



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

JUL 18 2018

The Honorable Steve Daines  
United States Senate  
320 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Daines:

Thank you for your letter of June 15, 2018, regarding airstrips and public access in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex in Montana.

You are correct in stating that the only backcountry airstrip currently open for public use inside the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex is Schafer Meadows. In addition, there are several backcountry airstrips open just outside the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex: Spotted Bear and Meadow Creek airstrips on the Flathead National Forest, and Benchmark airstrip on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest.

The remaining airstrips you mention have not been maintained or used by fixed-wing aircraft since the Complex's Wilderness designation in 1964. These airstrips were not in public use at the time of the Wilderness designation. Therefore, our management intent is to maintain closure of the airstrips to naturally restore and blend into the landscape. While they are used sparingly for emergency-fire operations for rotator aircraft, fixed-wing aircraft cannot safely use them. These emergency use landing areas are not included on our maps, and are no longer considered backcountry airstrips for potential use or inventory purposes.

Thank you for referring the Recreational Aviation Foundation to us, they are a valued partner. If you have any further questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sonny Perdue". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sonny Perdue  
Secretary