

Dear Editor,

Buffalo and Johnson County residents mark April 19 from 4 to 6 PM on your calendar. Forest Supervisor Andrew Johnson will be holding an open house at the Powder River District Office at 1415 Fort Street then. This is the community's opportunity to let Mr. Johnson know that we need a full time District Ranger stationed in Buffalo. Mr. Johnson proposes a "fulltime" District Ranger in Buffalo a few days a week. That doesn't sound fulltime to me.

Here are some reasons I think it is important to have a truly fulltime District Ranger in Buffalo.

- Community involvement and understanding of the local and visitor interests are critical to representing the south end of the Forest, something a full time District Ranger has time to do.
- Recreational use on the south end of the Forest comprises more than half of the entire recreation workload on the Bighorn National Forest, 3/4 of the Cloud Peak Wilderness use, 1/2 of the campground use, 1/2 of the dispersed recreation use, 800 plus rock climbing routes in Tensleep Canyon, and the only three cabin rentals on the Forest.
- Forest Supervisor Johnson mentioned to me there were 2 staff positions in the Supervisor's Office in Sheridan that he could reduce. Reduce one now and use that position for the PRRD Ranger as they are the same pay level.
- The Forest has gone from 5 districts in the 1980s down to 3 now.
- Buffalo is the closest town to the Forest, only 10 minutes away. A District Ranger and the employees stationed in Buffalo spend more of their day in the Forest not driving an hour to get to it.
- Once the District Ranger (Line Officer) position is vacant in a town, the remaining staff positions can be lost with the eventual closure of the office. Greybull, WY and Big Timber, MT are examples of this happening.
- Permittees will need to either travel to Sheridan to meet the "fulltime" District Ranger or wait for the "fulltime" District Ranger to be "available" in Buffalo.
- According to WYDOT traffic counts, traffic on US 16 is 1200 vehicles per day through Buffalo and over the Bighorns. That is 50% more volume than traffic over the Bighorns on US 14.
- **Finally, there has been a District Ranger in Buffalo since 1898 just one year after the Big Horn Forest Reserve was established.**

I encourage the citizens of the Buffalo area to let Mr. Andrew Johnson know on April 19 that we want a fulltime District Ranger in Buffalo.

Sincerely,  
Craig Cope