-Goff, PB 488 E. Winchester Street, Suite 400, Murray UT 84107.

You can also verbally give your comments to the court reporter. The study team will summarize this meeting in the August newsletter. The newsletter will be posted on the study website and paper copies will be available by request.

How to stay informed after tonight's meeting:

Study website : www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/
To provide comment : mdtnffrteam@mt.gov

Thank you for coming to the meeting and providing us with your questions, issues and concerns on the Draft Corridor Study Document.





**Public
Meeting**



**Discuss Corridor Planning Study - Hwy
486 in Flathead County
Tuesday, April 20, 2010
Doors Open at 6:00 p.m.
Presentation at 6:30 p.m.
Columbia Falls City Hall - Council
Chambers
130 6th St. W., Columbia Falls**

Flathead County, in partnership with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), will discuss a Corridor Planning Study regarding 13 miles of Highway 486 (aka North Fork Flathead Rd. (NFFR)) north of Columbia Falls, beginning at reference marker 9.5 (Blankenship Rd.) and extending to reference marker 22.70 (Camus Cr. Rd.). The purpose of the meeting is to gather public input to determine the feasible roadway improvements, if any, that may be needed in the future.

The meeting is open to the public and the community is urged to attend. Flathead County and MDT attempt to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any department service, program or activity. For reasonable accommodations to participate in this meeting, please contact Paul Grant at (406) 444-9415 at least two days before the meeting. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or (800) 335-7592, or Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request.

Comments may be submitted in writing at the meeting, by mail to Lani Eggertsen-Goff, Parsons Brinckerhoff, 488 E. Winchester St., Suite 400, Murray, UT 84107 or online at www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/ Please indicate comments are for project Highway 486 Study in Flathead County.



April 8, 2010

Name
Address
City, State zip

Dear Name;

You are invited to a public information meeting to discuss the North Fork Flathead Road (NFFR) Corridor Study process and give comments. The Corridor Study limits are the intersection of State Highway 486 and Blankenship Road north of Columbia Falls (approximate Reference post 9.5) north to the junction with Camas Creek Road (approximate Reference post 22.7).

The purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive long-range plan for managing the corridor and determine what, if anything can be done to improve the corridor based on needs, public and agency input, and financial feasibility. The study is a collaborative process with Flathead County, other agencies, the MDT Missoula District, and the public to identify transportation needs and potential solutions given funding constraints.

The doors will open at 6 p.m. with the presentation beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 20, 2010, in the Council Chambers at Columbia Falls City Hall, 130 6th Street West. Community participation is a very important part of the process, and the public is encouraged to attend. For more information including study area maps please go the study website: www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/. Enclosed is a map of the study area illustrating the limits of the roadway that will be studied during this process.

Opinion and comments may be submitted in writing at the meeting, by mail to Lani Eggertsen-Goff, Study Consultant, 488 East Winchester Street, Suite 400, Murray UT, 84107 or online at www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml. Please indicate comments are for Highway 486 Study in Flathead County.

MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any service, program or activity of our department. If you require reasonable accommodations to participate in this meeting, please call Paul Grant at (406) 444-9415 at least two days before the meeting. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592, or call Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request.

Sincerely,

Lani Eggertsen-Goff, Project Manager
Study Consultant - P.B. Americas, Inc.



Distribution List for Public Meeting Invitation Sent April 8, 2010

JESSE P JACOBS	F H STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER CO I
THIRD AVENUE INVESTMENTS LLC	MOSS III CHARELS HUNTER MOSS III
DONALD LEE & JONNI L MILLS	KITTY HYER REVOCABLE TRUST
ROBERT P & MARCIA M SZYMANSKI	JOSEPH S KRANITZ
DEAN C ALBERT	JOSEPH C ROSE REVOCABLE LIVING
JOSEPH E PITTSO	JOE PITTSO
RODNEY L & LAUREEN M EMMERT	PAUL W & CARLA P GENOVESE
F H STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER	C M FISHEL
SCOTT R & NANCY L COLLARD	KOZUCH
FRED J & LUVI R DYE	ROGER L & KATHLEEN M BECK
THIRD AVENUE INVESTMENTS LLC	CHARLES & KATHRY MEYERS
JOSEPH C ROSE REVOCABLE LIVING	MATHIAS JACOB & ANN M BOHMER
GLACIER LINE LOGGING INC	CHRISTI HORNE MASTERS
JAMES J PRETE	JOHN & CHARLOTTE MORRIS
MARK B & LAURA LAWSON	SEARIGHT JOINT REV TRUST MURLA
DOWNES FAMILY TRUST	JENS NIELSEN
TYLER & BRANDY TOURVILLE	JACK L HEIL
DENNIS J & LINDA L RICHARDSON	GLACIER LINE LOGGING INC
THEODORE JOHN WEHE	RICHARD OWENS
DOUGLAS H & EVELYN M CAMPBELL	RAYMOND A & GENEVA BECKER
RAY A YOUNG REVOCABLE TRUST	



Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
Richard Kuhl			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Cindy Shaw			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Joe & Wally Pittson			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Calvin McNab			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Benny Morris			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you

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Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
<i>Cheryl Bergerson</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
<i>Dan Ward</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
<i>DUKE HOLLAND</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
<i>RALPH C HEMP</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
<i>Larry Wilson</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



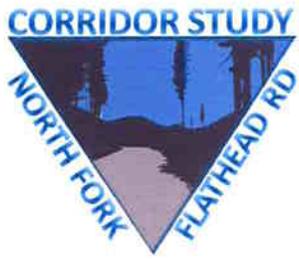
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Kate Mower MCC			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Frances Wade			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Kay Dawson			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Lynn POB			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you <i>leple I @ceowiretel.net</i>
Ailee Childress			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you



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Jerry Wernick			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Hunter + Debi Moss MOSSMOUNTAIN			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
TOM EDWARDS			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Lore Barnes			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Orla Br...			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you



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Betsy Haycross NFLA			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Scott Emmerich Glacier NP			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Paul Maroty NFLA			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
D. MARK BOYD III			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Rep Dee BROWN HD 3			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



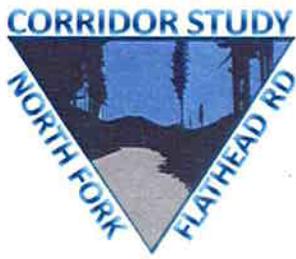
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RAY BROWN NFRCHS			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Stuart Reising Polebridge Mercantile			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Don BARNHART City of Col Falls			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Wendy Upton			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Miki Ahl U.S. Border Patrol			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



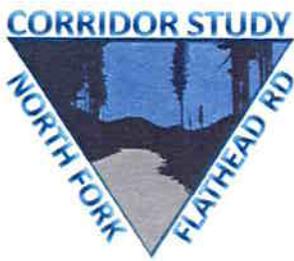
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NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
Karen Reeves			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Bill Bots			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
PAUL MCKENZIE			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Doug Woehler			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Lee Secret			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



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Richard Johnston U.S. Border Patrol			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Ellen Horowitz			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
ROB CARLIN US FOREST SERVICE			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Steve Thompson			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Harvey Reikofski Columbia Falls City Council			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



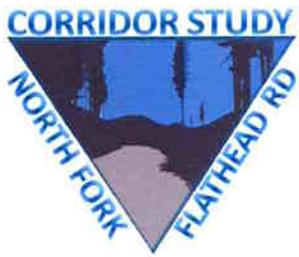
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BURGARD, DON			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
George Fekaris Federal Highways Admin / Western Federal lands			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Terry Richmond			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Andrew Hagenciez ECPZ			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Richard Johnston US Border Patrol			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



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Margaret Hegphy landowner NFLA			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: NFLA road committee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Bill BAUM			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Karin Chaver mail carrier & Resident 1535			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Alan McNeil			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
JIM FESTER NATIONAL PARK SERVICE			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you

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Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

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NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
Molly Bridg Flathead Beacon			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Rachel Potter North Fork Provision Assn			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Cus Struble H&S			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Chris Peterson Hungry Horse News			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
BRIAN PECK NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you



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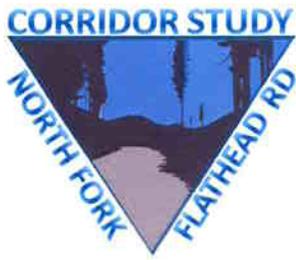
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JAN Caldwell NORTH FORK Road condition for Health & Safety			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Jimmy DeHerrera US Forest Service			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
EARL Applebaum USFS			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Stephanie Dubois Glacier NP			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Steve Berg			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you

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Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
Bill OIMSTED NERCHS			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Edwin Fields HEADWATERS MT.			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Mike Shepard Col Falls			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Flannery Coats Polebridge Merz Polebridge			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Steve Gniadek			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you

7



Sign-In

Meeting Name: Public Meeting

Location: Columbia Falls, City Hall

Date: 20 April 2010 6 p.m.

NAME / ORGANIZATION	ADDRESS / CITY / ZIP	EMAIL	HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THIS EVENT?	EMAIL UPDATE LIST
Carol Pike CF Chamber of Commerce			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Will Hammerquist National Parks Conservation Assoc.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Dave & Sally Peterson			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Jencla W... <i>(Signature)</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input type="checkbox"/> No thank you
Sandy Welch			<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> County Website <input type="checkbox"/> MDT Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please add me <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No thank you



Public Meeting

Volume 1, Issue 1

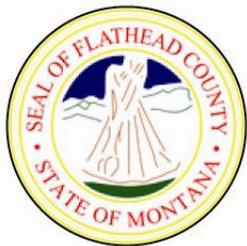
April 20, 2010

At the meeting tonight...

Tonight's meeting will begin with signing in and informal discussions with the study team around the study area maps.

Commissioner Dupont will begin the formal presentation with greetings and team introductions at 6:30 pm. Lani Eggertsen-Goff will then give a power point presentation and discuss the purpose of the meeting, the Corridor Study Process, go over the study objectives, outline the next steps and listen to your issues, concerns and questions.

The purpose of tonight's meeting is to describe the Corridor Study Process including how it relates to NEPA/MEPA, discuss the study area boundaries, share information we have heard to date, ask for your input about issues and concerns within the study area, address your questions about the Study Process and discuss next steps. Thank you for coming to the meeting and providing us with your input on issues and concerns.



How to stay informed

The study team is developing a FAQ (frequently asked questions) page for the website. Please check the website often for updates. By providing your email contact information you will receive study updates as soon as they happen.

- Study website is: www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/
- To provide comment : mdtnffrteam@mt.gov



WELCOME

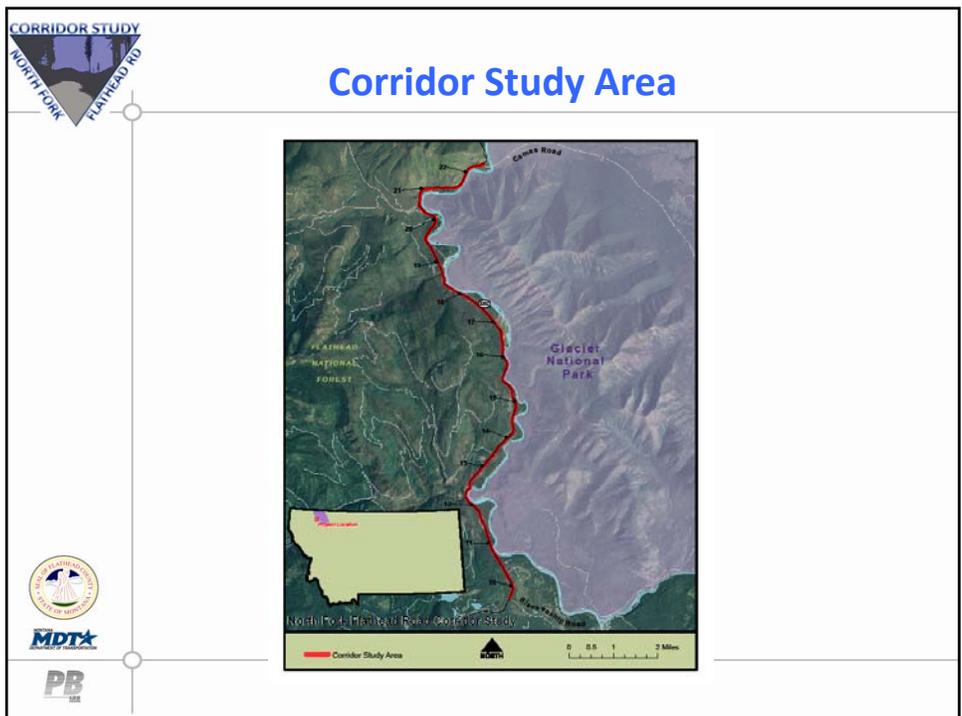
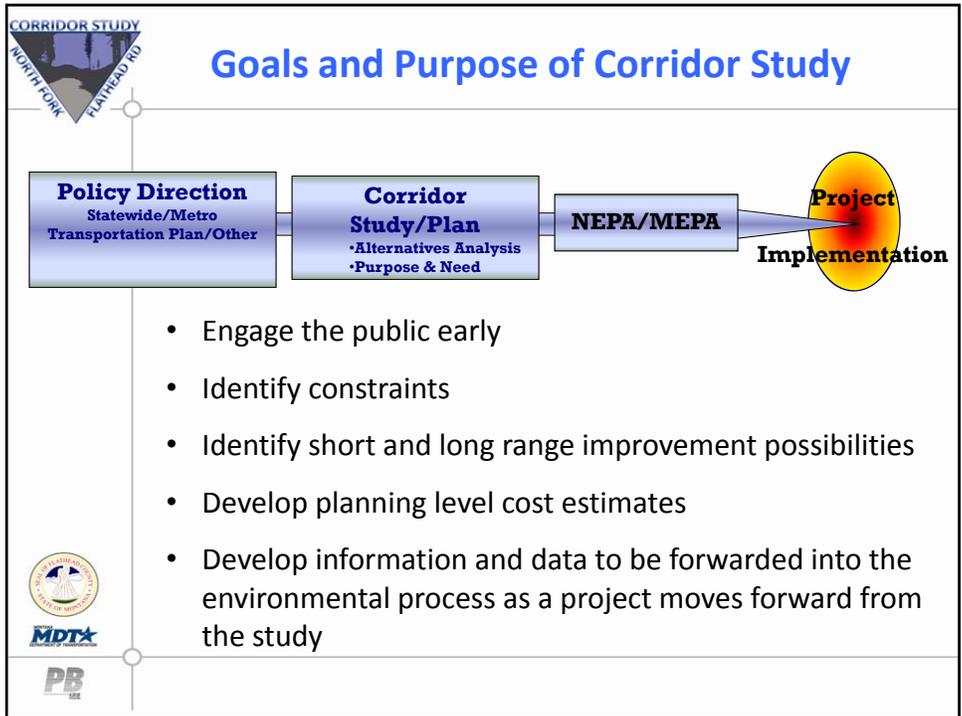
Public Meeting for
HWY 486/North Fork Flathead Road
Corridor Study



Meeting Purpose

- Introduce the North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
- Explain the Corridor Study and public involvement process
- Discuss the study area boundaries
- Share information we have heard so far
- Ask for your input on the Study area
- Answer any Study Process questions
- Discuss next steps







Corridor Planning vs. NEPA/MEPA

What is the Corridor Study Process?

- NOT a NEPA/MEPA* study or environmental study
- NOT a preliminary or final design project
- NOT a construction or maintenance project
- NOT a right of way acquisition project

** The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) / Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) is a policy for the protection of the natural environment and human health and welfare and is carried out by promoting efforts to prevent or eliminate damage to the environment*



MDTA



Corridor Study Approach

Corridor Studies:

- Are a “High-Level” Scan
- Define transportation issues/problems
- Assess a broad range of options
- Consider social, economic and environmental effects at an EARLY stage and throughout the study process
- Provide a level of analysis that can support informed and sustainable decisions



MDTA





Stakeholders/P.I. Activities/Schedule

Study Team

- Flathead County
- Flathead National Forest
- Glacier National Park
- Federal Highways Administration/Western Federal Lands
- PB Americas (formerly Parsons Brinckerhoff)
- Montana Department of Transportation

Stakeholders (potential)

- North Fork Landowners Association
- Fire Departments and Emergency Medical Personnel
- County Sheriff and MT State Highway Patrol
- Resource and Regulatory Agencies
- Others



Public Involvement Activities

- Two public informational meetings
- Outreach to select landowners and stakeholders
- Other outreach efforts
 - Project newsletters
 - Website
 - Informal meetings



CORRIDOR STUDY
NORTH FORK
FLATHEAD RD

Schedule

- Project kick-off meeting – March
- Public Information & Resource Agency meetings - April
- Draft Corridor Study Document -- July
- Final Corridor Study Document – August

MDT
PB

CORRIDOR STUDY
NORTH FORK
FLATHEAD RD

Complete Existing Conditions

- Corridor description
- Existing traffic volumes
- Existing crash trends
- Environmental resources
- Environmental scan

- Begin analysis of transportation needs
- Begin identification of potential improvement options for the corridor

MDT
PB



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

- Today - please give us your input on issues within the Corridor Study area – we're hear to listen!
- As the Corridor Study process continues - please comment on potential options and recommendations

Comments accepted via the MDT website, regular mail and email. Please provide comments about your issues and concerns so that we may include with our initial analysis period

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/>

or see handout for email and regular mail addresses.

WHAT ARE YOUR CORRIDOR STUDY PROCESS RELATED QUESTIONS?



MDT

PB



Thank You for Participating

Your input is valued and appreciated, please note the contact information for the Study Team Leads:

Jim Dupont

Flathead County Commissioner

jdupont@flathead.mt.gov | 406.758.5503

Sheila Ludlow

MDT Project Manager

sludlow@mt.gov | 406.444.9193

Lani Eggertsen-Goff

PB Americas

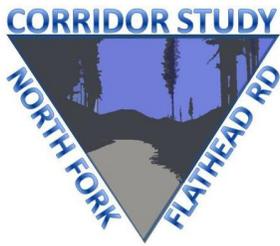
Project Manager

goff@pbworld.com | 801.288.3220



MDT

PB



NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD CORRIDOR STUDY
PUBLIC MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2010
COLUMBIA FALLS CITY HALL

Below is a synopsis of comments received as transcribed from the meeting notes; all written statements submitted will be retained as part of the final document and comments provided verbally at the meeting to the study team are captured in the meeting minutes and will be retained for the study files..

Nearly seventy five people participated at the North Fork Flathead Corridor Study public meeting held April 20, 2010 at the Columbia Falls City office on 130 6th Street West. The attendees included local community residents and business owners, Flathead County staff, MDT staff, resource agency staff and public officials. The evening began with a half hour open-house; this was followed by a brief presentation by the consultant, and concluded with a full hour public comment period. The intent of the meeting was to find out what the issues of the study corridor. The most frequent concern raised was roadway dust and the potential driving hazards it poses including: requirements for drivers to travel at slower speeds, speed limit enforcement or lack thereof, reduced visibility, impacts on air and water quality, impacts to view shed and recreation.

Remarks regarding the timeliness of Emergency Service response to the community of Polebridge and other residents north of the study area were forwarded. Some of those who expressed concerns related to safety said they think that paving the gravel portions of the road will improve the unsafe road conditions they see, for example washboard driving surface, dust and overall slow driving condition causing delays for emergency services.

Other comments requested the study look at ways to minimize the potential for wildlife impacts including collisions in the corridor and expressed concern that if the gravel roadway sections are paved the increased speed will result in unsafe conditions for wildlife and motorists. Many stated that traffic is increased in the summer with GNP tourists coming from Camas Road.

Several participants were unclear about the ownership/jurisdiction and which entity is responsible for maintenance of the roadway within the study area – the consultant has provided a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document and a map of this on the study website. The FAQs and map will help clarify who is responsible for what. Others pointed out that the roadway was too wide and this adds to the roadway maintenance expenses.

Columbia Falls' Mayor submitted a proclamation at the meeting advocating roadway improvements including paving of the gravel portion of the roadway in the study area.

Many comments included discussion of the recent compact in the area regarding limits on development of oil and gas and mining. This led to the discussion of economics and concerns raised around this issue included balancing demands on this delicate ecosystem, future development, tourism, and distribution of taxes for all the county roads, not just NFFR.

All participants were encouraged to visit the study website as it is updated and as the study progresses they will be informed of additional ways to participate in the process.



NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD

SEPTEMBER 2010



corridor study update

The North Fork of the Flathead Road (NFFR) runs from the City of Columbia Falls northward, passing near the community of Polebridge and up to the United States border with Canada. This pre-NEPA/MEPA corridor study evaluated a 13-mile section, from the junction with Blankenship Road (RP 9.5) to the junction with Camas Creek Road (RP 22.7). This segment of roadway is a Forest Highway (Forest Highway 61), on the state Secondary Highway System (HWY 486) and maintained by Flathead County.

The request for a study along this corridor came from Flathead County in response to the numerous concerns received from residents seeking a mechanism to make improvements along the gravel section of the roadway currently under the county's jurisdiction.

The final document discusses the findings and recommendations for the NFFR Corridor Study conducted by PB for Flathead County between March 2010 and August 2010. This newsletter presents the highlights of the document.

The purpose of the study was to gather information from the public to identify options and consensus, if any, to improve driving conditions and the surrounding environment along the corridor. The corridor study evaluated the feasibility of improving the corridor including assessing a range of low-level safety or maintenance-type improvements to consideration of major reconstruction. The intent of the study is not to identify a specific project, but give Flathead County options to consider in future planning and operation on the North Fork Flathead Road, if any public consensus exists.

The process involved a collaborative effort with Flathead County, other agencies and the public in identifying transportation problems and the most efficient and effective possible options to address the issues and concerns.

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/

NEWSLETTER

background and where to find the final document

For all previous elements of the corridor study process and to view the final document, please visit the website.

Paper copies of the document can be found at the following locations:

In Columbia Falls

Columbia Falls Library
130 6th Street West #C
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

Columbia Falls City Hall
130 6th Street West #A
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

In Helena

MDT
2960 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59601

(continued)



study objectives & corridor needs

Objectives for the study were identified at the beginning of the study process and were further refined based on input from the public and resource agencies. They include:

- Document existing conditions – roadway and environmental
- Review data available that projects future growth
- Identify corridor issues
- Develop corridor goals and possible improvement options
- Analyze future transportation improvements based on impacts, constructability, public acceptance, and financial feasibility
- Recommend possible improvement options and management strategies for long-term safety and operation of the corridor
- Maintain character of the area
- Develop dust mitigation strategies
- Review impacts on wildlife
- Identify maintenance needs - roadway surface conditions, including washboard and potholes
- Review travel speeds
- Document roadway safety
- Review emergency services

strategies for identifying corridor problems

The following strategies were utilized to identify problems within the study corridor:

- A. Review of existing MDT reports – Existing reports that MDT has prepared for the corridor were reviewed and include the following:
 - Preliminary Geotechnical Report
 - MDT Accident Analysis Reports
 - Environmental Scan

Note: the Geotechnical Report and Environmental Scan are available in a CD or on the webpage and are included as part of the final document.

- B. Stakeholder interviews – Fourteen stakeholders (see list on following page) were interviewed. During the stakeholder interviews, safety and environmental concerns were discussed with landowners, resource agency staff, business owners, recreation outfitters, non-profit organizations and a local government official.

- C. Engineering review of the existing corridor compared to current design standards – The existing roadway alignment was compared to current MDT design standards.

- D. Public and agency coordination – Coordination with the general public and the resource agencies occurred throughout the study.

Feedback from the public and agencies was used to identify corridor issues and concerns, as well as potential improvement options. Several meetings occurred during the study process.

background and where to find the final document (continued)

In Kalispell

Flathead County Offices
800 South Main Street
Kalispell, MT 59901

Flathead County
1249 Willow Glen Drive
Kalispell, MT 59901

MDT

85 5th Avenue East N.
Kalispell, MT 59901

In Missoula

MDT

2100 West Broadway
Missoula, MT 59807-7039



NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD

SEPTEMBER 2010



improvement options advanced for future consideration

Over 25 improvement options were analyzed to address the issues and concerns identified in the corridor study area and a detailed description of each option is included in Section 4 of the corridor study document. Options were grouped into five categories – maintenance, stabilization treatments, improve grading/surfacing, speed enforcement strategies, and bituminous surface treatment. A no-action option was also included.

All options were reviewed for potential cost and analyzed against eight criteria, each option was then reviewed for advancement or exclusion. Criteria for screening included:

- Helps with dust abatement
- Agrees with land use and management plans
- Impact to environment
- Impact to wildlife
- Potential to increase vehicle speed
- Improve road safety
- Potential to increase traffic
- Estimated cost over 20 years

While several of the improvement options presented in the study are feasible from an engineering perspective, only additional grading and stabilization treatments have public support. Regardless, implementation is dependent upon funding being secured.

viable improvement options*

Improvement Options	Viable Feasible / Public Support
2. Maintenance	
2a. Additional grading of current road	Yes/Yes
3. Stabilization Treatments	
3a. Bentonite	Yes/Potential
3b. Magnesium chloride/calcium chloride	Yes/Potential
3c. Lignin	Yes/Potential
3f. Road Oyl	Yes/Potential
3g. SoilSement	Yes/Potential

**Implementation is dependent upon funding being secured.*

stakeholder organizations

Representatives were interviewed from:

- North Fork Land Owners Association
- Fire Department and Emergency Services
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Property Owner
- U.S. Border Patrol
- Recreational Trails, Department of Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- National Resource Defense Council
- Adventure Cycling
- North Fork Preservation Association
- North Fork Compact
- North Fork Coalition for Health and Safety
- Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce
- Guides and Rafting Outfitters
- City of Columbia Falls

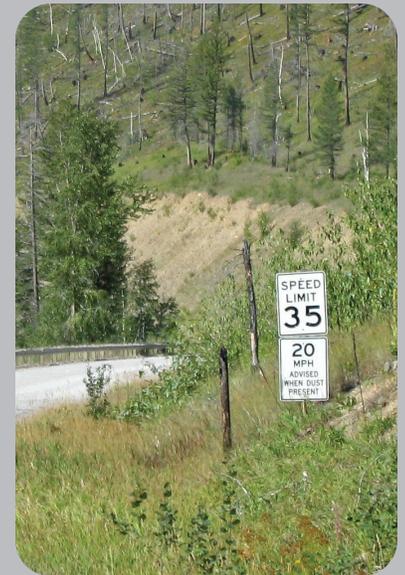
study conclusion and next steps

The public perspective gained through public involvement efforts found no consensus on potential improvement options based on the conflicting comments received. This resulted in no single option or group of improvement options emerging as a recommended priority for this corridor. Based on engineering and environmental perspectives, several of the improvement options presented in the corridor study are viable and have been implemented in similar sensitive areas in other parts of the country and Montana. Dust and maintenance issues continue as problems along this roadway and over the years, incremental development and tourism may have lead to higher traffic volumes. Regardless of the public's division concerning improvement options, some form of dust abatement measures appears necessary.

During the course of the study, many members of the public stated that if they could not have their preferred option (for instance either "pave" or "no-pave"), their preference is better maintenance and, if at all possible, one of the dust abatement treatments identified in the corridor study. Property owners along the corridor and other area residents using the corridor need to continue to work with Flathead County officials to identify and prioritize funding sources for dust abatement or any of the other identified improvement options.

The next steps for this segment of roadway will need to be determined by Flathead County. This study provides a diverse list of improvement options and management strategies for consideration. If any option demonstrates public buy-in, is selected and funding is available for that option, a project implementation process would begin, including any required environmental process.

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/



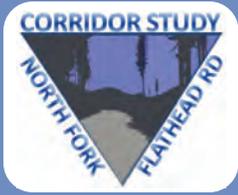
contact us

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406.444.9193

website
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email
mdtnffrteam@mt.gov



NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD

JUNE 10, 2010



NEWSLETTER

what is the study focus?

The focus of the study is to develop a comprehensive plan for managing the corridor and determine what, if anything, can be done to improve the corridor based on needs, public and agency input, and financial feasibility. The study is a collaborative process with Flathead County, the MDT Missoula District, other agencies, and the public, identifying transportation needs for the roadway section from the intersection of Secondary 486 (S-486) and Blankenship Road north of Columbia Falls (approximate reference post 9.5) to the junction with Camas Creek Road (approximate reference post 22.7). The entire corridor study area is within the Flathead National Forest and adjacent to Glacier National Park. S-486 is also referred to as the North Fork Flathead Road (NFFR) and Forest Highway 61. The study is expected to be completed in August 2010. Please refer to the study map on the following page for more detail.

The study will provide a basic description of the environmental setting. This consists of preliminary identification of potential improvements (including funding options and phasing), management strategies, and environmental impacts and potential mitigation. The consultant, PB Americas, will follow the process as defined in the Montana Business Process to Link Planning Studies and NEPA/MEPA Reviews, which require public outreach and coordination with other agencies. Issues that have been identified and will be reviewed within the corridor include but are not limited to:

- threatened or endangered species
- air quality (roadway dust)
- wild and scenic rivers
- water quality
- serving as access to Glacier National Park
- public sentiment
- safety
- wildlife
- fisheries

contact us

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Sheila Ludlow
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Lani Eggertsen-Goff
PB Americas
Project Manager
801.288.3220

website
www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/

email
mdtnffrteam@mt.gov

schedule

The study began on March 1, 2010 and is expected to be completed in August 2010. The consultant began the process of collecting information for existing corridor conditions for the study area in March 2010.

next step?

A public meeting will be held **July 27 at 6:30 p.m.** at the Discovery Center to review the results of the draft study document. Please check the website for more details and information.

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/



what we've heard so far...

On April 20, 2010 a public meeting was held to introduce the study. 73 attendees came to the meeting with approximately 50 people providing comments in writing or by speaking at the meeting. A summary of the public meeting is located on the study website.

Since the beginning of the study, March 1, 2010, 134 comments have been emailed, mailed or provided via the MDT website.

Summary of comments and concerns:

- Dust
- Access to Glacier NP
- Water Quality
- Health Issues
- Emergency Response
- Pollution
- Road Surface Issues
- Zoning
- Overpopulation
- Character Preservation
- USFWS Jeopardy Decision
- Development
- Safety
- Road Maintenance
- Air Quality
- Visibility Issues
- Cultural Changes
- Drainage Issues
- Traffic, Speeding
- Tourism
- Wildlife / Habitat



Taken at April 20, 2010 public meeting. Image courtesy of the Hungry Horse News.

On April 21, 2010 a resource agency meeting was held. The participants discussed the regulatory requirements and issues and concerns from the agency's perspective. PB also provided a summary of the public meeting held the evening before. *Continued on page 4.*

comment

We want to hear from you at this point in the study if we did not accurately capture your issue or concern.

In July, there will be a draft study document available that will present another important opportunity to provide us with your feedback.

The corridor study document does not determine which improvement options will be forwarded or guarantee final decisions will have consensus. It does not prohibit any improvement option, including taking no action.

Simply stated, your comments help the corridor study process sift through all issues and concerns to streamline the process. The intent of public involvement is to increase the quantity and quality of information available to the public.

Commenting on a document or study process is not a "vote" for or against any course of action, or any possible maintenance option. The information provided throughout the process benefits the decision makers, supplying relevant information about issues and concerns. Comments are encouraged.

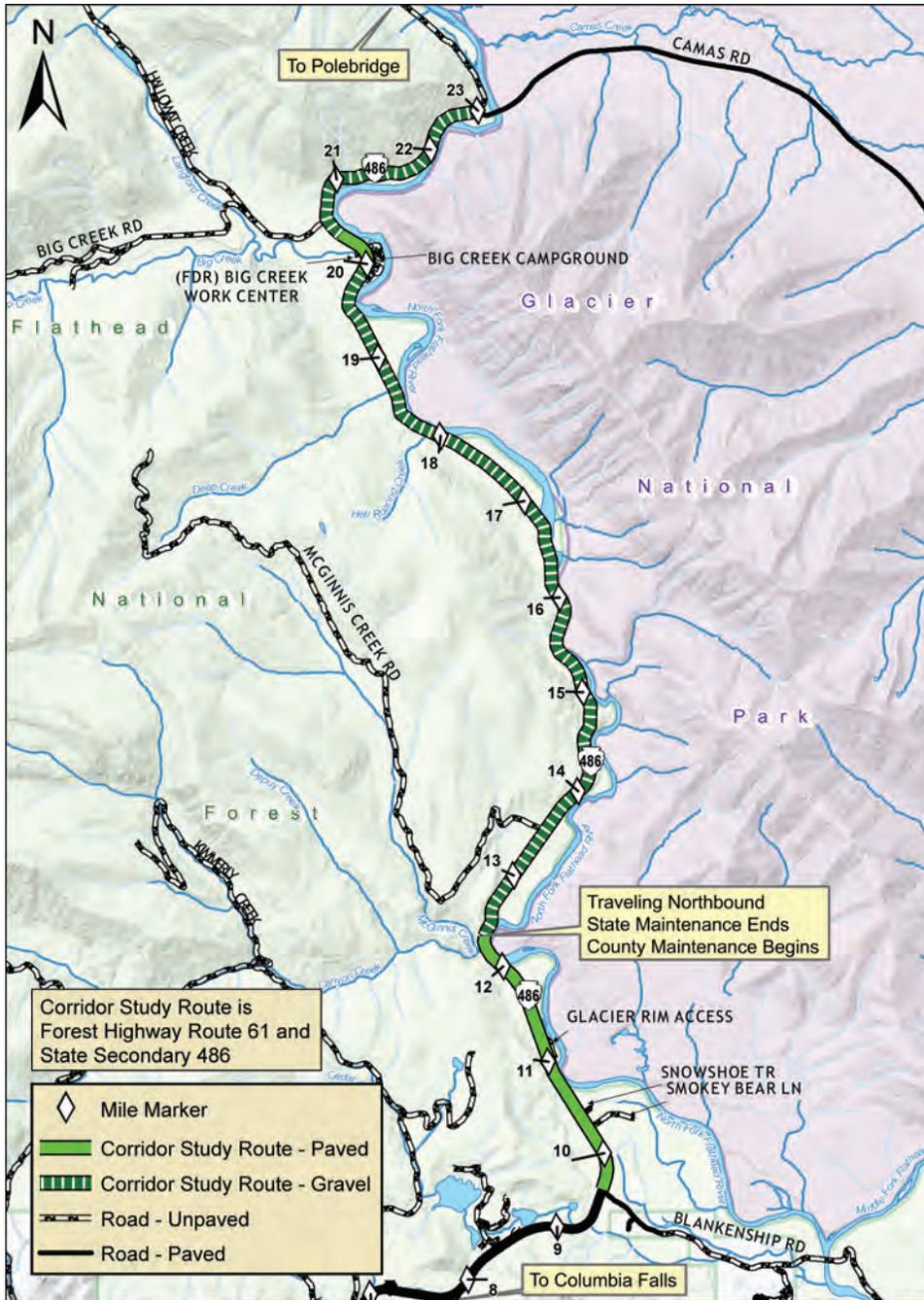


NORTH FORK FLATHEAD ROAD

JUNE 10, 2010



study map



montana secondary highway fast facts...

4,674 miles The number of Secondary miles statewide.

95 miles The number of miles in Flathead County on the Secondary system.

67% vs. 33%
The percentage of paved vs. the percentage of gravel surface on the Secondary system statewide.

82% vs. 18%
The percentage of paved vs. the percentage of gravel surface on the Secondary system within Flathead County.

25.6 feet Average statewide secondary roadway width.

32.6 feet Average S-486 secondary roadway width.

2009 weighted annual average daily traffic:

- Statewide secondary highways **450 vehicles**
- S-486 (reference post 0 - 22.7) **755 vehicles**
- Study section of S-486 (reference post 9.5 - 22.7) **280 vehicles**

what we've heard so far... (continued)

Multiple stakeholder interviews have also been conducted – to help the study team further understand issues and concerns within the study area of the North Fork Road. During the interviews the study team heard:

- wildlife is plentiful and often seen along or adjacent to the roadway
- road condition is a deterrent to traveling the road
- road drainage is a problem and contributes to the potholes
- current summer maintenance schedule is inadequate
- speed is a problem that exacerbates the dust problem in the dry summer months
- the number of motorists that are using the road is increasing year to year

The needs identified on this roadway that have been expressed by members of the general public, stakeholder groups and staff from resource agencies include:

- A large amount of dust is present at speeds approximately 20 mph and greater. The dust causes visibility issues which can lead to safety concern for any vehicles, pedestrians or cyclists on the side of the roadway.
- The maintenance of the roadway by Flathead County is challenging due to up to 44 foot widths along this roadway. This width can require up to eight passes with the grater and equates to funding issues for this maintenance.
- The washboard conditions are of concern to regular travelers of the roadway, the tendency described is that vehicles slide off the road in the washboard condition areas. This washboard condition also has been cited as causing the need for vehicle maintenance.
- Coordination of emergency services to address long travel times from Columbia Falls for ambulances and fire fighting equipment vehicles.

did we get it right?

We want to hear from you if we have not accurately captured an issue or concerns you have about the study area. You can send us an email to mdtnffrteam@mt.gov with your additional information or fill out the comment form on the website at www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/comment_form.shtml.

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/



tell us what you think...

The information provided throughout the process benefits the decision makers, supplying relevant information about issues and concerns. Comments are encouraged.

Simply stated, your comments help the corridor study process sift through all issues and concerns to streamline the process. The intent of public involvement is to increase the quantity and quality of information available to the public.

FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)

What is a Corridor Planning Study?

A Corridor Planning Study is a high-level evaluation of safety, environmental and geometric concerns along a transportation corridor where needs, possible improvement options and costs are identified before a project can proceed. Community input and consensus is an important consideration in this process. *It is important to note that the Corridor Planning Study is part of a planning process and is not a design or construction project.* Another consideration is how costs and the availability of funding affect the nature of any possible improvements and phasing of the possible improvements.

The North Fork Flathead Road (NFFR) Corridor Planning Study allows for earlier planning-level coordination with the public, resource agencies and other entities. The study may develop specific factors that can be used in the future if a subsequent environmental review process is required.

What does a "pre-NEPA Corridor Study" mean?

NEPA is the National Environmental Policy Act. Modeled after NEPA, MEPA is the Montana Environmental Policy Act, and it only applies to state agencies and state actions. NEPA is a federal law that outlines policies, goals, and procedures to insure environmental information is available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and actions are taken. The NEPA process is intended to assist public officials in making decisions taking into account the human and natural environment and the public's need for safe and efficient transportation. The NFFR Corridor Study is a pre-NEPA/MEPA study that will include a high level environmental scan of potential issues.

Who is conducting this study?

Flathead County, with support from Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), is conducting this study. Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB) is assisting Flathead County and MDT in completing the planning effort by the end of August, 2010.

Who has ownership and responsibility for maintenance of this stretch of the North Fork Flathead Road (NFFR)?

The portion of the NFFR being studied is on the State of Montana's Secondary Highway System 486 (S-486). S-486 is a major collector and serves as the north-south corridor between Columbia Falls and the Camas Road intersection that leads into Glacier National Park. This portion of the route is also designated as Forest Highway 61. The NFFR continues north from the Camas Road intersection to the Canadian border and is designated as a local road.

From Columbia Falls to RP 12.3 (end of pavement), the NFFR is maintained by state forces. From the end of pavement to Camas Road, it is maintained by Flathead County. From Camas Road to the Canadian Border, it is a local road and maintained by Flathead County.

Due to the MDT Secondary Road designation and Forest Highway designation, the portion of the route from Columbia Falls to the Camas Road intersection is eligible for Secondary Capital Construction Program funding through MDT and the Forest Highway Construction Program funding through Western Federal Lands Highways Division, a branch of the Federal Highways Administration. The portion north of Camas Road intersection is the responsibility of Flathead County.

What steps will be taken during the Corridor Study?

The following steps will be followed to produce an effective corridor study plan. These include:

1. *Identify corridor study candidate.* Over the years, the NFFR corridor north of Columbia Falls, Montana has generated much discussion among local

residents regarding the purpose and role this corridor plays in the region. Due to the high level of concern, this corridor has been identified for further study by Flathead County and MDT.

2. *Develop corridor study work plan.* The planning team will assess the complexity of issues within the corridor and the level of effort required to address the issues.
3. *Develop existing and projected conditions report.* The report will analyze existing and projected conditions, incorporate findings from an environmental scan, and consider local community vision, goals and objectives. Perceived corridor deficiencies, known impacts and potential mitigation opportunities will be documented as part of the report.
4. *Identify needs, issues, impacts, goals, and screening criteria.* The planning team will consider comments from resource agencies and public involvement to develop screening criteria and objectives for improvement options analysis. The screening criteria will be related to the identified needs, issues, impacts, goals, costs, and funding and resources available.
5. *Determine improvement options advanced and not advanced.* The planning team will analyze each improvement option using the identified screening criteria leading to a selection of preliminary improvement options advanced and not advanced.
6. *Recommend improvement options.* The planning team will recommend potential improvement options (if any) for NFFR. Potential impacts, mitigation opportunities and estimated costs will be identified for each option.
7. *Prepare draft corridor study report.* Based on key findings, needs, screening criteria, and recommendations, the planning team will develop a draft corridor study report. Input and comments on the draft report will be obtained from resource agencies, stakeholders, and through public involvement.
8. *Make recommendations.* The planning team will finalize the corridor study report. This Corridor Planning Study may then transition forward to implementation.

What happens next?

The study serves only as a planning process, not a design or environmental project. Based on the results of the study, Flathead County will determine what, if any action to pursue.

How can the public/community become involved in the study?

The general public is invited to participate in the process through public meetings and ongoing project information review and input. A web site has been developed to provide on-line opportunities to comment on the needs of the NFFR and later on the draft plan recommendations. Dates, times, and locations for all public outreach will be announced prior to the events through the local media and the project mailing list.

The study team, made up of members from Flathead County, the MDT, FHWA, WFL, Forest Service and Glacier National Park, and PB will collect and consider all public comments received to better understand the public view of potential issues. The team will then determine the next steps based on information gathered from local governments, regulatory agencies, stakeholders and the general public.

Those with a specific interest in the project are encouraged to join the **project mailing list**. They can do so by submitting their name and contact information to Lani Eggertsen-Goff at the mailing address or e-mail address, shown below, or completing and returning the project comment sheets from the public meetings (that can also be found on the website).

When is the best time to give comments?

Although there is no formal time period for the study team to receive comments, the study process will take six months so early input and comment is important.

How can I stay informed and be part of the process?

To keep the public informed about the study, project information is being published on this web site, in local media venues, and in newsletters. The public may also provide input or questions by email: mdtnffrteam@mt.gov which will be recorded in the study record, and the study mailing address. A copy of each comment will also be shared with these individuals:

Jim Dupont

Flathead County Commissioner

Sheila Ludlow

MDT Project Manager

Lani Eggertsen-Goff

Project Manager, PB Americas

488 E. Winchester Street, Suite 400

Murray, UT 84107

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U.S. Border Patrol

Interview conducted May 27, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - Many times every day
- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Patrol duties (work)
- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - #1 Road surface
 - #2 is dust
- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - That at times it is heavy and the heaviest times are also the dustiest of times –summer tourist season is also when most of the dust issues happen.
- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - No we use this road year round –
- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - Daily: Deer, bear, coyote, elk.
- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
 - Not in this area
- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?
 - No other concerns about this road specifically. Narrowing the road using existing material there –is that a good idea? It may be more of a safety issue if the road surface is not improved. In general the further north you go the less maintenance occurs. The serious road issues affect the entire road. This section of road that we are talking about (study corridor) actually receives the most maintenance.
- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)? No



U.S. Border Patrol

10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?

- --being a Federal employee I have no opinion— BUT I want a safe road
- The road would be wide and paved with adequate guard rails all the way to the boarder.
- Crazy idea—specifically for our study corridor. Utilize the burnt trees... grind up and make into a pulp or sawdust and add cooking oil to spread out –more natural solution but it could bind up the dust –for a test section perhaps ?



Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce

Interview conducted May 25, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - Personally not often anymore because the conditions are so bad –it is a recreational opportunity (Big Creek Campground –now glacier institute) But business community has to go up there --I have 4 rafting companies who are members of the chamber –outfitting and fly fishers. So in the summer they are using it and in the winter –groomed snowmobile trails and cross country skiing at Canyon Creek to go around big mountain (public lands) on forest service existing roads lunch at the summer house... another wonderful partnership with the Forest Service.
 - 90% of the road is Forest Service land so how can development happen. The river is the park boundary. Do not see the potential for development.

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Recreation and recreational related business –and we have a lot of them.

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - The condition of the road –dust—pollution –washboard conditions. So much dust in the summer that it is not good for humans – dust ruins the air quality and water quality for animals. A paved road would control (dust) pollution.

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - It is a rustic experience –not a high traffic area. You go up there to enjoy the great outdoors. There are no condos or big developments. If we can come in the west entrance –and take the left up fish creek and Camas Cr –in spring and fall you see wildlife. It is paved in the park to Camas Cr so why can't it be paved on the other side –it would alleviate traffic on going to the sun road.
 - Environmentalist keep freaking out that this will make traffic but what about the residents here about going up after church for day use and family recreation. But people don't do it now because the road is so bad. And isn't it why people live here –to enjoy wildlife and the rustic life and recreational opportunities –and the public education at the Glacier Institute Big Creek educational center (used to be hot shot fire crew for the NF and they lived up there in the summer) but they could house them in town now due to cell phones or be 10 min to the airport. And also elder hostel (through the community college) housing for educational programs. The stuff on the right is Forest Service campground –on the left it is Glacier Institute.



Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - Yes but there is use in the winter –x-country ski, snow shoe, snowmobile trails (Canyon Creek has 150 miles of trails)... and cyclists. More overall use in summer.

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling.
 - Not very often it is such a vast area that animals don't have to be right next to the road. It is not Yellowstone. You do see moose and deer.

- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
 - No not when 90% is Forest Service land. A small segment is not—and it is already privately owned and they want it paved.

- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?
 - Emergency services concerns –ambulance fire truck –to pave or have some better surface. Need to do something soon to help small businesses extend their season 1 extra month. The new superintendent of the park –park experience to be rustic and primitive. That made my jaw drop. It is a concern for the business community to expand business opportunity –and open recreational opportunity.

- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)?
 - Documentation of letter from former Governor Conrad Burns.

- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
 - Ideally it would be paved –pave the existing road that is there. Don't create environmental issues. Provide a new road surface for tourists and locals to recreate without the pollution that happens with the dust.



City of Columbia Falls

Interview conducted June 14, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - Many Columbia Falls residents utilize the recreation opportunities and camp, rafting and hunting up there –and some access the park from Camas. And it is a nice way to get in to the park.

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Recreation

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - The condition of the road –roughness and dust makes it dangerous to go up there. Some people wait until the road gets grated

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - Personal experience (as a contractor my business) I will not take my equipment up there anymore. Went up once last year as condition of the road prohibits my travel

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - People in Columbia Falls go up there hunting season which ends in late Nov –then snowmobiling begins when the snow comes.

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - Not a whole lot in this section of road there is not a lot of room in this area and steepness of the banks to the river then the banks of the road too steep for wildlife.

- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
 - No

- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?

An improved roadway will allow visitors to better access goods and services downtown Columbia Falls.



City of Columbia Falls

- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)? NA
- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
- An improved asphalt road with somewhat of a shoulder improved surface and dust free.



State of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division

Interview conducted June 10, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - I work for the State of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division and mostly administer federally appropriated and transportation funds with/through Federal Highways.
 - Our office does trail site inspection 1 or 3 times per year (a lot of access points for trails in this area).

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Trail site inspection –and study future trail projects (personal note –great recreation area)

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - Extremely dusty –the dust abatement is the primary concern and yet if it becomes paved it would bring in so many more people and that could lead to economic benefit for Columbia Falls and potential for development –I have asthma and the dust is a concern for me personally as it effects (triggers) my asthma symptoms.

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - Pretty safe it is wide enough (which is a good thing) and when I was there last summer not heavy traffic by any means and that was during peak season. Able to access many points on the river and where I needed to go. You have to be a safe driver on the washboard areas.

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - Yes, I plan my trips around work primarily in summer but associate has talked about access delays in winter due to snow fall and snow removal.

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - This is a sensitive ecological area with grizzly habitat and as a hiker or biker you know to take precautions to avoid conflicts with the wildlife and possible encounters.
 - If this area was more developed it could impact the habitat of these animals. I have not seen much wildlife myself but associates who frequent this area they have –seen bear and other large animals.

- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
 - Do not know of any potential trail projects in this area or other development



State of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division

- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?
- No –do not get to travel there often but in the few times I've been there dust is problem but development can cause additional issues.
 - Would hope that if this road is paved the MDT would consider alternate modes of travel in the overall plan –separate lane for x-country, bikers, walkers –consider that now for this recreation area. And this could attract different user groups –less impactive user groups.
- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)?
- No
- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
- Not apposed to development but would like to see a trail parallel the roadway for other modes of transportation.



Fire and emergency services

Interview conducted May 27, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - The Blakenship Fire Department responds to any life safety or wildfire it is a long way and the road is such a way (bad surface condition) it makes the emergency trips longer.
- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Emergency response
- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - Road condition –my understanding from the crews is because it is not paved drivability –gravel gets pushed to one side or the other which makes dangerous driving conditions, road surface is poor.
- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - More traffic on the road all the time –fair number of people live in the area and as more and more people move into the area our calls are becoming more numerous –not a lot of places to land the helicopter (no pad up there she is going to check) so we need to have the roads
- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - In winter it is worse due to snowpack -- in the summer if it is wet the road can get muddy or portions of it can be very potholed.
- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - Don't know
- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
 - Not specifically at this point. No.
- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?
 - Not from our perspective of emergency response.



Fire and emergency services

- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)? Additional information is not available.
- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
- I would pave it –there could be avalanches in this area. The road should be able to withstand natural hazards including seasonal run off, and winter conditions.



North Fork Preservation Association

Interview conducted May 18, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - I drive the road about 20 times a year –North Fork Preservation Association was founded in 1983 to fight coal miles and to keep the road gravel. {And the flathead coalition (currently does not have a position about paving) however most members have the same opinion } broader membership drives the road –a number of members are year round residents.

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Recreation in the NF the forest, GNP and the river and to access our cabin –14 miles north of Polebridge –cabin owner for 19 years, have been recreating for 33 years backpacking, skiing, rafting.

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - While dust and rough road conditions are a nuisance, these conditions have kept the area relatively pristine. So we probably travel to the cabin somewhat less than we could but that is also a good thing for wildlife.

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - a) If you relax and don't drive fast it is no problem. If you are not tail gaiting someone then it is ok because the person in front of you is probably going faster than you –most people do not observe the speed limit. Speed would be worse if it was paved. The dust is an issue for 3 months of the year so the vast majority of time it is not an issue. It really depends too on the weather –rain etc.

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.

This is true north of the study area but overall it impacts her use --No just glare ice season --snow then rain then freezing—chains required. Late fall and early spring when it may be muddy and there is not much to do up there. Not really effected by road seasonal use...

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - This section of road not very much the animals are mostly deer and elk --some moose and on Apgar Range there are many grizzly but you can't see them from the road.



North Fork Preservation Association

- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?

No, not currently. There have been periodic proposals for development north of this section –destination resort or retreats etc they have come and gone. As far as private property north of the study area –there are already lots of parcels that can be subdivided –still potential for development but no known development plans right now.

- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?

HUGE concern that for Glacier National Park anything that increases # of people in the NF is going to be detrimental to the park –huge support to keep GNP primitive –limits of acceptable change- study and managing . Idea is set the parameters and limit the change you are willing to accept, set the limits of acceptable change –how much trash, how many encounters on the road, how many campers... these numbers have already been exceeded in GNP and the park feels strongly that paving would increase numbers and they cannot maintain the resource and visitor experience with that influence.

Trans-boundary implication (since 1975) coal mines development in Canadian Flathead. Work to protect the drainage –banning mining in CF, MOA signed just recently. BUT Canadian regulations change quickly.

Paving the road could be seen by Canada as hypocritical. AND that would be detrimental to wildlife. Lack of access helps protect diversity.

In 1998 -99 when there was a proposal to pave the lower road the NFPA we had 1200 signatures in opposition to paving. And in the late 1980's jeopardy opinion ...still in effect.

- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)?

- a) Shannon Donahue's report –cross reference from RP written comment –the literature review of this white paper is excellent. Dr. Daren Smith professor to –Tony Ward (dust study author) from U. of M. –Air quality is bad from dust BUT burning wood is a far bigger threat to air quality from people living up the NF in the winter. This area could be more of a commuter area if the road were to be paved and that would impact air quality from the increase in wood burning.
- b) I represent many groups: Trans boundary advocate, Columbia Falls community builder, GNP advocate –park cannot function as an island if wildlife habitat is fragmented, wildlife and clean air and water are vital.
- c) “Gateway to Glacier” National Parks Conservation Association (Will –can get this to us)



North Fork Preservation Association

10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?

- The roadway would be narrower and adding curves to straight sections (like road prior to 1983) it would reduce speed and dust.
- Advocate looking at dust abatement options –interested at what happens with the improved bentonite section north of Polebridge. Magnesium –chloride options? Support looking into those options. If they could only treat some sections –do it near Wild and Scenic River area. Only certain sections where river is adjacent (or very close to) to roadway.



Natural Resources Defense Council/Great Bear Foundation
Interview conducted May 18, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - Several dozen times a year (both himself and staff)

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - a) Fishing
 - b) Wildlife viewing
 - c) Educational programs –for adults, at the great bear foundation and elder hostel.

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - Nothing prevents me from traveling it –although there are problems.

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - A substantial increase in traffic in the last 5 years. People are most usually travelling at excessive speeds –more vehicles at higher speeds.

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - Probably travel less in the winter – most travel summer and fall. A more difficult road to travel in the winter –access becomes a problem. Road not always plowed.

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - Almost every time I see white tail deer, elk, and mule deer. Sometimes a moose –every once in a while a grizzly or black bear. And eagles, osprey and other birds.

- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
 - No. There are often for sale signs up there.

- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?



Natural Resources Defense Council/Great Bear Foundation

- Excessive speeds.
 - Dust. Also relates to the fact that the County is not doing maintenance to control the dust. When there is a fire up the NF –the road does get water and dust abatement treatment –where does that money come from? It seems like a matter of allocation of funds rather than lack of funds. The County needs to decide if it is important enough to treat the road --dust abatement—only for emergencies –why don't they do that regularly. The general public's safety is just as important as the firefighters.
- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)?
- One source could be the Hungry Horse paper –50 years up the north fork.
- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
- In this particular stretch I would narrow the road in the very wide spots
 - Grade the road several times a year (not just 1 or 2 a year) treat with dust suppressant.
 - Look into gravel aggregate it may have a lot of dust/dirt already in it, something that will compact better. The current surface creates dust clouds –and then you add high speed –it only has one place to go –up in the air. I personally put mostly gravel on my dirt road and it works well.
 - Someone needs to enforce the speed limit. I've never seen the dust police –I've never seen anyone pulled over in the last 25 years on the NF



North Fork Compact

interview conducted June 1, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - I represent a group of NF landowners to set aside their land to preserve the NF –signatories of inter-local group that reports twice a year (mile marker 53) we have been doing it since 1981.-- We travel it rarely in the summer –because it is more convenient because we use the Camas cut off through the park –twice a month. 65 members in organization but the year round residents are only about dozen people.

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Provisioning –get to town to do chores and get goods and services.

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - The road is in so much better condition today than 1981 –it used to be a lot worse. The biggest problem the slum at reference post 45 there is a wash out there –a cut bank- and almost every year there is a slough off the bank and the road has to be realigned every year –very much a hazard. After a 2 mile good stretch of road with gravel –a drop off and rough going NF slump—that is #1. Near the Heart property the road is about a one lane road at this point about reference post 38 –the road goes close to the river --the river is cutting into the bank and into the road. The County has put up barrier –50-60 feet above the river at this point both of these areas are worse than anything else about the road. I would estimate 1 accident at the slump per year. The rest of the road is pretty good really.

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - Virtually no traffic 8 months of the year. Labor Day to the fourth of July is very quiet. July and most of August quite a bit of traffic to Polebridge and the PB ranger station. No traffic delays just more cars during this time of year. Except for the border patrol—rarely seen more than 20 cars a night in Polebridge.

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - Definitely! The biggest change happens seasonally when GNP (only 6 miles further and it takes no more time to get to Columbia Falls smoother and dust free) is closed then we use the whole of NFR. More people are doing this park cut off –it is more scenic –smoother faster –dust free.



North Fork Compact

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
- Very frequently –a mountain lion chasing a doe just last summer –both kinds of bears, wolverine, badgers, wolves. On an average trip elk, deer, moose –almost never DON'T see some kind of wildlife. With the most activity in the fall.
- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
- Zoning –restricts some kinds of commercial development. There has been a huge change in last 15 years in terms of sub-dividing and people building homes –multi-million dollar homes. He sees concrete trucks every trip to town. Developers/builders would very much like to see the road paved to develop the area that would be to the detriment of the values and ecology of the NF.
- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?
- The big problem (with no solution) the excessive speed which people drive. County does not have resources to patrol. I've been forced off the road by an out of control truck. Dust is worse the faster motorists go. A narrower road would help keep speed down. He has talked to the county about buying a self-sustaining speed monitoring (passive radar) but they don't have the money. It is inadequate to have one patrolman for all county roads.
- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)?
- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
- That particular piece of road –narrowed, a crown ensure good drainage, the grating needs to take out the big rocks and lay down 6 inches of crushed rock (a way to keep the dust down) environmentally benign and to keep the potholes from forming.



North Fork Coalition for Health and Safety

Interview conducted June 4, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - Most every day

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Property owners –mostly go through this area to access their property to the north

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - Main concern for our or –health and safety about this section of road –dust and visibility (opacity) becomes zero –obliterates the view –health effects of the dust in the air –increase in traffic volume of traffic (prop owner for 30 years) –can’t see other motorists due to lack of visibility
 - Some people drive too fast
 - Accidents and rollovers --road conditions (poor –usually and most of the time) road condition is bad –gets chuck holed –sometimes maintenance gets done a few times a year –spring (fourth of July) and once in the fall

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - I moved up in 1978-- it was logging at this time and the logging co –paid to oil the road and grate it then in the mid-80’s then maintenance dropped off and traffic increased –park Polebridge station burned down in 1988 --and they closed the inside north fork road in the GNP which starts in West Glacier—the NW section of park is wilderness --now people go to Camus SO it increased traffic volume on the NFFR with the Inside North Fork Road closure --rental cabins by the FS, rafting, other recreation has increased –there is a hostel in Polebridge –expand an area (with amenities) and you get more traffic.
 - Vehicle traffic is the only way to get in and out of the area

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - Not necessarily --business in town shuttling back and forth personally --don’t go through the park some people that live up Trail Creek go to Eureka rather than Columbia Falls to avoid the worst of the roadway conditions.

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.



North Fork Coalition for Health and Safety

- On this stretch deer, elk –many other large animals
- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
- No I am not –the area we are referring to is Federal and Forest Service land.
- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?
- The road itself --should be fixed—the entire road surface to the boarder needs to be fixed --my option is people should be able to enjoy
- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)?
- Tony Ward Study –lab mice report on dust –exposure to dust is negative health effects
 - EPA website –back in 1997 EPA mandated visibility and haze program class 1 air-shed -- eliminate man made pollution -this is a long term program where the GNP has their receptors so far away. EPA sent MT Implementation Program –failing to submit January 2009—Fed register SIP -- that needs to be addressed –no one knows anything about this –and it effect views of and into the park. Paving could address this specific issue.
 - I don't buy it anymore that we are saving anything by not paving the road.
- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
- In our letter we say this section should be paved –it would only enhance the area.



Rafting Companies

Interview conducted May 26, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - For our (outfitting and rafting businesses) 20 to 60 trips a year for trips.

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Fishing trips in this section and overnight multi day rafting trips. They use small 20 passenger vehicles pulling trailers with drift boats or rafts –and 15 passenger vans.

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - a) Dust and rough conditions are hard on the vehicles --vans and trailers breakdowns over the years.
 - b) In addition to these hazardous driving visibility –when people pass –damage to vehicles and trailers, and cracked windshield

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - a) Dangerous with the dust conditions –logging trucks create hazard, lack of visibility
 - b) Unsafe motorists speeding –then the people who crawl (drive very slow) due to drive too slow cause problems difficulty in this section
 - c) Don't see a lot of traffic –dust hazards --not constant flow of cars

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - a) Seasonal business mid-June to late Aug
 - b) Some trips during the shoulder season –but it is less desirable to drive then (due to summer peak dust).

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - a) Less than 15-20 30% of the time –effected by time of day that we using the road

- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
 - a) No mining in Canada but other than that construction of private homes –park visitation Bowman lake and NW portion of the park –no real development

- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?



Rafting Companies

- a) People have concerns that traffic will increase if the road is paved –but for us and our business there is only benefit
 - b) Our business would be supportive of road improvement to Camas –reduce dusk –improve safety would outweigh the negatives –require engineering to reduce issues
 - c) Our business is more neutral –see both + and - with roadway improvements but think it will increase use of river. Then there will be more people in the busiest places –put ins and parking areas.
- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)? NA
- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
- a) 2 lane would fulfill (our) vision and needs --speed limit signs and enforcement – (Blakenship to HW2 --big concern)
 - b) Finding a balance with safety and maintain unique quality of eco system hate to see slides safety engineering –not widened but have some pull offs
 - c) If it going to be paved –want a smaller (narrower) version and keep improvements to a min (along with) the associated impacts of roadway improvements.



Adventure Cycle

Interview conducted June 4, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - None of our routes use this portion of the North Fork Flathead Road –great divide uses 486 –10 miles north of Polebridge –Eureka to Tuchuck pass the Tuchuck campground --connects into North Fork Road (north of study area) goes back west over Red Meadow pass –comes down Whitefish range –no auto support offered.
- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - Recreation – occasionally get feedback but not specific to this area –no support vehicles
- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - Later in the year the road gets washboard
- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - No traffic (minimal personal experience and no feedback from tours)
- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - Not really (individually no) summer use for cycling
- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - Yes there is wildlife but I have no experience of it.
- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area? NA
- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?
 - Our organization would like to roadway (north of Polebridge) to remain cycling friendly.
- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)? NA
- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
NA



North Fork Flathead Landowners Association

Interview conducted May 27, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - NF Land Owners –voluntary membership close to 300. There is increased potential with 400 parcels –so it could be 1000 members.
 - Some members numerous times a week to once every two weeks.

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - People who live up there year round –people come to town for groceries, laundry, post office do these things in Columbia Falls also intra trips for recreation.

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - a) Cost of gas –economize it is 140 mile trip for some of us (me) that is an issue, cost of travel. People who are dragging a trailer –they are going really slow.
 - b) Dust (only know 1 person who thinks this is a big deterrent to drive to town)
 - c) Others don't mind dust at all –not a big deal
 - d) People prefer to out –avoid going to town be self sufficient- and enjoy what the North Fork has to offer
 - e) Road condition –if the grader is coming up people will wait
 - i) The road gets rutted and it is hard on your vehicle

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - a) Fourth of July there is traffic or when the rafting companies are coming through to access area rivers.
 - b) Variables
 - i) Time of day
 - ii) Time of year
 - c) Traffic is not an issue
 - d) It is attitude too (about what traffic is and if it is a problem)
 - i) Some people speed and are in a big hurry
 - ii) Other people take their time
 - e) There has been an increase of traffic over the years



North Fork Flathead Landowners Association

- f) Not a concern –overall or for safety (except in combination with road condition –it may arise as an issue –because of the dust and there is a car you want to pass –people get impatient) individual motorist have different tolerances
- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
- a) NFLA yes for most members –not year rounder’s only have meetings June-Oct our people up there in summer –problems disappear in the winter –no rocks or ruts --no cars in winter
 - b) Need for guard rails with road not crowned --just north of Camus—winter safety issue and not really a gravel road it is a dirt road in most places --needs to be a safer year round road
 - c) Does not stop hunters in the fall
 - d) The county is going to plow town first –so we as year rounder’s know this reality and are prepared. Seasonal people came up for Christmas and got stuck on the road because they didn’t wait for plow –it can take the plow a few days to get up to the NF
- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
- a) Every trip both ways.
 - b) Elk and deer, bears, black and grizzly, sheep, moose, wolf
 - i) Bears general use pattern river on the east side of road –primary water source
 - ii) Winter range on the Huckleberry lots of animals on the GNP and animals go back and forth
- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
- People are building –who is building now –individual homes. Always rumored 1 spec house by a developer –3 large sections. In 2008 -746 separate lots and potential for 288 additional (where owners can subdivide and be within current zoning) NF neighbored plan adopted in 2008. There is a ton of development potential. Don’t know of anyone planning anything big – of so many different opinions –most people find out about it later. No one can make a big deal because of the varying views –pro and anti very strong opinions. Many opinions within NFLA.
- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?
- NFLA is Neutral on this issue of paving.



North Fork Flathead Landowners Association

- This is a special and unique place and the landowners value that: health and safety, control growth, aesthetics, costs, values preserve a way of life, concern for subdivisions, dark night sky, quiet and solitude. NFLA members want to be part of the process.
- 9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)?
- They will give us results of their 2006 property owner survey –some info below.
- 10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
- RESULTS of 2006 survey –statistics NFLA did the January 200:7 results 428 landowners –261 respondents 61%. Response rate largest item –dust abatement 76.2 % want dust abatement Percent not satisfied with road maintenance 66.7 % during spring, summer and fall.
- So to answer this for our membership –the road would have dust abatement, guard rails and pothole fixes, crown the road, smoother have it graded more often and other spot specific fixes like banking of some curves, a surface that holds –it potholes easily right now.
- Overwhelming dust is the issue and people want dust abatement technology that can be put in the gravel. Some people do not want anything to be done –because of the indirect and cumulative impacts general fears about any improvement. Speed greater risk for wildlife. This is the last best place (partially) because travel or access is difficult remote and isolated valley.



National Parks Conservation Association

Interview conducted May 24, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - Most members, of the 340,000 national parks association –to enhance national parks for current and future have not been on the roadway in the study area. HQ in DC but many members live in the area. Will is speaking today for his organization.

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - For our members primary purpose is access to the north-west quadrant of the park (Glacier National Park) GNP via Polebridge to the primitive wilderness areas where the parks values reflect this (wilderness).

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - The biggest obstacle is maintaining the values of GNP. The planning objective should be to honor values of the park and not impair GNP values –see the General Management Plan (the parks NEPA document) of 1999. The area was considered by the 1964 Wilderness Act by Nixon. The road must honor and maintain the wilderness values of the park.

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - Disregard for speed limit on this road. Traffic is variable –vast majority of time is a quiet road depending on time of year there are more people on this road in the summer recreating and or accessing the park.

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - Summer is the busy time for recreational activities. When the park shuts down for winter nonresident traffic rates significantly fall. Data points to research are Polebridge station #s and Forest Service –Wild and Scenic River.

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - A lot –some really good scientific data available at American Wild Lands –extensive mapping project and in this document they have identified threats to wildlife. Four distinct wildlife



National Parks Conservation Association

corridors that would be impacted NF linkage area, Camas Creek linkage area, North Whitefish range linkage area, Haskell range linkage area –wildlife values.

Greatest concentration of grizzly bears and trout see “America’s wildlife valley” story in NY times.

7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?

- There is always some development—there is a land use plan. Limits to subdivisions to 20 acres. Build out right now is 50 % with 300 subdivided lots but not yet developed lots that can be subdivided. Not aware of any large projects but potential for build out is there. Look at 486 relationship key access park to GNP make sure we do not impair the park values as part of this project at values of park and transportation project and linkage area .

8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?

- Yes. Our organization thinks this project warrants meets criteria for 4f this corridor study process needs to include a section 4f due to significance of the park. This places a constructive use of 4f is the key part of our proximity as a collector route. There are clearly defined values of the park. Also Wild and Scenic River is another point of consideration.

9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)?

- Both reports mentioned above. Due to significance of this valley, values of the park and the world, 4f needs to be considered. To be a valid “tiered document” –it is clear that a document approach to work in a tiered approach to NEPA that 4f has to be done for the process to be legal –and this includes an avoidance alternative.

10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?

Ideally it provides 3 things:

- Dust abatement approach –that works environmentally
- Maintain rustic character
- Provides non motorized recreation opportunity –example a bike path. The balance needs to be struck between a safe recreational experience between residents and visitors while maintaining, and not adversely impacting, the values of the park.



Individual property owner

Interview conducted on May 27, 2010

- 1) How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?
 - Since 1979 once a week up and back—year round

- 2) What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?
 - To visit my second home north of Polebridge

- 3) What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?
 - Its poor surface condition with pot holes washboards and dusk in the spring –summer and fall. In winter these points do not apply.

- 4) What is your experience with traffic on this road?
 - That the amount of traffic creates the excessive dust –dangerous, safety, and many pose health hazards to breathe. I see other cars on the road –them and me make the potholes and dust worse – not an issue in winter.

- 5) Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.
 - No

- 6) How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.
 - 25% of total trips –deer only

- 7) Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?
 - No

- 8) Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?
 - Tourist add to the traffic during the 3 seasons –the Camus link into GNP- some of these tourists are encouraged to use this road because they know GNP does not have staff at this location –they are afraid to due to security. They would have to protect that ranger and that would be difficult to do that –terrible incident 20 years ago of abduction of ranger at this point. Volume of traffic increases due to tourists (including locals) entering (for free) at this location -where as it is a \$25 fee to go to main entrance.



Individual property owner

9) Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)? NA

10) What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?
Asphalt



Summary of All Responses

The following is a summary of the fourteen stakeholder interviews that were conducted by telephone between May 18 and June 14, 2010. The findings of the interviews are qualitative not quantitative in nature. This study was designed to explore how selected area business, residents, and special interest groups feel about their driving experience on North Fork Flathead Road from reference post 9.5 to reference post 22.7. The findings are not intended to be projected on a larger population, but used to better understand the underlying concerns about transportation issues among a small cross-section of community members. The verbatim responses for each interview begin on page 10.

Participants were asked to specifically talk about their driving experience in the study area and to identify locations outside the study area if they felt they needed to be included in the discussion.

The following introduction was given before each interview:

“Hello –(name of person) , my name is Pam Murray and I am a consultant with Parsons Brinckerhoff working for Flathead County and the Montana Department of Transportation on the North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study.

Thank you for talking to me today regarding the corridor study initiated by Flathead County with technical assistance provided by the Montana Department of Transportation. The purpose of this call is to better understand the issues and concerns related to current road use on Secondary 486 North Fork Flathead Road between Blankenship Road (Reference Post -RP- 9.5) to Camas Creek Road (RP 22.7).

Answering these questions is voluntary and should take less than 15 minutes. Your input will help the study team understand the needs and issues associated with this roadway, including your driving experience and your familiarity of the surrounding area. This quick survey is part of the public outreach effort and allows for individual stakeholder input into the overall public involvement process.

Corridor planning studies are an efficient way to understand the issues and needs related to a corridor and to determine what, if anything can be done to improve the corridor based on needs, public and agency input, and financial feasibility.

Just to be clear, the limits of our study is the 13-mile section of the North Fork Flathead Road between Blankenship Road and Camas Creek Road (RP 9.5 to RP 22.7), as highlighted on the map I provided you via email.

Before we get started, have you looked over the study information provided in the email sent date -- --? Do you have any questions I can answer before we get started on the questions?”

The first two questions were asked to establish the stakeholder’s familiarity with the study area, find out more about who they represent during the interview and how often they travel the study corridor.



Summary of All Responses

First Question (Q1):

- 1) *How often do you, or staff members of your organization or business you represent, travel on NFFR between Columbia Falls and Camas Road?*

This question had a variety of responses which I ranked by how familiar each stakeholder is with the area and how often they or members of their organization use the corridor. In general most of the 14 people interviewed are very familiar with the study corridor as they have lived and/or worked in the area for many years. Two stakeholders interviewed have a history of using the corridor but do not go up often and three stakeholders do not use the corridor personally but represent others who do.

Highlights on Q1 include:

- NF Land Owners Association –voluntary membership close to 300.
- National Parks Association - with 340,000 members, includes locals and is headquartered in Washington DC.
- US Border Patrol drives the corridor many times every day.
- Chamber of Commerce represents businesses in Columbia Falls and businesses who use the corridor for business.
- The North Fork Preservation Association was founded in 1983 to fight coal mines and to keep the road gravel, broader membership drives the road –a number of members are year round residents
- Some year round residents use the corridor everyday while others limit their trips to town to 2 to 4 times a month.
- Many Columbia Falls residents utilize the recreation opportunities including camping, rafting and hunting–and some access the park from Camas, “it is a nice way to get in to the park.”
- I represent a group of NF landowners (North Fork Compact 65 members) to set aside their land to preserve the NF –signatories of inter-local group that reports twice a year. We travel the study section rarely in the summer –because it is more convenient to use the Camas cut off through the park –twice a month.
- The Blakenship Fire Department responds to any life safety or wildfire. “ It is a long way and the road is such a way (bad surface condition) it makes the emergency trips longer.”
- Personally I don’t go often anymore because the conditions are so bad –it is a recreational opportunity (Big Creek Campground –now Glacier Institute). But (the business community I represent) has to go up there....I have 4 rafting companies who are members of the chamber –outfitting and flyfishers. So in



Summary of All Responses

the summer they are using it and in the winter –groomed snowmobile trails and cross country skiing at Canyon Creek to go around Big Mountain (public lands) on Forest Service existing roads lunch at the summer house... another wonderful partnership with the Forest Service.

- Several dozen times a year (both himself and staff).
- None of our adventure cycling routes use this portion of the North Fork Flathead Road –Great Divide ride uses 486 –10 miles north of Polebridge –no auto support offered.
- I work for the State of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division and mostly administer federally appropriated and transportation funds with/through Federal Highways. Our office does trail site inspection 1 or 3 times per year (a lot of access points for trails in this area)
- For our (outfitting and rafting businesses) 20 to 60 trips a year.

Second question (Q2):

- 2) *What is the primary purpose for your travel on this road? (i.e. recreation, work, shopping, other)?*

There were eight responses which I ranked by how many stakeholders offered this response. Some stakeholders offered more than one reason for their trips so the total number is more than 14. The * indicates work duties.

1. **Recreation** (7 stakeholders mentioned).
2. **Access personal property**, provisioning in town (4).
3. **Business** (2).
 - Park access (1).
 - Emergency response (1*).
 - Border duties (1*).
 - Educational programs (1*).
 - Trail site inspection (1*).

Third question (Q3):

- 3) *What do you see as the biggest obstacle (if any) to traveling NFFR?*

1. **Road surface**, washboard roads and potholes, not enough maintenance (8).
2. **Dust and visibility** (6).
3. **Nothing**, this section of the NF is pretty good and/or nothing prevents me from travelling the North Fork Flathead Road (3).



Summary of All Responses

- Other motorists (who) drive too slow, or too fast in combination with road surface and dust (2).
- The road issues are good for wildlife (because) it limits ease of access. (1).
- Cost of travel (1).
- Honoring GNP values (1).
- Potential for accidents and rollovers (1).
- Creating pollution (1).
- Health and safety (1).

Some quotes from stakeholder responses to Q3:

“Dust (only know 1 person who thinks this is a big deterrent to drive to town) others don’t mind dust at all –it is not a big deal.”

“Road condition –if the grader is coming up people will wait (a few hours or days until the grader has come through) as the road, when rutted, is hard on your vehicle.”

Fourth question (Q4):

- 4) *What is your experience with traffic on this road?*
1. **Traffic is not an issue**, this is not real traffic it is not a constant flow of cars (6).
 2. **Speeding**, many motorists speed (5).
 - **Seasonal increase in traffic**, Fourth of July to Labor Day (4). Tie for #3
 - **Increase in number of cars** over the years (4).
 - It is an attitude too, have patience and enjoy (2).
 - Some motorists drive too slow (2).
 - Dust mostly an issue in the peak tourist season, more cars equal more dust (2).
 - It is a safe wide road (1).
 - Vehicular travel is the only mode for accessing area (1).
 - Columbia Falls’ residents hunt in the fall and snowmobile in winter (1).
 - Traffic is dangerous in dusty conditions (1).

Fifth question (Q5):

- 5) *Do the seasons affect your use of this road? If yes, please explain.*
1. **Seasonal use for business**- spring, summer and fall (4).
 2. **Weather and snowy road condition delays** (4).
 3. **No** (2). (Tied with) **Increases for (does not stop) hunters** (2).



Summary of All Responses

- Yes, not a year 'rounder (1).
- More winter safety issues north of study area (1).
- When GNP is closed then we can't use Camas cut off (1).
- Overall (traffic) numbers fall when the park is closed (1).

Sixth question (Q6):

6) *How often do you encounter (or see) wildlife directly adjacent to or on the road while traveling along this road? Please describe locations, species and condition of wildlife.*

- **Every trip**, both ways (6).
- **About 25% of trips** it depends on time of day (2).
- **Very frequently**, most activity in the fall (2).
- **This is a sensitive ecological area**, linkage area, with grizzly (2)
- **Not a lot (of wildlife) in this section** because of bank steepness and abundance of better areas for wildlife (2).
- Winter range on the Huckleberry, lots of animals (1).

When asked ,about half the respondents said every trip they see wildlife, while the other half said less often the animals they mentioned are both grizzly and black bear, wolverine, wolf, coyote, deer, elk, mountain lion, badger, moose, sheep, eagles, osprey and other birds. Road kill was not mentioned.

Seventh question (Q7):

7) *Are you aware of any proposed development in the area?*

1. **No**, not in this area (6).
2. **People are building individual homes** (4).
3. Tie with **There is potential for subdividing** (4).
 - **Zoning exists** with the NF neighbored plan adopted in 2008 (3). Tied with **No idea because I don't go up there much** (3).
 - Do not know of any potential trail projects in the area (1).
 - Look at relationship between road improvements, development and conflicts to GNP values (1).



Summary of All Responses

When asked Q7 most respondents paused and asked me what I meant by “development”. My sense is they were concerned with the possibility of development. A few stakeholders mentioned that pro-development and anti-development sentiment very strong, “...don’t know of anyone planning anything big –so many different but strong opinions about development –most people (only) find out about it later.” A few stakeholders who responded without hesitation said they had no personal experience with the area and had no way of knowing about development. Whereas a few others said development is not an issue in the study area because most of the land adjacent to the corridor study is public.

Eighth question (Q8):

When asked Q8 we received a wide variety of responses so this list is not a ranked list as most responses were said by one or two stakeholders at most.

8) *Any other specific issues or concerns with NFFR?*

- NFLA is neutral on this issue of paving.
- This is a special and unique place to preserve.
- Excessive speed is the main issue and it creates more dust.
- One dust cop is inadequate for all the Flathead County roads.
- Maintain health and safety.
- Road surface needs to be fixed.
- 4(f) needs to be done as part of this study (because) this is constructive use.
- Costs.
- Trans-boundary implications as new road could be seen as hypocritical.
- Values preserve a (rural -rustic) way of life.
- Aesthetics of area.
- Concern about subdivisions and area growth and development.
- Light pollution could ruin night sky.
- Maintain quiet and solitude.
- The community wants to be part of the process.
- If road is paved, include adjacent trail for other transport modes.
- Improving the road equals improved visitor access equals improved local business economy for Columbia Falls.
- Increasing the visitors to GNP is detrimental to the park. Limits have been set on visitor impacts (trash, campsites, amenities, wildlife encounters) and they are being exceeded now.
- Paving would be detrimental to wildlife; the Jeopardy Opinion is still in effect.



Summary of All Responses

- Nothing additional (from our perspective) Emergency Response.
- Narrowing the road without addressing road surface would make road less safe.
- Dust can cause additional issues.
- Dust maintenance is not happening.
- The further you go north the less roadway maintenance. The study section of the roadway gets the most maintenance.
- Road surface should be fixed.
- Quotes:
 - “I don’t buy it anymore that we are saving anything by not paving the road.”
 - “The county can manage dust during fire emergencies but not for general public safety. Where does the money come from for the emergencies?”
 - “This is the Last Best Place (partially) because of rustic travel conditions and access is difficult in this remote and isolated valley.”

Ninth question (Q9):

- 9) *Can you provide us with any specific data or information to help support the information you have given us (i.e. pictures of items such as road kill, roadway maintenance issues or extreme dusty conditions; reports; newspaper articles; accident information; etc)?*
- NFLA property owner survey, January 2007.
 - Shannon Donahue Report (provided in Rachael Potter’s comment)
 - Gateway to Glacier (National Parks Conservation Association)
 - Tony Ward Study
 - EPA website
 - Hungry Horse News, writing for 50 years on this issue
 - Letter from former Governor Conrad Burns
 - Polebridge GNP entrance numbers
 - GNP General Management Plan
 - American Wild Lands
 - North Fork Neighborhood Plan

Tenth question (Q10):

This last question, once again, has a large variety of responses with only the top three tallied as the rest have one or two stakeholders in agreement on the ideal fix. Most people offered more than one ideal scenario for the study corridor and reiterated thoughtful ideas and suggestions that they discussed previously. Only one person offered a novel idea –see the last bullet.



Summary of All Responses

10) *What would the roadway look like ideally, if you had the means to address any issues you see with it?*

- Ideally it would **be paved** (7).
- Ideally it would **maintain rustic character** (5).
- Ideally it would **strike a balance between safe recreation experience for residents and visitors while maintain and not adversely impact values of the park and scenic opportunities adjacent to the road** (4).
- Dust abatement (76% with NFLA survey in January 2007). “Overwhelming dust is the issue and people want dust abatement technology that can be put in the gravel.”
- Reduce speed and increase enforcement.
- If paved, keep improvements to a minimum (narrow section) to reduce environmental impacts.
- Crown the road.
- Graded more often and other spot specific fixes like banking of some curves, a surface that holds –it potholes easily right now.
- Engineered to tolerate seasonal weather issues and drainage.
- A safe road.
- Do nothing the road is ok and improvements will bring cumulative and indirect impacts.
- Increased speeds create greater risk for wildlife.
- Novel idea: create a test section of ground up dead trees and vegetable oil to reduce dust and use local and available materials.



April 8, 2010

To: Affected and Interested Agencies

From: Sheila Ludlow, MDT Statewide & Urban Planning

Re: North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study
Resource Agency Workshop
Wednesday, April 21st, 2010: 9 a.m. to noon

Greetings;

You are invited to participate in an introductory workshop for the North Fork Flathead Road (NFFR) Corridor Study – Secondary 486 (Forest Highway 61). The study will help Flathead County and MDT develop a comprehensive plan for managing the corridor and will assist in determining what, if anything, can be done to improve the corridor based on transportation, environmental and/or safety needs; public; agency input; and financial feasibility. The purpose of the meeting is provide you with an orientation to the corridor study process and learn of your agency's issues and concerns regarding the NFFR.

The study will include the portion of the NFFR that is on Secondary 486 from the intersection with Blankenship Road north of Columbia Falls (approximate Reference post 9.5) to the junction with Camas Creek Road (approximate Reference post 22.7). The corridor roadway consists of both paved and gravel surfacing with widths varying from 24 to 36 feet. The entire corridor study area is within the Flathead National Forest and adjacent to Glacier National Park.

The study will provide the following:

- Basic description of the environmental setting,
- Preliminary identification of potential improvements,
- Management strategies,
- Environmental impacts, and
- Potential mitigation options.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 21st from 9 a.m. to noon. For agency contact's convenience, the following locations will be connected via polycom for this meeting:

- MDT Kalispell office; 85 5th Avenue East North in Kalispell - upstairs conference room (the consultant will be presenting from this location)
- MDT Rail, Transit & Planning Division; 2960 Prospect Ave. in Helena – Conference Room A, and
- MDT Missoula District office, 2100 W. Broadway in Missoula – Missoula Conference Room.

The meeting will focus on identifying your resource issues as well as outlining the difference between corridor planning and NEPA/MEPA. The consultant will follow the *Montana Business Process to Link Planning Studies and NEPA/MEPA Reviews*:



http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/brochures/corridor_study_process.pdf. An agenda will be provided to you in advance of the meeting, via email.

On behalf of the planning team, we look forward to working with you on this important project to identify the most needed improvements for the North Fork Flathead Road. Please contact me at (406) 444-9193 if you have any questions prior to the meeting. Thanks in advance for your participation. ***Please RSVP and let me know at which location you will be attending – this will assist in ensuring there is adequate room at each site.***

Sincerely,

Sheila Ludlow
MDT Statewide & Urban Planning

Copy: Jim Dupont, Flathead County Commissioner
Bob Burkhardt, FHWA
Doug Moeller, MDT Butte District Administrator
Tom Martin, MDT Environmental Services Bureau Chief
Zia Kazimi, MDT Statewide & Urban Planning
Susan Kilcrease, MDT Environmental Services
Heidy Bruner, MDT Environmental Services
File

Distribution List:

Stephen Potts, US Environmental Protection Agency
Scott Jackson, Wildlife Biologist, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Todd Tillinger, US Army Corps of Engineers
Robert Ray, MT Department of Environmental Quality
James Vashro, Regional Fisheries Manager, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks - Region 1
Jim Williams, Regional Wildlife Manager, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Region 1
Mark Deleray, Fisheries, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Bob Habeck, Department of Environmental Quality – Air Monitoring & Planning Manager
Larry Alheim, Department of Environmental Quality – Enforcement
Joe Russell, Flathead County Air Quality
Pat Basting, MDT Environmental Services – Missoula District Biologist
Lisa Axline, Trust Lands, MT Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
Earl Applekamp, USFS – Flathead National Forest Engineer
Rob Carlin, USFS – Flathead National Forest
Jimmy DeHerrera – USFS – Flathead National Forest District Ranger
Chas Cartwright – Glacier National Park, Superintendent
Jim Foster – Glacier National Park, Chief of Maintenance
George Fekaris – Western Federal Lands Highway Division
Bob Burkhardt – Federal Highway Administration
Wayne Noem – MDT, Secondary Roads Engineer



MEETING NOTES
North Fork Flathead Road Corridor Study

Name: Resource Agency Meeting

Date: April 21, 2010

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: MDT Kalispell Office (Main meeting), Via telecom - MDT Helena Office, Conference Room A and MDT Missoula Office, Conference Room

Organizers: Sheila Ludlow, MDT and Lani Eggertsen-Goff, PB Americas

Invitees/Attendees: Sheila Ludlow, James Freyholtz, Susan Kilcrease, Pat Basting, Wayne Noem, Bill Squires, David Holien, Doug Moeller, Jean Riley (MDT), Bob Burkhardt (FHWA), Guy Foy (Flathead County), Jim Foster and Stephanie Dubois (NPS), George Fekaris (WFLA), Rob Carlin and Reed Kuennen on behalf of Jimmy DeHerrera (USFS), Stephen Potts (US Environmental Protection Agency), Scott Jackson (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Tim Their (FWP), Eric Merchant, Jeff Ryan on behalf of Robert Ray (MT Department of Environmental Quality), Mark Deleray (MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks), Lisa Axline (MT Department of Natural Resources & Conservation), Lani Eggertsen-Goff and Pam Murray (PB)

Absent: Shane Stack, Zia Kazimi, Lynn Zanto, Bret Boundy, Jim Skinner, Brian Andersen, and Jim Lynch (MDT), Jim Dupont (Flathead County), Jimmy DeHerrera, Earl Applekamp (USFS), Chas Cartwright (NPS), Todd Tillinger (US Army Corps of Engineers), James Vashro and Jim Williams (MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks), Robert Ray, Bob Habeck and Larry Alheim (MT Department of Environmental Quality), Joe Russell (Flathead County Air Quality)

Discussion Items:

1. Introductions

Everyone briefly introduced themselves to the group.

2. Corridor Study Process overview

Lani discussed the MDT Business Process and an overview of the long range planning linkage to NEPA that corridor studies are intended to have. This particular study has been shortened to six months and MDT has offered technical support to Flathead County to take a different look at this roadway than has been done in the past.

3. Summary of April 20 Public Information Meeting



Pam summarized, for those who were not in attendance at the meeting the evening before, what the public raised as the main issues and concerns.

- Paving will take care of dust and delays, for both emergency services and motorists. Some attendees stated that there can be up to 2 hour delay for emergency vehicles to arrive.
- Increased traffic over last several years
- Clarification of the jurisdiction/ownership/maintenance of the study area portion of the NFFR is needed (FAQ and map will be put on website)
- One participant brought his old “Save Don’t Pave” t-shirt and encouraged the study to look at preserving the new compact that Governor Schweitzer put into place limiting development of oil, gas and mining in the area.
- Many questions were raised regarding air quality and the role of EPA, DEQ (State and Flathead County)
- The North Fork Coalition for Health and Safety provided us with a large document and asked about PM 10 vs. PM 2.5
- Columbia Falls submitted the proclamation they just passed requesting the roadway be paved, the mayor said that the proclamation is supported by recreational and business interests.
- Does road siltation make it to the river? Some comments claimed that dust travels far off the roadway itself into surrounding vegetation.
- A question was posed about haze vs. air quality violations and what is the air shed?
- Glacier National Park has a “no development” plan
- Jan Caldwell said to check traffic data because 500 cars per day can’t equate to acceptable air quality
- An attendee told the county to give the roadway back to the State or to the Forest Service
- Another asked if the needs of the grizzly outweigh the needs of residents
- The North Fork compact group provided a document as comment
- Several people asked about the USFWS jeopardy decision
- Many said that the speeds traveled will increase if the roadway is paved
- NPS has data for GNP visitation, check the entrance station data to “ground truth” traffic on Camas coming from GNP
- The roadway (of corridor study area) could serve as an alternate route if Bad Rock Canyon roadway is under construction

17 comment forms were given to the study team and many paper comments that were prepared prior to the meeting were received also.

Doug stated that he also heard that if road improvement came to the NFFR, the County would likely need to change the land use and zoning controls.

Bob heard several people ask how much dust gets to the river from the roadway.

Jim and Stephanie told the group that the GNP General Management Plan is not expected to be updated, it was designed to be appropriate for a 20 to 30 year time frame and the area that this study is looking at is to be managed for the visitor experience to be primitive. NFFR is not



expected to be like “Going to the Sun” highway. North Fork Flathead Valley is a mini-Glacier valley and holds different options for GNP visitors. There are no commercial entities. From Camas to Polebridge there is a strong requirement for primitive/wilderness management.

Rob pointed out that the Flathead Forest Plan from 1986 is still in effect. It was intended to be a 10-15 year plan, there is a proposed plan, but due to a new planning rule process for all USFS plans, it isn't expected to be updated and approved until 2012-2013.

4. Roundtable discussion of issues/concerns pertinent to each agency's mission and responsibilities

Steve Potts (EPA) sees this roadway as similar to other in Montana, as far as water quality concerns related to dust. If it is paved, the trade offs (regarding air and water quality) have to work. Concern could be for localized air quality impacts versus recognizing the possible impacts with paving. Dust particulates questions from the public will need to get information from the County area as it is not designated as non-Class 1 air quality area (related to GNP).

Eric Merchant (from Air Resources section of Montana DEQ) said that there are no compliance monitoring efforts being done in the study area. No one has air quality data. There are three PM10 non-attainment areas near the study area, Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls. Eric discussed standards that are being phased out, PM 2.5 (more of a gas) versus PM 10 (more localized, less than 10 microns), from health standard 2.5 is worse, but the annual standard is being phased out. He expects that the results of dust on the road on air quality would be minimal. He will look into the Air Quality Order of Consent (AOC) data. No plans that he is aware of for MTDEQ to do studies since funding for monitoring is tight. There have been multiple monitoring projects in the NFFR area.

Stephanie Dubois (GNP) stated that air quality monitoring within GNP is available and a new study has preliminary data available. This is expected to be published in the near future. APGAR area has a monitoring station 10 miles north of NFFR.

Eric Merchant - Flathead County air quality program has primacy on this roadway. The AOC (Administrative Order of Consent) stems from a reasonable expectation of good air quality. AOC 07-04 clean air act violation by Flathead County. Reasonable precautions are being taken on NFFR –Eric to follow-up.

Scott Jackson (USFWS) said this is a multi-faceted issue with lots of tradeoffs. He asked about P&N, and suggested that the dust abatement component of this study needs to be what we strive vigorously toward as a goal or objective and that an exhaustive look at dust abatement methods and possibilities should be done. He is also going to be the one responsible for any Section 7 consultation if the study leads to project development in the future. T&E species in the study area include bull trout, lynx, grizzly bear, possibly a listed plant and as with other Forest Highways the NFFR is in a sensitive area with lots of concerns. Some of these concerns include increased use of the area including people, auto speed and the effects on wildlife, direct and indirect effects of improvements of the roadways, wildlife concerns such as the Biological Opinion (BO), Jeopardy decision for both Grizzly bear and wolves in 1980 and 1982. The opinions are still valid for the study area and for similar proposed projects. If the same projects were proposed it would likely mean those BOs would stand. If new projects were proposed, this would require new BOs and Section 7 consultations.



Looking at what the traffic volumes, he wonders how one road treatment would affect speeds vs. another treatment. Also, what about adjacent land development impacts to the area? The difficult thing is to quantify the impacts. The USFWS is interested in solutions to problems, such as keeping speeds low, keeping the area primitive, dust no doubt runs into streams (although he hasn't heard this up in the NFFR area), are there actual benefits to fish if the roadway is paved? (He's not sure that is the case). He stated this is an area of concern as this is world class area for wildlife.

Bob Burkhardt (FHWA) asked how this compares to the Libby North Corridor Study. Scott replied that it is not in the "no take" prohibition status as was the case in Libby area; it was a paved roadway, so this is not applicable to NFFR.

Jeff Ryan (DEQ) discussed his thoughts about dust certainly contributing to potential water quality problems. He sees there being zero tolerance for any increase in pollution, especially as this river is an "outstanding resource". The trade-offs must be considered, dust vs. pavement, siltation from runoff and the runoff coefficient increase/storm water runoff. What about salt and sand treatment for snow/ice removal? If there are improvements and it came to design phase, again zero tolerance would be given, i.e. zero (roadway) run off to the streams would be allowed.

Rob Carlin (USFS) suggested a possible stakeholder Raul McKensie, the Manager of Stolzt Land and Lumber. There are two timber sales per year and they could possibly provide dust abatement if the sales proceed. This study area is within FS significant timber. In 2001 and 2003 the wild fires compounded difficult timbering (some clear cut done in the past) and the forest is still recovering.

The Forest Plan has been amended 24 times, they are not likely to do another amendment, but hope to have a new plan after the Planning Rule is finalized (as stated above). The Grizzly bear security and maintenance standards of landscapes for the Grizzly bear are the forest wide goals and in some sub-units within the Flathead Forest these standards couldn't be met.

The wild fire of 2006 really brought the suitable forest base level down. National Forest area suitable base was cut in half. Within Flathead NF there are recommended wilderness areas, two inventory roadless areas- Thompson Section and 2 Chuck (adjacent to Kootenai). There are multiple use areas and some leases are active and there has been some discussion this week for withdrawal of lands not under the lease.

Reed Kuennen (USFS) stated that some spin off recreation occurs at Big Creek campground. The stream sediment and grizzly management are two topics he wants considered in the study.

Scott Jackson (USFWS) reiterated that 2 chuck and Big Creek FS facility (and Great North Flats, cabin rental? We need to check on this) are really the only FS facilities within the study area. A lot of the other facilities are outside the study area. He has observed that the river access sites get a lot of use, there are no hardened campgrounds at river access and he's not aware of any plans to increase or improve campgrounds that could supply access to a lot more recreation use. Right now there is a freeze on increasing recreational use and a focus on conservation. The current pressure from pilots wanting to land on old landing strips has resulted in strips reopening; he thinks this includes one outfitter. Paula Peterson in the Hungry Horse office does recreational monitoring.



Who are the new users in the study area? The Glacier Institute and Border Patrol, new residents with second homes are some of the new users. The wild and scenic river (recreational segment) needs to be researched.

Rob Carlin stated a lot of people at the meeting last night said this is the road to nowhere, he disagrees. The Road Meadow Route is known nationally. He recommends some research regarding Wild & Scenic Rivers, not now designated but can be used for impacts and effects (ORB). He thinks the BO Jeopardy decision was based on population projections, so recommends looking at the neighborhood plan for NF. There may be more controls in place than when the BO was written. The plan is available on the County website. Resolution 2143A adopted June 12, 2008.

Scott Jackson raised the question about if pavement is a chosen improvement that could lead to ease of access would that lead to indirect impacts? Since 1980s what are the voluntary or other actions with “teeth” that have occurred? He thinks maybe a combination of paving/not paving to the border could work, but that the long stretch from Camas to the Canadian border not likely to be approved for paving.

Tim Thier (FWP) said he has been seeing more problems on private lands at private residents due to large bear removal due to conflicts with private property (owners).

George Fekaris (FHWA/WFL) sees baseline conditions of the Grizzly in this area comparable to the 1980s, Jim stated the population is at capacity and spreading to other areas. We don’t want to mess with the core population in the NF area.

Stephanie Dubois (GNP) said that we know what the overall ecosystem population is in this area. Rick Mace’s study should be published within the next year. The study will be available and there will be ongoing monitoring efforts as appropriate.

Tim Their (FWP) thinks that compared to elsewhere the efforts to educate property owners about grizzly have been intense, but have paid off.

Several people that could offer additional information are Pat vanImeran in Hungry Horse, regarding magnesium chloride and the effects of oil, and Brad Treat, FS law enforcement, regarding speed and crashes, and Paula Peterson regarding recreation use.

(After a short break the round table discussion continued)

Stephanie Dubois posed the question of the effects of dust on air quality and possible effects on air shed (Class 1 air shed status), as follow up to DEQ, would like to learn more if possible. Lani Eggertsen-Goff stated that during the short time frame of this study it is not likely any studies can be completed.

The park was surprised at the Columbia Falls proclamation. We didn’t know this was in the works, but we have known of their interest to market the Camas Road as an entrance to the park. There is currently a self-service fee station as one enters the park on the Camas Road; it was staffed in the past.

GNP is supportive of all non-paving options, such as dust palliatives, enforcement of low speed limits and understanding the road use, 2-3 months it has high use, look at that issues related to that. She informed



the group that the visitor numbers at Camas entrance are automated and the visitors that enter there do impact the entire NFFR area; it is not cut out to work in isolation.

Many comments at last night's meeting were blurred, i.e. protect the primitive area, provide visitor enjoyment goals, pledge to protect the entire World Heritage Site (WHS) of the Waterton International Peace Park, British Columbia mining concerns were elevated last year with a conference regarding the WHS, fracturing the ecosystem and impact to wildlife are the main concerns with major improvements to NFFR of the GNP.

Bob Burkhardt, is there something comparable for GNP to the Yellowstone Coalition? Reed Kuennen (USFS) said, there is a NF preservation group North Fork Preservation Association, National Parks Conservation Association, Friends of the wild swan, and Crown Managers Partnership. The Crown Managers are a group of agencies in the U.S. and Canada that partner with local partners including NGOs.

Doug Moeller (MDT) talked about the one comment last night that pointed out the possible use of NFFR as an alternate route during any Bad Rock Canyon construction. This is not likely to occur in the foreseeable future. Even if that construction were to occur in the near term, the NFFR would not likely see that much traffic as a "work around" possibility.

He would like to address the comment he heard about what standards would be used, County or State, and if the roadway could become narrower and curvier to decrease travel speeds. He thinks we'd have to work toward being within MDT standards for this roadway if any improvements are implemented. Sheila talked about the question raised last night, if the County could give the roadway back to the State. MDT would take over a roadway automatically if it were improved to state standards, up until 2000. Now it would have to go through legislative process.

George Fekaris revisited addressing water quality and the cost of treatment of stormwater and runoff if paving improvements occur. There used to be the same reaction to this topic that the group had earlier this morning, but it has become standard practice to include these costs in the Pacific Northwest. A lot of sensitive areas in this study area in addition to the transportation needs.

He would like the study team to consider what is needed from a design perspective, some method to address this type of area and terrain, look at opportunities to allow design exceptions. New technologies coming on-line that may preclude mag/cal chloride. A new aggregate (durable driving surface) is being used in other locations. This can eliminate a lot of the silt and fines and create a durable driving surface.

15 to 20 years ago alternative transportation modes were barely being considered. Now it may be more possible to consider a shuttle system for the NFFR.

Tim Their (FWP) shared that Mark Deleray has observed that relative to the NF area generally, this stretch of the NFFR has very little spawning. If you do pave the roadway, more people will be fishing and possibly fishing illegally on closed sections of the river. This is a concern. The pros and cons of gravel and pavement sort of balance out, if there is increased use it will lead to impacts. He thinks that limiting the impact considerations to the stretch of roadway only is limiting the big picture for the wildlife.



Bob Burkhardt (FHWA) echoed what Jim stated. He pointed out that this is the Flathead County initiative, not an MDT project proposal. Land use needs to be looked at carefully by all parties.

Eric Merchant (DEQ) encouraged the group to consider paving, treatments, and all options. The Clean Air Act is reactive, if we all understand where the area of the problem lies, and this is recognized—then look at what is the cause, road dust. Possible requirements that could result from continued dust include daily watering, treatments (paved or not). If the CAA does not get triggered it will be less cumbersome for everyone.

Guy Foy (Flathead Co.) stated that the County has several departments that this study can rely on for assistance, Health, Roads and Public Works, Public Safety (Sheriff) and Planning. He also thinks that FS and FWP, along with Border Patrol can share data. He wants the team to let the County know how they can help.

Rob Carlin (USFS) asked if there is likely to be any chance of greater Right-Of-Way (ROW) acquisition. James thinks that possible drainage issues and addressing those issues could require more ROW. This will require determining the ROW width, toe of fill to top of cut, etc. Currently there is an easement between the FS, Flathead County and State for the roadway.

Jean Riley (MDT) asked about the width of the roadway, maybe shrinking to 26 feet or even narrow a bit more to put in paths/bicycle access. George will place the original EIS for the NFFR on the ENRS FRP and it can be moved to MDT and PB files. He recommends looking at as many possible treatments as we can, identify cost/impacts and then raise a few to a higher level of consideration. Identification of red flags is important. Jean said that we have a wide range of cost-impacts from Do Nothing to Full Reconstruct. MDT will work with PB on potential funding options.

5. Project Solve (PS2) web-based site available to study team and participants in this meeting, others to be included?

Lani asked for any additional participants, please give the contact info and we will include on the PS2 and study mailing/email list.

Rob gave the name of the new Forest Supervisor, Chip Webber, from the Willamette Forest. Stephanie asked that we keep Chas Cartwright as lead for GNP.

6. Website available to everyone <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/northfork/>
7. Tour of corridor for those available. Sheila, George and Lani drove the study area.