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Comments:

I was a small child living at the FS cabins at Porcupine Buffalo Horn while my father worked for the USGS mapping soils in Yellowstone for several summers in the early 1970s. I clearly remember seeing the first road punched in to what is now called Big Sky, the building of the first condominium, and I painfully remember the high number of enormous moose that dwelled in the swampy bottomlands, the fat and saucy porcupines that were numerous, and the thousands-strong elk herds that drifted up and down the long ridge above the cancerous growth that is the Yellowstone Club. I have spent many days traversing the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area literally since the mid-1980s and dearly wish for the Gallatin Forest to put this area into permanent wilderness protection. It is decades past time to do this. Damaging OHV use has only increased. You must manage these areas for the Endangered Species Act. The Taylor Hilgards are critical to protect as well, especially for the bison. Please choose Alternative D.

As a college student, I worked for a MSU bear biologist researching and tracking grizzlies and recording what plants they were eating in the Taylor Fork, staying at Cinnamon Creek cabin for the summer and packing out grizzly poop to be analyzed in the lab. I have grown up backpacking and horseback riding and packing on the Gallatin Crest and have been advocating, testifying, marching and writing in support of wilderness and grizzly bears for 40 years, literally since I was 10 years old testifying at wilderness hearings. Bison, Wolves, Coyotes, Wolverines and Elk and Grizzlies need more habitat protected outside of the artificial borders of Yellowstone Park. I am very concerned about the genetically isolated population of grizzlies in Greater Yellowstone and especially concerned about the current exceedingly high mortality rate as more and more humans press in on once-wild habitats. Connectivity between the Absaroka Beartooth and the Gallatin NF, Crazy Mtns, Bangtails and Bridgers is critical at this time. We are needing more roadless wilderness, not less.

I would like to see protections because more connectivity to the northern populations, all the way to the Yukon, is how genetic diversity and healthy populations can be preserved. I plan to work on garnering public and agency support for a wildlife overpass on Bozeman Pass over I-90 so that migrations may happen more easily and with less mortality.

I do not want to see mechanized recreation in the form of mountain bikes allowed in the Buffalo Porcupine drainages and I hope you will choose Alternative D to protect 257K acres as Wilderness so that grizzlies, wolverines and bison can safely make their way up the Bangtails and Bridgers and connect with habitats in the Little Belts and up to Glacier and the Yukon. We must do everything we can to preserve the precious genetic seedbank we caretaker, especially in the face of climate change. Protecting these areas as wilderness will be a huge asset for the planet in the future.

I was an early avid mountain bike racer in the late 1980s and have always respected the trails frequented by foot traffic, horse and human, and have seen first hand the conflicts that arise with horses, both from the saddle of a bike and from the back of a horse. Further, I can say absolutely that ALL wildlife is impacted more negatively by the whizzing speed of mechanized recreation, much more so than foot traffic. I have seen this first hand since I was a teen in the 1980s. We are looking at 250 bears lost in the Yellowstone ecosystem since 2015 and all mortalities are human-related. I would like you to choose Alternative D in your revisions of the Gallatin forest plan.