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Comments:

To whom it may concern: please accept the following comments on the Draft Forest Plan and DEIS for the Custer/Gallatin National Forest.

I am in my fifties and have been recreating in National Forests since I moved west in my teens. I am in the Forest 2-5 days a week using a variety of different modalities: I hike, run, mountain bike, hunt, dirt bike, collect firewood, and snowbike. I have been extensively involved in Forest planning and Travel Management in the San Juan and Uncompahgre Forests in Colorado, as well as volunteer coordination and lots of trail maintenance. I am also a USFS B Sawyer.

First of all, I appreciate greatly the balance with which the various alternatives have been crafted. I feel like there is excellent attention to detail as well as evaluation of the uses in the Forest and needs of the ecosystems. I actually feel as if I would be ok with 4 of the 5 alternatives.

Alternative D, however, is too much. I do believe in the Forest slogan, Land of Many Uses. Although I agree that there are many areas of the Forest that should remain as they are for future generations, in this area where there is such an abundance of Wilderness (1/3 of the Forest), as well as National Parks totaling over 2.5M acres, I cannot agree with the contention that more Wilderness to the extent that it is suggested in Alternative D is appropriate. I believe that humans have a place in the Forest, whether to recreate or extract, and Alternative D goes far too far to exclude the citizens of the country.

Conversely, Alternative E errs too much in the other direction. Although I participate in mechanized and motorized recreation and support responsible commercial use of the Forest, I don't think those should be the driving forces of a Forest Plan.

Alternative C, while being generally acceptable, concerns me with the focused exclusion of mechanized recreation from the Lionshead WSA. As with other WSAs, especially longstanding ones, I feel that they should not be used as an end run around the Wilderness Act. A WSA is perfectly fine as long as existing users are not excluded to form a de facto Wilderness. I understand barring extraction that causes permanent changes to the character of a WSA. Even there, however, there comes a time when the question must be asked: will this be proposed to Congress for Wilderness designation? If the answer is no, then it should return to regular Forest designation.

Alternative A is perfectly acceptable, although I realize that aspects of it do not meet the Forest rules. In my experience No Action is never chosen. I do not see any glaring problems in the Forest that the current plan does not or could not address. In my long experience, glaring problems almost always result from a rule or regulation that is not being implemented or enforced.

Which brings me to Alternative B: the white bread alternative. It acknowledges the growing need for recreational resources while still respecting Wilderness priorities as well as extraction. It seems the most reasonable plan to achieve its goals given the budget environment the USFS is in. It is perhaps the simplest plan other than No Action. It addresses WSAs as they should be addressed, in my opinion. This definitely seems like the "greatest good for the greatest number" plan, while still protecting and enhancing the Forest environment. I hope that the Service chooses this alternative.

Thank you for your consideration.