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Comments:

Comment draft plan - CGNF

May 18, 2019

Forest Plan Revision Team

PO Box 130

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Dear Revision Team,

Thank you for taking the time to read my personal comment.

Please know where I am coming from to better understand my perspective on the issue of protecting our Custer Gallatin National Forest that neighbors many small towns around south central Montana.

I grew up in the mountains of northern Utah and didn't understand the concept of land ethic until I relocated to and settled in Missoula, MT in 2008. After several summers volunteering with the Wilderness Institute I decided to attend college at the University of Montana in 2011. I majored in Resource Conservation with a focus on sustainable development and ecological restoration. I have assisted researchers working with the Forest Service, BLM, and private labs. Since 2012 I have lived and/or worked in WA, OR, ID, UT, WY, and MT. Because of my work, I have first hand experiencing working in many of our national forests in these north western states.

As population and development booms in western states it is becoming increasingly important to recognize significant areas for conservation. The crown of the continent, from the Blackfoot River to Waterton National Park, in Canada feeds, most of the continental United States' water. Because of how the west was settled, there are many areas of land that have been overgrazed, clear cut, or continue to restore from mining impacts. The greater Yellowstone-Teton ecosystem borders an intact region of south central area Montana, and is a key area that must remain intact and protected.

I support the full incorporation of the Gallatin Forest Partnership (GFP) Agreement into the plan for the Gallatin and Madison ranges. However, while alternative C incorporates parts of that agreement, it does not accurately reflect the GFP's recommendations for wildlife protections or recreation monitoring. Looking outside the GFP

agreement, it is also critical that we protect and enhance other areas, including wildlife linkage areas and existing wilderness, and include enforceable climate change components.

I recommend the following revisions to the draft plan:

Ensure wildlife connectivity in portions of the Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin Geographic Area that aren't otherwise protected by the grizzly bear recovery zone. The Madisons are critical for wildlife movement to areas beyond the National Forest. Habitat protections for grizzly bears must extend wherever population health is monitored and into areas important for connectivity. Grizzlies must also be designated as a Species of Conservation Concern.

Plan components must support a year-round self-sustaining bison population within tolerance areas on National Forest System lands. West Pine and Porcupine Buffalo Horn backcountry areas must mirror Cabin Creek Wildlife Management Area in wildlife protection and wild character plan components.

Recreational use must be monitored more extensively by area, and standards must ensure that increasing recreation is balanced with wildlife protection.

Manage existing wilderness areas in line with the 2020 Vision.

Given the uncertainties of climate change, monitoring questions for vegetation, invasive species, aquatic resources, fire, and more must explicitly assess the effects of climate change and guide adaptive management as required by the 2012 planning rule (219.12(a)(5)(vi)).

In addition to the 30 rivers recommended as eligible for Wild and Scenic designation, include Taylor Creek, Hellroaring Creek, and the South Fork of the Madison due to their outstanding wildlife values.

I am excited to see the Custer Gallatin National Forest taking a fresh look at our ecosystems and the many species that depend on them. The Draft Plan and DEIS includes many strong points, and with some revisions the new management plan will be an important tool to guide decades of sustainable forest management. Thank you for your work on this important issue.

Respectfully,

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