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Comments:

Attachment Gerdes

I am submitting the following comments and suggestions for your consideration.

I support Alternative C for the Madison Gallatin area as it pertains to RWA and D for the Absoraka Beartooth area. These areas are relatively small and would complement already designated Wilderness in both ranges. Continued management in RWA status would help maintain clean water supplies for the nearby municipalities and preserve wildlife habitat and migration corridors. Hunting and fishing would benefit as well.

I support Alternative D for the Pryor Mountains and for the Ashland Geographic area. RWA status not only perpetuates the character of these areas but observes the religious and cultural significance they represent to the Native Americans. This would also apply to the Crazy Mountains. I realize the patchwork nature of private ownership in this range but at a minimum access by foot and hoof only would seem advisable.

In supporting these alternatives I am not forgetting the contributions of the mining, timber and livestock industries not only to Montana but the nation as a whole. Nonetheless tourism has become the number one driver of Montana's economy and plays a predominant role in attracting newcomers to this state.

We should take the long range view and preserve what is unique to Montana and critical to our economic wellbeing. We can expect continued population growth in this part of the state thereby making preservation of nearby WSA areas even more important. Likewise the country as a whole will continue to grow increasing visitation to Montana.