

PROTECT THE PUTT-PUTT

A COMMUNITY ACTION ORGANIZATION

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December 8, 2009

Reagan Bebout, Field Representative
US Senator Mike Enzi's Field Office
1110 Maple Way, Suite G
Jackson, WY 83002

Re: North Cache Conveyance Project of the Bridger-Teton National Forest

Dear Ms. Bebout:

Thank you for this opportunity to meet with you in Jackson yesterday. We appreciate your interest in Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) funding needs. Please allow me to recap some of our discussion from yesterday.

- Selling valuable federal assets to fund facilities maintenance needs is bad public policy. That is something everyone, including BTNF employees, understands.
- Waiting for the conclusion of the NEPA process is imprudent. We already know what the result will be (I know because I saw the memos and e-mails going two-and-one-half years back to when the decision to sell was already made). Regardless, the decision will likely get bogged down in appeals and litigation. And, the Forest still will not have the funding it needs.
- Even if this sale gets to implementation, the market for that land is non-existent now, investors will not get any advanced assurances about up-zoning from the Town, and the community will likely shoot down any up-zoning requests after the sale (Remember the Porter-Gill annexation referendum in 2002). And, the Forest still will not have the funding it needs.
- Funding for this does already exist. The Forest Service has \$500 million in discretionary funding for facilities construction and maintenance in its FY 2010 appropriations. That is in addition to Recovery Act funds allocated to the Forest Service and yet to be spent.

Letter to R. Bebout

12/8/2009

Page 2 of 2

- But for this conveyance, the BTNF would likely have some of that funding. It recently skipped over its Jackson needs and funded the Big Piney Ranger District Office construction, which was its thirteenth priority. The reason is because it wants to sell that land.
- Moreover, the Regional Office recently shot down the BTNF's \$9 million application for Recovery Act funds saying this project is not shovel ready. That's not true. NEPA is 90 days from completion and all the preliminary site planning is done (Again, I've been through the files). The real reason is they think they are selling that land.
- For those who oppose earmarking (or other forms of politicking for pet projects), this is not a "Bridge to Nowhere." This is a palpable need for a new Supervisor's Office that is not otherwise being met. Our Congressional delegation is in a superior position to recognize this governmental failing and to do something about it. That's why we elected them: to represent *our* needs.
- Lastly, there is a consensus in Teton County on this issue—stop the sale and find other funding—because we all use and depend upon the BTNF. The Parks are for tourists. The Forest is where all of us hike, bike, ski, hunt, and snowmobile. It is where our Forest permittees conduct their businesses. The healthy Forest supports the whole ecosystem, which includes those prized Parks.

Thank you again for your interest in finding ways to work together toward a solution to this predicament. We look forward to future discussion.

Sincerely yours,

Charles L. Payne, Jr.

cc: Carole "Kniffy" Hamilton, BTNF Supervisor
Harv Forsgren, R-4 Regional Forester
Tom Tidwell, Chief of the US Forest Service