

MPA members attend U.S. Forest Service meeting

Several members of the Montana Pilots Assoc. (MPA) and the Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF) attended an all day meeting sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service in Missoula on April 13. Attending on behalf of the MPA were Western VP Steve Rossiter and Treasurer Jim Younkin. Representing the RAF were Chuck Jarecki, Jerry Cain and Ron Normandeau (also MPA members).

The Forest Service is conducting a series of “Roundtable Meetings” throughout the nation to gain public input in drafting a new land management planning rule for the entire National Forest System. In the past, recreation on National Forest lands has taken a back seat to other uses such as timber harvest. Aviation has not been recognized at all. This is why the MPA and the RAF are engaged in the planning at the early stages of this eighteen month public lands process.

The MPA and RAF successfully inserted the following comments into the public record:

- 1) The planning rule must direct planners at all levels to consider and provide for motorized and non-motorized public access to USFS lands for recreational purposes whether by land, water, or air.*
- 2) The planning process needs to be uniform throughout the country.*
- 3) USFS planning should only apply to USFS lands.*
- 4) Future goals must be established before a planning process is initiated.*
- 5) Increased recreational use of USFS lands must be recognized and become a significant portion of the planning process.*
- 6) The planning process needs to be drafted so that USFS employees’ personal biases are not influencing the forest plans.*

The “Missoulian” carried a front page report on the meeting the next day. Jerry Cain, of the Recreational Aviation Foundation, was quoted as follows: *“I want to see that recreation is included in the rule and the planning process, and that aviation is considered. In all the previous plans, that hasn’t been done.”*

Various special interest groups attended the roundtable meeting from wilderness advocates, back country horsemen, numerous motorized recreational users, mountain bikers, timber interests and river floaters.

The MPA and the RAF will continue to be involved to make sure the voice of recreational aviation is heard.