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Comments:

I have lived in Bozeman since 1973. I began hiking and cross country skiing in Gallatin National Forest (as it was then called) shortly after I arrived. A few years later I began to snowshoe and hunt big game as well. I am now in my 70's and although I am not as strong as I once was, I continue to enjoy those activities in Custer Gallatin National Forest.

My personal preference among the alternatives is D. The combined pressures of increasing population, global warming, increasing popularity of OHVs and mountain bikes, and lengthening wildfire seasons require additional protection for the forest and its wildlife than would otherwise be necessary. The best protection available is wilderness designation. Backcountry areas do not provide the same degree of protection and there is increasing evidence that mountain bikes disturb wildlife.

But while I prefer D, I believe that the best choice is alternative C. The advantage of C is that it is very close to the consensus reached by Gallatin Forest Partnership (GFP). Over the years I have been concerned about OHV users not respecting forest rules and wilderness boundaries. For example, last summer I saw two motorcycles near Hyalite Lake on a day when the timeshare trail was not open to motorcycles. A few years before I saw the marks of motorcycle treads on the Sky Rim Trail in Yellowstone where it follows the border with Custer Gallatin. Real protection of the forest requires more than a wilderness or any other designation. It requires a diverse set of users to respect the rights of other users and the designations conferred by the forest plan. Because of the number of interests that have agreed to C, it has the best chance of achieving this.