



File Code: 2300/2700

Date: FEB 8 2002

John McKenna
Recreational/Backcountry Committee
Montana Pilots' Association
1925 East Baseline Road
Belgrade, MT 59714

Dear Mr. McKenna:

This is in response to your letter of December 13, 2001, regarding backcountry airstrips in the Northern Region. Thank you for providing us with the Montana Pilots' Association's (MPA) initial list of priority airstrips for our mutual consideration. I will forward your letter to the affected National Forests on which these strips reside for consideration by that Forest's staff.

In previous correspondence and meetings, your organization has expressed a need to use some existing "decommissioned" backcountry strips, and possibly construct additional new airstrips in the Northern Region. I agree with former Regional Forester Dale Bosworth and Deputy RF Kathy McAllister that backcountry flying is a very enjoyable dispersed recreational activity, and backcountry landing strips can be an appropriate use of National Forest System (NFS) land. However, as with all uses on NFS land, using existing or constructing new airstrips must comply with laws, regulations, and policies, and must be compatible with applicable land and resource management plans (Forest Plans).

To continue with this process, I encourage your organization to work directly with District Rangers and their respective staffs to further develop and evaluate the list of airstrips your group has proposed. My staff and I will support those proposals, which make sense at the District and Forest level. I would also encourage the MPA to become involved in the public Forest Plan revision process because Forests can best address and evaluate proposed land uses, such as airstrips, during this process.

I look forward to working with your organization to accomplish our mutual objectives. Please call Gordon Schofield of my staff (406/329-3110) if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

BRADLEY E. POWELL
Regional Forester

cc:

Forest Supervisor, Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF
Forest Supervisor, Flathead NF
Forest Supervisor, Gallatin NF
Forest Supervisor, Helena NF
Forest Supervisor, Lewis & Clark NF

