

I'm writing in support of Alternative D for the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan. As stewards of these public lands, the Forest Service's number one objective should be to protect the resource for the future. The resource meaning the plants and animals that make up the different ecosystems within the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

The science is clear. Native plant and animal species are in decline nearly universally, whether they live in remote wilderness areas or more managed human landscapes. The number one cause for these declines is loss of habitat. Study after study shows that human encroachment in the most persuasive threat to the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem.

Biogeography teaches us that the larger the "island" or wilderness area the more likely it will retain viable populations of the existing plant and animals within the system. Whether it is a large-scale timber harvest, mining or the latest recreational fad, each human action affects and changes the character of the landscape. One timber sale may have the unintended possibility of causing a plant we hardly knew to become extinct. One speeding mountain biker may kill a single Western Tanager, which would doom its brood. Every action has consequences large or small.

Every opportunity must be taken to give the greatest protection possible for the remaining relatively undisturbed lands. If we don't protect these areas that have seen the least human disturbance, we or any future human managers will never have that chance again. Other areas in our country don't have our good fortune to have this opportunity. This can be our legacy. In the future, wilderness will be much more valuable than anything we can extract for short term gain or pleasure.

I hope that you will take the conservation ethic to heart and help give the greatest protection possible for the plants, animals, and the ecosystems they are a part of. These other inhabitants of our world don't have a say. It's our choice, choose Alternative D.

Thank you,

*Tamie L Hoffman*  
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