

FORUM

A4

Saturday
November 10, 2007

THEIRS

Legal Services cuts to fight crime no answer

The statistics are frightening, and something has to change.

Between 1992 and 2002, Native Americans were victims of violent crime at twice the rate of the general population, according to Department of Justice statistics.

But cases referred to U.S. attorneys are far less likely to be prosecuted if the crime occurred on tribal land.

Sen. John Thune said he is determined to put an end to the proliferation of violent crime on reservations in South Dakota and elsewhere. Thune introduced an amendment that would have provided an additional \$20 mil-

lion for U.S. attorneys working in Indian Country.

Thune's amendment, which would have taken money from Legal Services Corp.'s \$390 million allocation, failed in a vote.

Legal Services funds and monitors free civil legal aid for people who cannot afford it. It is a national program that is undeniably troubled but helps many who struggle in situations similar to those Thune's amendment would have helped. Perhaps another funding source would have been more palatable.

— Sioux Falls Argus Leader

School funding lawsuit promises nasty battle

Sioux Falls lawyer Scott Abdallah, in a Daily Republic story about the education funding lawsuit he's filed against the state, said two members of the state Board of Education stated under oath that they feel the state is wrong with its funding.

Attorney General Larry Long telephoned us with a stern response.

That both sides were willing to give such passionate comments shows that this lawsuit isn't likely to be one of cordiality and fellowship.

School districts involved in this suit have taken off a bite they should not have attempted. As we've said before,

it's dangerous to bite the hand that feeds you.

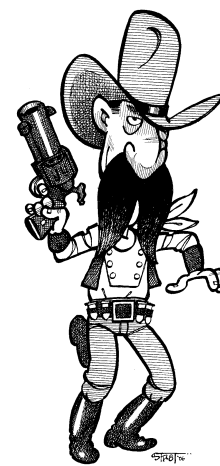
As evidenced by Abdallah and Long, things are going to become heated. Depositions have just begun, and will continue for another year. And as those testimonies become public, they will spark even more debate, putting this lawsuit in the spotlight months before it goes to trial.

Long said "somebody has to start critically questioning what these folks are saying." It's likely the schools involved feel the same way.

This may be a nasty battle.

— Mitchell Daily Republic

THE GOOD,
THE BAD,
AND THE UGLY



Today's Good, Bad & Ugly is submitted by Dana Burnett Tompkins of Rapid City.

THE GOOD: The Sixth Street bridge is open in Memorial Park. It looks great, better than the previous bridge and makes for a good evening walk through the park.

THE BAD: The last time I walked over the bridge, I noticed an attempt to vandalize its span.

THE UGLY: Apparently, some people think it's OK to destroy property that people enjoy.

Call in your Good, Bad or Ugly on a current news topic to 394-8296 or e-mail: letters@rapidcityjournal.com Name and hometown required.

Paha Sapa should be closed to public

I was amused by the cartoon submitted by Nate Thorson in the Nov. 3 issue, which depicts the Black Hills being closed to the public.

Finally, someone is listening! Our most sacred land, Paha Sapa (Black Hills) is the most overdeveloped national forest in the United States.

I am not sure what is being taught at Rapid City Stevens High School, but I'm confident that this young man has not been educated on the history of Paha Sapa and the 1851 and 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaties.

The 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty is an

active agreement between the United States and the Great Sioux Nation. In fact, it is one of only a few treaty agreements still in effect in this country. If you read the United States Constitution, which I'm sure is taught at Rapid City Stevens, you will find that treaties are the "supreme law of the land." This treaty, authored by the U.S. government, established lands to be set aside for the Great Sioux Nation. The treaty territory includes Paha Sapa. The first act of desecration and development of this sacred

land came when Custer trespassed on our land in his pursuit of notoriety. After that, the European-American immigrants just kept on taking, with no regard for the treaty that was set forth by their legislators.

I want to impress upon this young man and your entire readership that Paha Sapa belong to the Great Sioux Nation and that the European-American immigrants of this country have desecrated our lands to the point of no return in some places. Indigenous peoples never lived in Paha Sapa. It is *wakan*, a sacred place where tribes went to gather medicines and pray. Paha Sapa is our church, our hospital, our school, our burial ground. It is not a place for "four-wheeling".

Would you go "four-wheeling" at the Vatican or the Wailing Wall or your family cemetery?

It is time that European-Americans realize that some things need to be held sacred. If you continue to develop every inch of land, through mining, drilling and deforestation, there will be no forests, no jungles, no wildlife. Unci Maka (Mother Earth) is crying. The "true" warning signs are all around you. Unprecedented hurricanes, forest fires, melting glaciers.

If you truly want to protect Paha Sapa "for future generations to enjoy," then leave it alone.

GUEST CARTOON



Cooperation is key to forest's future for both quiet hikes and off-road riders

The issue of off-road travel in the Black Hills National Forest is often portrayed as a battle between hikers seeking peace and quiet and off-road enthusiasts who want the freedom to ride wherever they'd like.

This simple, black-and-white labeling does little to explain the complicated issues or to bring people together to find solutions that are acceptable for now and generations to come.

Issues such as wildlife habitat improvement, controlling erosion and exotic weed importation, fishery protection, reducing dust and noise near homes in the forest, access to hunting and the separation of both the hunter and the hunted from motorized routes are only a few of the many issues that could be argued are supported by all responsible forest users.

A simple explanation of the USFS proposed travel management plan is that it will reduce the miles of motorized routes from 10,000 to 4,000 essentially closing 6,000 miles to the public.

However, the Black Hills National Forest, considered to be one of the most roaded in the country, presently has only 3,699 miles of mapped roads open even part of the year and less than that open year round.

Most of the 6,000 miles not included in the plan are user-created routes estab-

lished during years of uncontrolled access that gave almost unlimited freedom to drive off road. In the Black Hills the term off road actually means "not on a road." Barring resource damage, it's legal to leave the trail and cross meadows, climb hillsides, meander down streams and go pretty much wherever curiosity and the ability of your machine takes you. As the capability and number of off-road machines increased, the harmless off-road side trip becomes the creation of a new road as hundreds of others follow those faint tracks to see where they go. The result is a cornucopia of 6,000 miles of unplanned, unmapped and unsustainable routes with an estimated two more miles being carved in every week.

Overuse is not limited to motorized travel. Last year, two user-created hiking trails were closed because they had become too popular and were

creating erosion problems.

Though 10,000 miles of routes do not appear on any Forest Service map, they do exist. That's a road density of over five miles of road per square mile of forest. The average distance between routes is shorter than a walk from Penney's to Sears and back in the Rushmore Mall. Road densities over 0.8 miles per square mile have been shown to have debilitating effects on big game animals such as elk. The average National Forest has a road density of 1.3 miles per square mile. The new plan at 4,000 miles would be more than double that average.

Cost can be a determining factor in deciding which routes should be added to the system. This year maintenance costs on a section of trail near Nemo that had been designed and reinforced to withstand ATV travel were above \$8,000 per mile. USFS cannot add user-created trails to its system that it would have to upgrade and maintain when its budget is already stretched so far.

It is imperative that user groups respect each other, become informed and work together to help the Forest Service in the decision-making process.

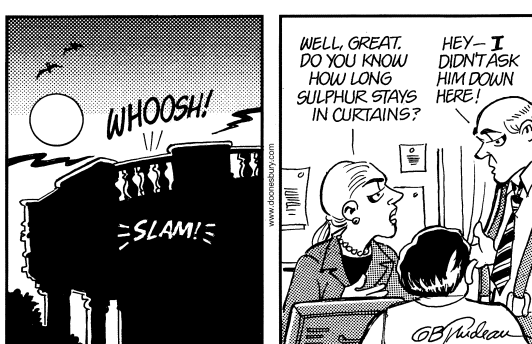
The Norbeck Society's first project was a cooperative effort with the Black Hills 4 Wheelers to protect a tiny stream near Piedmont from

ATV abuse while preserving access to one of the premier rock crawling routes in the country. We support the creation of a sustainable, enjoyable and affordable off-road trail system in the Black Hills. We recognize that a quality trail system is more effective protection for those areas that should not be driven in than any amount of law enforcement, gates or barricades. We encourage new ideas for funding that system such as the proposed state permitting system being considered in Pierre. We see merit in the growth of private trailheads and riding areas such as the Top 50 near Piedmont that can take the pressure off public resources and bring dollars to a community.

The decisions made today go far beyond the freedom to ride vs. peace and quiet. This is an opportunity for all of us to help shape the future of the Black Hills. In the end we are all striving for a forest that meets everyone's needs in a responsible, affordable and sustainable way that shortchanges no one, especially our children's children.

The Forest Service is asking for comments by Nov. 13. Maps and forms are available at any Forest Service office, at their web-site, www.fs.fed.us/r2/black-hills/recreation/travel-management/ohv.shtml and at our web-site, www.norbecksocty.com.

DOONESBURY



Garry Trudeau

MALLARD FILLMORE



Bruce Tinsley