

May 16, 2019

TO: Custer Gallatin Nat'l Forest
Forest Plan Revision Team
P.O. Box 130

PII
personally identifiable
info hide 1

I offer the following comments based on knowledge of some of the areas in the Custer Gallatin Nat'l Forest and some Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), and on research of those areas I don't know personally.

All 158,000 acres of WSA's need to be designated as permanent Wilderness Areas. In actuality, in all there are 230,000 acres of the Gallatin Nat'l Forest that should be protected by designating that 230,000 acres as permanent Wilderness.

Buffalo Horn/Porcupine area consisting of 31,000 acres and the West Pine area consisting of 25,000 acres need to be designated as permanent Wilderness Areas.

All wildlife migration corridors need to be protected.

The West Pine offers the only wildlife migration corridor effectively connecting the Gallatin Range to the Bridger Range to the north.

In the northern portion of the Gallatin Range, South Cottonwood, roadless lands surrounding Emerald Lake, Divide Peak and Maid of the Mist should be designated permanent Wilderness Areas.

The Gallatin Range is critical habitat for grizzly bears, lynx, wolverines, bighorn sheep confirmed in an extensive study by the Craighead Institute.

Much of the lower elevation of the Gallatins are habitat for thousands of wintering elk and are an essential portion of migration corridors.

I do not support the Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement. Although the Partnership Agreement is a good first step, designating Buffalo Horn Porcupine and West Pine Creek Areas as Wildlife Management Areas is too vague and lacks legal definition to ensure protection of these areas as permanent Wilderness. Buffalo Horn Porcupine serve as an important elk migratory corridor and elk winter range.

Designating Buffalo Horn Porcupine as Wildlife Management areas instead of Wilderness would allow motorized recreation and mountain biking. And while as Wildlife Management Area, no "commercial logging" would occur, other logging proposals that would allow the same volume of logging would be legal under a simple change in wording such as "forest health" and "fire prevention" and "fuels reduction." As Wilderness Areas, the Buffalo Horn Porcupine and West Pine would not suffer from the long time damage caused from logging operations.

The Wilderness values and cultural significance of the Crazy Mountains need to be protected forever.

The existing recommended Wilderness for the LIONHEAD must be protected. Existing recommended Wilderness surrounding the Absorka-Beartooth must be protected, which include Dove Mountain, Chico Peak, Emigrant Peak, West Woodbine, East Rosebud to Stillwater and Red Lodge Creek.

The Lost Water, Big Pryor, Punch Bowl, and Bear Canyon Areas in the Pryor Mountain Range should be designated permanent Wilderness Areas.

Wilderness Study Areas and recommended Wilderness Areas should be managed just like areas permanently designated as Wilderness Areas, which does not allow mountain biking or motorized use in any of those areas.

Considering the growing population of people and home development in the Hyalite Canyon, considering the growing development in Paradise Valley, considering the massive continuing development at Big Sky,

considering the ongoing development in Gallatin Canyon and considering how the City of Bozeman is spreading out and growing rapidly before our eyes, these Wilderness areas, WSA's and areas recommended for Wilderness are more important than ever. These Wilderness Areas provide critical wildlife habitat for wolverine and lynx; for elk migrating routes, cow elk calving grounds, elk winter range; for countless species of birds, many of which are threatened; for bighorn sheep who need isolated areas free of pneumonia infection from other bighorn herds and from domestic sheep herds; for grizzly bears.

These Wilderness areas, WSA's and recommended Wilderness Areas provide continual fresh water for fishing, numerous Montana towns and cities, for agriculture, as countless sources that feed our rivers and these countless mountain streams keep our rivers healthy.

We need to honor existing Wilderness Areas, and designate WSA's and recommended Wilderness Areas as permanent Wilderness.

The Crazy Mountains are arguably the most impressive island mountain range in Central Montana. The Crazies need special protection to honor the cultural heritage to ensure the Crazies will remain wild forever.

The Pryor Mountains deserve the ultimate protection for many reasons: (1) Culturally and geographically, the Pryors are important to the Crow Nation. (2) The Pryors provide a variety of recreation opportunities to nearby Billings residents. (3) The Pryors are home to a unique historic wild horse herd, descendants of horses from early Spanish Conquistadors. (4) The Pryors provide a seedstock area for mule deer, elk, wild turkey, upland ground birds, cougar, countless bird species. We can have that in perpetuity if we are wise enough to protect the Pryors.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments on the Custer Gallatin Nat'l Forest Plan.

Most sincerely,

David J. Murnion

