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Comments:

CGNF DEIS COMMENTS

I would like to thank the Custer Gallatin National Forest planning team for their hard work on the DEIS for forest planning.

I support the Gallatin Forest Partnership (GFP) Agreement: <http://gallatinpartners.org/> and its full implementation. This GFP agreement is balanced and represents the collaboration of a diversity of stakeholders.

The following are my comments:

Recommended Wilderness - Gallatin and Madison Ranges: I am 71 years old and have been hiking these trails for more than 25 years. Prior to moving to Bozeman 7 years ago, I spent most of my winter and summer vacations hiking and cross country skiing here. Although I may not hike as far as I once did, I want this wild terrain to always be available for wildlife, wild flora and fauna, native fish and primitive recreation for people and stock. That's a main reason why I urge the Forest Service to use the GFP agreement as a basis for proposing 124,000 acres of recommended wilderness in the Gallatin and Madison ranges including the northern part of the Gallatin Crest to Hyalite Lake, Cowboy Heaven, and the Big Creek watershed on the east side of the Gallatin range.

Although Alternative C encompasses some recommendations in the GFP agreement, I support full implementation of the GFP that, in addition to recommended wilderness in the Gallatin and Madison ranges, also proposes the Hyalite Watershed and Recreation Area, the West Pine Wildlife Management Area, and the Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wildlife Management Area.

Management of Recommended Wilderness: I support management of recommended wilderness consistent with designated Wilderness, i.e., prohibiting motorized and mechanized uses, both of which are not consistent with the Wilderness Act. Thus, non-conforming uses should not be allowed in recommended wilderness areas (RWAs). While technological innovations, e.g., fat-tire bikes and electronic assist mountain bikes increase opportunities for human travel, these innovations also create new challenges for public land management. The Forest Plan must anticipate continued development of new technological innovations in human transport and their impact on wilderness character, wildlife habitat, wildlife migration and corridors, and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. This is another reason why non-conforming use should not be allowed in RWAs.

Porcupine - Buffalo Horn Backcountry Area: The Backcountry Area (BCA) designation proposed in the DEIS does not provide enough protection to the wildlife in this terrain. This area is essential habitat for wildlife including elk, grizzly bears, moose, bighorn sheep, and wolverine. The Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement recommends a Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wildlife Management Area with ample allowance for recreation but with stronger wildlife protection. I support a primary management goal to conserve, protect and enhance the habitats of wildlife and native fish. Existing recreational access should be consistent with the goals of protecting wildlife habitat and native fish while maintaining the existing wilderness character of the area.

Crazy Mountains: I have hiked infrequently in the Crazies, an island range and unique geological area that has immense spiritual and cultural significance to the Apsaalooke (Crow) Nation, especially regarding vision quests, both historical and contemporary. I encourage the Forest Service to work in close coordination Apsaalooke Nation regarding management of the Crazy Mountains. I urge the planning team to respect the recommendations of the Apsaalooke tribal leaders, especially regarding the cultural and sacred role of the Crazy Mountains to the identity and spiritual life of the Crow. I believe we have taken away enough already from Indians in general and feel we have a humanitarian obligation to support them if possible.

I support the Apsaalooke (Crow) Nation recommendations regarding the following:

- do not allow expansion of motorized trails and motorized travel in the Crazies
- do not allow mining or road building
- do not allow construction of new utility or energy corridors
- do not allow development of additional recreation sites or facilities for recreation.

I support allowing only foot and horse travel as application of a [ldquo]primitive[rdquo] Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS).

I also support consideration of the 82,000 roadless acres managed by the CGNF in the Crazies as an option for recommended wilderness designation, especially in areas where opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation exist. Hiking in the depths of the Crazies, I have experienced the uniqueness of wilderness character and stunning beauty of this island mountain range. My experiences helped me to more fully appreciate the cultural and religious significance of the Crazies to the Apsaalooke Nation. The DEIS fails to provide desired conditions that address actions to preserve these unique characteristics. Due to the wild character and rugged terrain, I recommend managing roadless areas in the Crazies as recommended wilderness and acknowledging this landscape for its cultural and spiritual significance.

Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness: I have spend many hours hiking/skiing/and enjoying the beauty and solitude offered in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. These experiences have informed my decision to support the following roadless areas as recommended wilderness: Chico Peak, Emigrant Peak, and Dome Mountain, Woodbine, East Rosebud to Stillwater, and Red Lodge Creek as indicated in Alternative D. Close to human populations, these areas deserve the protection that recommended wilderness provides for wildlife, wildlife habitat and corridors and opportunities for solitude, wildlife viewing. and primitive recreation. I also support the proposal in Alternative B to prohibit mechanized and motorized recreation in the Bad Canyon of the Absaroka-Beartooth.

Pryor Mountains: I have just recently discovered the diversity offered in the Pryors and I support the recommendations of the Pryors Coalition (<http://www.pryormountains.org/>) for the Pryor Mountains, an island mountain range that is unique in terms of geology, ecology, and biology as well as being culturally significant to several Native American tribes including the Apsaalooke (Crow) Nation. The use of plants, some endemic to the Pryors, for medicinal purposes is especially significant to the Crow peoples.

While I support Lost Canyon (~13,000) as recommended wilderness, I encourage the CGNF to also designate these three additional areas as recommended wilderness: Big Pryor Mountain (~12,000 acres), Bear Canyon (~10,000 areas), and Punch Bowl (~8,500 acres). Each of these areas is distinctly different and each contains wilderness characteristics, a multitude of rare plants including those that are endemic to the Pryors, opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation, and developments that are substantially unnoticeable. The wildness of these acreages deserves permanent protection to maintain current wilderness characteristics and sustain existing flora and fauna.

A management plan addressing recreation needs to be defined for the Pryors. Designating recommended wilderness areas would enhance opportunities for primitive recreation. Ample opportunities already exist for motorized and mechanized recreation and almost all would remain if the four areas listed above would be designated as recommended wilderness as proposed in Alternative D. Without further management directives regarding primitive recreation, technological innovations, such as electric mountain bikes, would turn formerly mechanized mountain bike transportation into motorized recreation.

In closing, I urge adoption of the collaborative effort of the Gallatin Forest Partnership (GFP) Agreement and its full implementation as part of the Preferred Alternative, and consideration of the additional proposals in this document.