

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 11, 2024

Charles F. Sams III  
Director  
National Park Service  
1849 C St NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Sams,

I am writing to express concern I have heard from my constituents about the continued closure of the Black Canyon Campground at the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, which has been closed to camping for nearly two years due to bear activity.<sup>1</sup> During this period, there has been little explanation as to why a problem with local wildlife caused the Black Canyon Campground to be closed for such a long time. The closure impacts Americans from all over the nation who come to see the beauty of the Treasure State and the communities who rely on this tourism to stay afloat. The continued closure of the Black Canyon Campground is an insult to the people of Montana and this Country, who cannot use this area for camping due to an arbitrary decision by the National Park Service.

The Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area is one of Montana's most picturesque destinations, spanning over 120,000 acres, home to over 17 miles of trails, a vast amount of boating opportunities, and numerous campgrounds that allow visitors to experience the scenic beauty. For years, the Black Canyon Campground has been a critical part of this tourism, serving as a popular campsite for many visitors. Lying at the end of a spectacular cove with crystal clear water, abundant pine trees, and excellent fishing opportunities, the Black Canyon Campground is a one-of-a-kind camping spot that people across the country have come to our state to enjoy. My constituents and all our country's citizens should be able to access it to its full scope. Americans have a right to use their federal lands, and your decision impedes access.

The continued closure of the Black Canyon Campground to camping due to the presence of black bears makes no sense since these creatures have always existed in this area. Nonetheless, bear boxes have been on the camp to prevent these black bears from accessing food and other supplies of its visitors for several years before the closure. Furthermore, if black bears remain a consistent problem, keeping the nearby areas of Bighorn Canyon open for both camping and visiting while closing the campground presents even more danger that could result in more encounters between bears and people, leading to increased attacks. I request the National Park

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/bica/planyourvisit/black-canyon.htm>

Service to immediately address the situation by outlining a plan to reopen the Black Canyon Campground at the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area.

In addition to this request, I demand answers to the following questions:

1. Why has the National Park Service not taken any necessary measures to safely reopen the Black Canyon Campground?
2. How common is it for the National Park Service close campgrounds for over two years without sufficiently communicating with the affected community?
3. How many visitors have been attacked by bears at the Black Canyon Campground? How many at the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area as a whole?
4. What specific incident or incidents led the National Park Service to close the Black Canyon Campground?
5. If not immediately, when do you plan on reopening the Black Canyon Campground?

Thank you for your time, and I eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew M. Rosendale, Sr.", followed by a stylized flourish or mark.

Matthew M. Rosendale, Sr.  
Member of Congress