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May 9, 2021

The Hon. Jon Tester  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

*Re: the Blackfoot-Clearwater Stewardship Act, S. 1493*

Dear Senator Tester:

The Sustainable Trails Coalition<sup>1</sup> respectfully requests deletion of two words in the Blackfoot-Clearwater Stewardship Act (BCSA), S. 1493. The words would negatively affect Montana's bicycling community and jurisdictions that depend on bicycling visitors.

The BCSA would set an unwelcome precedent by being the first legislation STC knows of to ban bicycling on federal land. Specifically, section 201 of the bill prohibits "mechanized vehicles" in the proposed Otatsy Recreation Management Area.

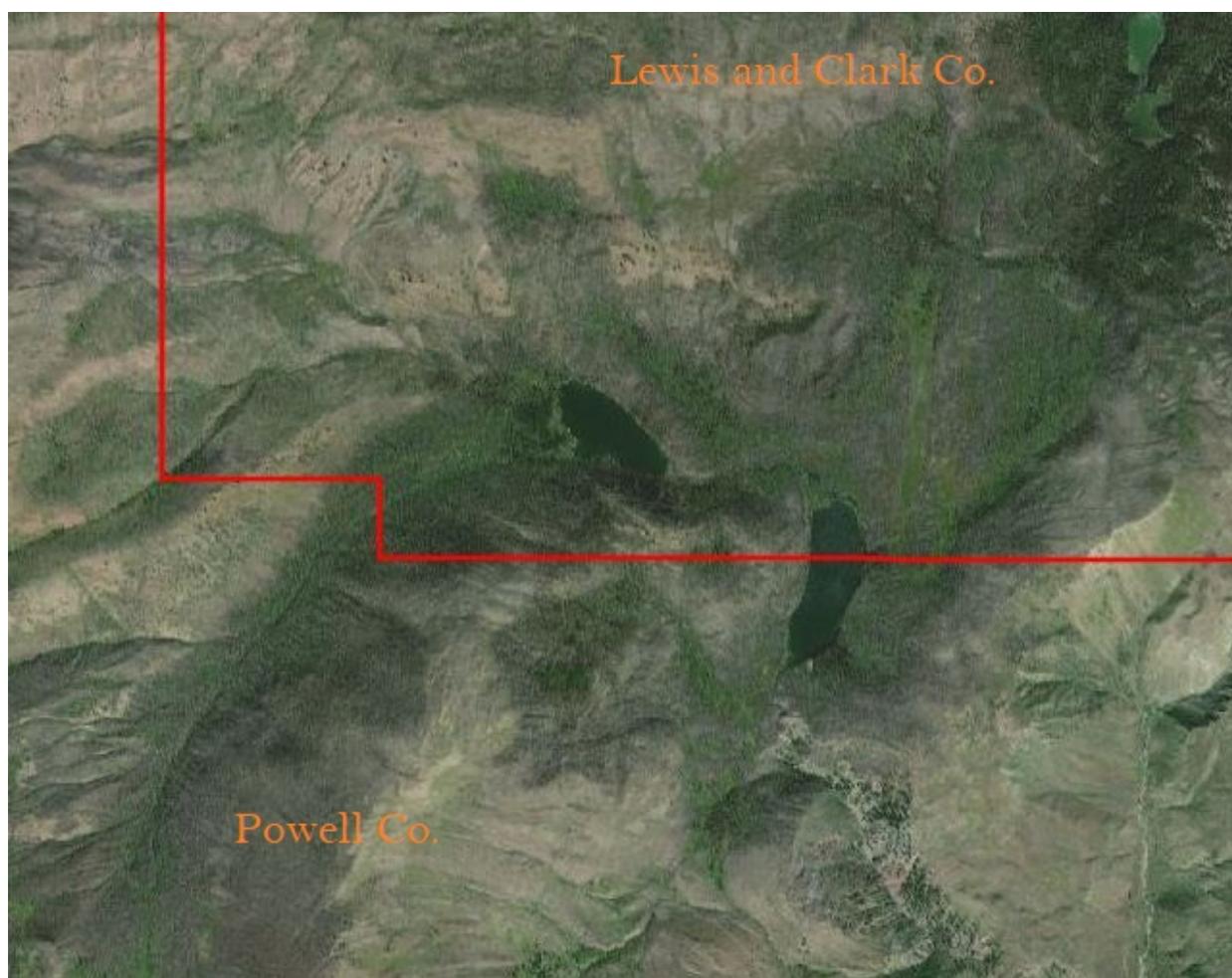
In common parlance, bicycles are seldom referred to as "vehicles," so the language doesn't necessarily ban bicycling. But the Forest Service or a court might interpret it that way.

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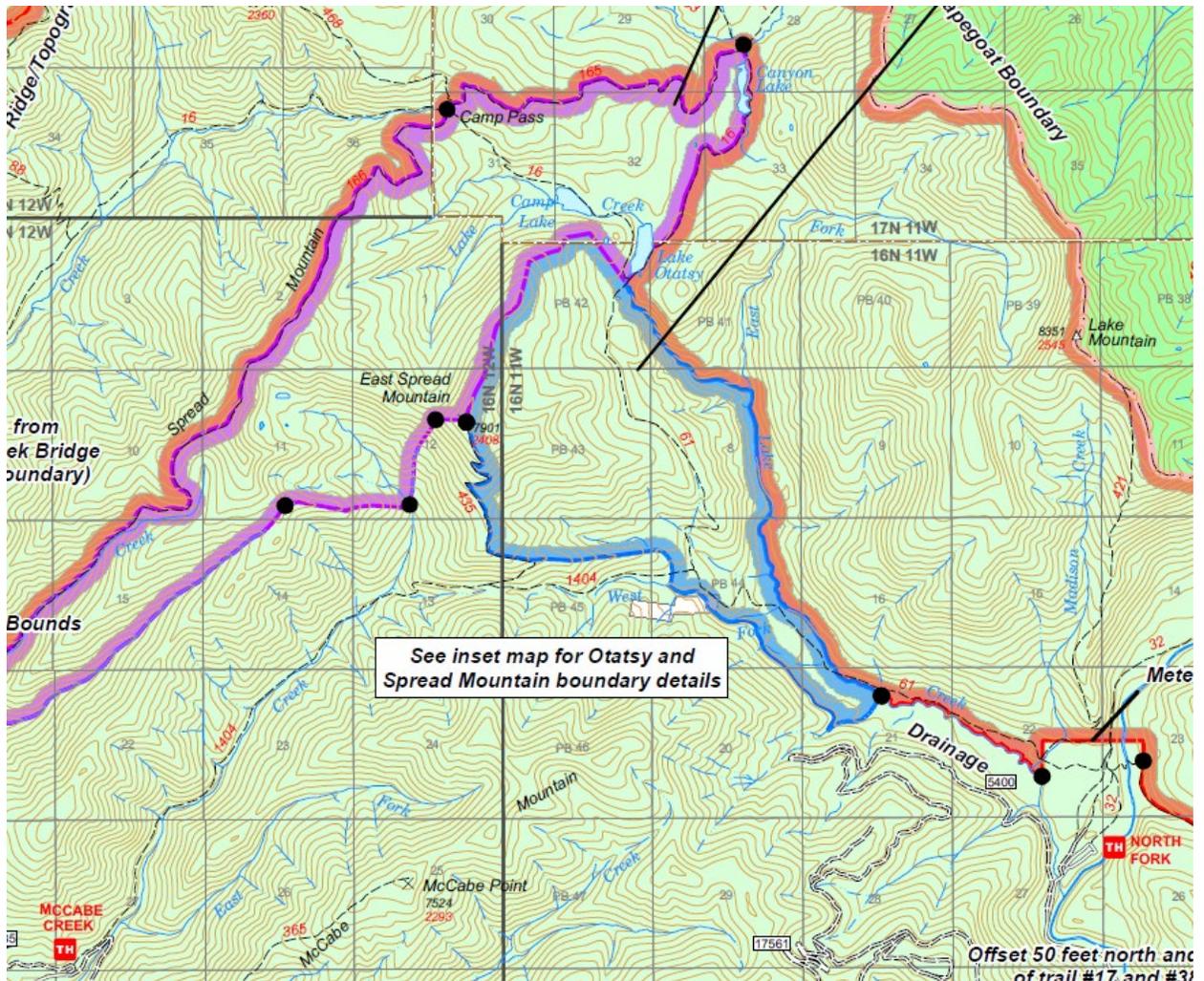
<sup>1</sup> STC is a nonprofit, grass-roots organization with tens of thousands of followers. We work to restore National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park staff discretion to allow mountain biking in Wilderness on a case-by-case basis. They were able to do this as recently as the year 2000 in the case of the BLM, but no longer can.

If so, cyclists would lose practical access to the lakes basin on the Powell County–Lewis and Clark County border, comprising Camp Lake, Lake Otatsy, and Canyon Lake from the McCabe Creek and North Fork trailheads in the Lolo National Forest. Specifically, access via the McCabe Creek Trail No. 1404, Otatsy Lake Trail No. 61, and Falls Creek Trail No. 16 (eastern portion) would be severed.

This photograph shows the lakes basin, bisected by the county line.



This map show trails that would be lost to cyclists in that area:



With BCSA’s Wilderness designations severing other bicycle access to the lakes basin, the only theoretical access would be via the Spread Mountain Trail No. 166 from the Monture Creek trailhead, assuming that that it remains outside the proposed Wilderness boundary (it abuts it and may not).

Even if the Spread Mountain Trail remains outside the proposed Wilderness, however, it is too steep and unmaintained to be rideable by bicycle. Visit Montana [states](#), “Spread Mountain Trail (166) is very steep for the entire route. It’s a primitive foot trail over the top of Spread Mountain to Camp Pass.” The well-regarded Trailforks mapping website does not list it as a viable route for mountain bikers or even for hikers.

We request that the language “and mechanized” be removed from section 201(c)(3)(A) of the proposed BCSA, so that cyclists can be assured of continued access to the lakes basin.

Respectfully submitted,



Ted Stroll  
STC board president

cc: The Hon. Catherine Cortez Masto, subcommittee chairperson  
The Hon. Mike Lee, subcommittee ranking member  
The Hon. Steve Daines  
The Hon. Matt Rosendale  
The Hon. Tom McClintock  
The Hon. Bruce Westerman  
Mr. Chris French, USDA Forest Service  
Montana bicycling organizations  
Powell County and Lewis and Clark County Boards of Commissioners