



GALLATIN COUNTY

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County Commission

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May 28, 2019

Mary Erickson, Forest Supervisor
Custer Gallatin National Forest
Attn: Forest Plan Revision Team
P.O. Box 130 (10 E. Babcock)
Bozeman, MT 59771

Re: Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement

Dear Forest Supervisor Erickson and Forest Plan Revision Team,

Gallatin County writes in support of the Gallatin Forest Partnership's agreement which contains important recommendations regarding the future management of the Gallatin and portions of the Madison Ranges. We respectfully encourage the Custer Gallatin National Forest to adopt the Partnership's proposal in your final forest management plan as the management direction for this landscape.

This broadly supported proposal advances the interests of multiple stakeholders who worked together to find common ground regarding a longstanding conflict in this community – the future management of the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area. The Gallatin Forest Partnership includes many of the different perspectives regarding public lands found in Gallatin County, from business owners, mountain bikers, conservationists, hunters, and anglers to skiers, climbers, horse people and hikers. Many of the partners reside in Gallatin County.

This group has crafted a proposal that maintains recreation access as it exists today – both motorized and nonmotorized – and conserves important public lands that provide vital resources to our community. They have identified lands where it is important to protect undeveloped wild lands and areas in the Wildland Urban Interface where active management to address fire hazard is appropriate.

Gallatin County residents depend on our national forests for jobs, clean water and outdoor recreation, making the Custer Gallatin National Forest an important economic driver for the county. Many businesses and individuals come to the county because of the high quality of life associated with abundant public lands and outdoor recreation, bringing jobs and economic development. The Gallatin and Madison Ranges are rich in important undeveloped open spaces and trails that attract business to southwest Montana and feed our growing outdoor recreation economy.

These public lands provide clean water for agriculture and 100% of Bozeman's drinking water supply, as well as future water supplies for the City of Bozeman as identified in its Integrated Water Resources Plan. They also provide important habitat for abundant big game and species such as grizzly bears. Opportunities for hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing further support our economy and way of life.

Gallatin County's long-term success and prosperity depends on these multiple uses of national forest lands being compatible with existing agency plans and mutually beneficial for the health of our communities and surrounding lands. We appreciate the hard-collaborative work of the Gallatin Forest Partnership to produce this agreement and their continued outreach to new individuals, organizations and businesses to build further support.

That said, the Gallatin County Commission is hesitant to endorse Cowboy Heaven's designation as Wilderness. We believe that the current designation provides a valuable economic and recreational resource to our citizens and visitors.

We are supportive of this good faith effort to balance the, at times, competing needs of a place like Gallatin County. We support the Forest Service incorporating this agreement into their final forest plan as the management direction for the Gallatin and portions of the Madison Range addressed by the Partnership.

Sincerely,

GALLATIN COUNTY COMMISSION



Joe P. Skinner, Chairman



Donald F. Seifert, Member



Scott MacFarlane, Member