

2007

Resolution #6 2007 Submitted by Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead MT

Subject: Suggestions by Citizens' Advisory Group

WHEREAS, Our wild areas in the past were protected mainly by their isolation and lack of easy access before the Wilderness Act was passed in 1964. Congress mandated protection of these areas from high-level intrusion and development, and that the land would remain basically unchanged for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations; and

WHEREAS, To accomplish this, a large task force of Forest Service personnel, stock users, hikers, outfitters and conservationists were formed into a citizens' advisory group under the direction of Steve McCool, a University of Montana professor of wildland recreation management. This group held numerous meetings and spent thousands of hours formulating a new type of management plan, called "Limits of Acceptable Change," which has also become the foundation of many management plans developed for other areas; and

WHEREAS, One of the first things recognized was the fact that, with few exceptions, only some of the "old time" Rangers and Packers within the Agency had the benefit of having acquired many of the "primitive skills" necessary to efficiently construct and maintain backcountry trails. The advisory group stressed that recognition of these necessary skills should be a major consideration for hiring, placement, advancement, and awards, such as the Silver Axe award. It was agreed that on-the-ground experience with whatever tool necessary to do a job efficiently, including handling livestock, should be in the resume of every supervisor. This is especially important at the District level where some multi-tasking, including teaching, is necessary to train subordinates; and

WHEREAS, The recognition of what we consider crucial knowledge and skills for a particular position no longer appears to be a prerequisite or consideration for placement in our backcountry jobs; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, by the Back Country Horsemen of Montana, That government agencies in charge of Wilderness and backcountry be strongly encouraged to use the suggestions of the citizens' advisory group, which provided many of the parameters and provisions of our current Limits of Acceptable Change management plan, which have proven to be highly successful; and be it further

RESOLVED, by the Back Country Horsemen of Montana that the agencies be required to implement training strategies that will ensure that employees obtain proficient livestock handling skills which include packing and back country travel.