



Columbia Seaplane Pilots Association

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UPPER MISSOURI BREAKS NATIONAL MONUMENT PROJECT MEMORANDUM

Telephone Discussion with Gary Slagel

November 29, 2005

This memo summarizes a telephone discussion held between Gary Slagel, Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office, 920 Northeast Main, Lewistown, MT 59457, (406) 538-1900 and Aron Faegre on November 29, 2005 to request information about the basis of seaplane information contained in the draft Resource Management Plan. The following items were discussed:

Columbia Seaplane Pilots Association: Faegre noted that his organization represents the interests of seaplane pilots especially in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska, and California, and had just recently learned that the BLM's draft Resource Management Plan was considering closing the Missouri River within the Monument to seaplanes. Faegre apologized for coming to the table this late to provide input on the needs of the seaplane community. Slagel said that the Plan is still a draft, so he welcomes our input to the BLM. Faegre noted that the Columbia Seaplane Pilots Association is preparing information for submission, and had considered coming to the public meeting on November 28th, but had heard that all meetings this week were canceled due to weather. Slagel said that these meetings will be rescheduled.

Seaplanes use this Route for Interstate Travel: Faegre noted that the Missouri River is virtually the only way for strait float seaplanes to get back and forth between the western and eastern United States, and that these pilots need the ability to occasionally land in this stretch of river while using the river as a flyway. Faegre noted that his group will be submitting information concerning this vital need of occasional landings while using seaplanes for transportation through the area. As to pure recreational uses, Faegre noted that once a seaplane lands, it is considered a vessel, so his group would also request that if power boats are allowed access for recreational uses, that seaplanes be considered to be power boats, which they are, thereby being allowed for pure recreational uses as well.

Lumping together of Seaplanes with Personal Water Craft: Faegre asked why the draft Resource Management Plan in virtually every case lumped seaplanes with personal water craft? Slagel said that it was only for the ease of creation of the document. Faegre asked whether some group or organization had suggested the language about seaplanes and the lumping of them together, and Slagel said no, this language was created by BLM. Faegre noted that seaplanes are used for long distance travel and use perhaps 1000 feet of the river for a landing and takeoff. Whereas personal water craft are generally a recreational vehicle that may go long distances on the water but usually involve the enjoyment of jumping waves, making rapid turns, and stop and go activities. Slagel agreed and said that the BLM recognizes that they are very different craft, and will welcome our input to make sure the differences are taken into account in the Resource Management Plan.

Seaplane Issues of Interest to BLM: Faegre asked Slagel what issues BLM would consider especially important to address in our letter. Slagel noted that the river changes a lot every year, with shallows and snags appearing at different places at different times. In addition, there are a lot of boats in the river, and this may be a conflict with the boats. Slagel feels these two safety issues are very important to address. Faegre briefly noted that these are issues that seaplane pilots are trained and tested on when receiving a seaplane rating from the FAA. A seaplane has the advantage over boats of being able to do an aerial reconnaissance of the water area it intends to use. For example, if there are boats in an area, we simply wait until there is a good clear area of river before we land or takeoff. Seaplanes travel for thousands of miles through wilderness areas of the US and Canada each year, and these are the issues that we have to address on all of those trips. Faegre said he would provide information on this in his letter.

Proclamation Goal of Protecting Objects: Faegre noted that the Proclamation is very specific in stating that the intent is to protect the “biological, geological, and historical objects” in the Monument. Faegre asked how one gets from preserving the objects, to a concern of people’s experience of the objects – i.e. the discussion about noise impacting the quiet – since noise might not have any impact on the objects themselves? Slagel said that the BLM considers that “solitude” might be considered as an object in the Monument to be protected.

Thanks: Faegre thanked Slagel for taking the time to talk with him, and looked forward to providing information to BLM. Slagel offered to send Faegre a hard copy of the draft Resource Management Plan, and Faegre accepted the offer, as the on line version has been a little difficult to use.

cc: Gary Slagel, BLM