

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service -- Northern Region



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOREST SERVICE RESPONDS TO DECISION ON WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

Missoula, Montana – Officials with the Forest Service’s Northern Regional Office responded today to the recent U.S. District Court decision on a lawsuit regarding wilderness study areas in Montana. Judge Donald Molloy found in favor of the plaintiffs, the Montana Wilderness Association, that the Forest Service “failed to administer Montana wilderness study areas so as to maintain each area’s wilderness character as it existed in 1977.” Molloy’s decision deals primarily with changing use patterns, such as motorized use and trail maintenance levels, in the study areas.

Forest Service spokeswoman, Maggie Pittman, said that agency officials are reviewing Molloy’s decision to determine whether or not an appeal will be filed. “We believe we have done a good job in maintaining the wilderness character of these areas in Montana and will continue to do so”, Pittman said. She added that “in most of these wilderness study areas, there are fewer areas open to motorized use than in 1977”.

Pittman stated that in order to comply with the order, officials will be reviewing actions that have been proposed in the affected areas over the upcoming summer months. “We expect most of the proposals would maintain the desired wilderness character. Those that might be in question would be postponed”, she added.

Once a decision is made on whether or not to appeal Molloy’s decision, more detailed direction for management and specific uses in these areas will be developed.

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