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Comments:

I am writing in support of Alternative D of the draft forest plan with some additional recommendations listed below.

I've lived in Montana for 31 years now and have hiked, biked, skied, and canoed all over National Forests in western and southwestern Montana. The main change I've seen in roadless areas over the years is the increasing use of snowmobiles and mountain bikes. Snowmobiles and mountain bikes have evolved into highly efficient machines which make travel over remote terrain relatively easy and fast, effectively "shrinking" the size of large areas of land. Additionally, the noise of two-stroke engines, squeaky brakes, clanking chains, and other sounds of mechanized travel reduce the quality of quiet recreation on National Forest lands. Wilderness and roadless areas are the last refuge in a noisy, fast paced world and are also the last refuge for many wildlife species facing increasing challenges due to climate change.

For these reasons, I support Alternative D which offers the best protection for existing roadless areas and recommended wilderness areas. Of special concern to me is the possible conversion of the Gallatin Range from Bozeman to Yellowstone, including the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area, into a mechanized playground for Bozeman and Big Sky. The Gallatin Range deserves wilderness protection as a corridor for wildlife traveling in and out of Yellowstone and as a high-altitude refuge for species being driven up mountain ranges due to climate change. Many times, I've stood on high plateaus in Yellowstone Park and marveled at the lovely Gallatin Range, ending at Mt. Holmes in the Yellowstone Caldera, all the way north towards Hyalite. It offers some of the best hiking, skiing, and solitude in southwest Montana.

In addition to Alternative D recommendations, the plan should include the entire 230,000 roadless acres of the Gallatin Range in the Recommended Wilderness. The final plan should prohibit any use, including all motorized and mechanized travel, which is not consistent with wilderness to preserve its wilderness character until Congress can act on the wilderness recommendations.