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## **Forest Service Needs to Prosecute Illegal Helicopter Landing in the Bob Marshall Wilderness**

Missoula, MT — Today, Wilderness Watch [sent a letter](#) to U.S. Forest Service Region 1 Regional Forester Leanne Marten urging her to pursue the strongest possible penalties against the pilot and passenger of a helicopter that flew into the Bob Marshall Wilderness so the couple could go fishing.

On May 16, two people on horseback reported encountering a helicopter and its occupants on the banks of the South Fork of the Flathead River in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The Forest Service is currently investigating the helicopter landing by former NYC banking executive Sara Schwerin and her husband, Sam Schwerin, of Bozeman, Montana, who the horsemen found fishing on a sandbar. When confronted by the horsemen for their illegal Wilderness landing, the Schwerins reportedly claimed it was okay for them to land their helicopter “below the high water line.” They later issued an “apology” through a public relations firm.

The Wilderness Act prohibits landing aircraft in Wilderness areas, and it is the responsibility of pilots to abide by that law and know their location and Wilderness boundaries. In their letter, Wilderness Watch called on the Forest Service to work with the FAA in the investigation and prosecution and, if possible, confiscate the helicopter and revoke the pilot’s license.

“The egregiousness of the action, the disdain it shows for the sanctity of Wilderness, and the sense of privilege and entitlement displayed by the helicoptering couple argues for the strongest possible punishment,” wrote Wilderness Watch executive director, George Nickas. “A thousand dollar fine would be like no more than a parking ticket to these law breakers.

The penalty must serve as a deterrent to others who would contemplate a similar escapade in the Bob or other Wildernesses in the Northern Rockies,” he added.

“The American people, and Montanans in particular, are incredibly proud and protective of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. We expect the Forest Service will prosecute the perpetrators to the greatest extent possible, because it’s deserved and it may deter others who feel entitled from embarking on such obnoxious behavior,” Nickas concluded.

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