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Comments:

Adopt Alternative D: list American bison as a species of conservation concern

Custer-Gallatin National Forest Plan Revision

Custer-Gallatin National Forest

P.O. Box 130

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Bozeman, MT 59771

RE: Adopt Alternative D: list American bison as a species of conservation concern

Dear Forest Plan Revision Team

I support adopting Alternative D in the Custer Gallatin National Forest plan. I also support listing American bison as a species of conservation concern in Region 1. The best scientific evidence available supports adopting these standards and alternatives for the health and safety of this ecosystem.

Please strengthen Alternative D by adopting the following standards and desired conditions that prioritize native habitat, native flora, and native fauna over introduced, commodity species:

- \* Put in place enforceable standards to preserve and/or recover population numbers and to enhance genetic diversity for American bison, bighorn sheep, and threatened grizzly bears.

- \* American bison are recognized by biologists as a keystone species. Conserving American bison viability and genetic diversity should be a forest-wide standard.

- \* Freedom for American bison to roam National Forest habitat should be a forest-wide standard, as should restoring habitat connectivity.

- \* To restore connectivity, and conserve the viability and diversity of American bison's genetically distinct subpopulations, the Custer Gallatin needs to adopt a standard to close and not permit cattle grazing allotments in American bison range. The presence of native bison populations helps the ecosystem, but the presence of cattle on the land has negative impacts on biodiversity.

- \* To restore connectivity, and conserve the viability and diversity of native bighorn sheep populations, the Custer Gallatin needs to adopt a standard to not permit domestic sheep grazing in bighorn sheep range. The health of native flora and fauna must always come before invasive species such as cattle and sheep.

- \* The best available scientific information supports including enforceable forest-wide standards to protect key linkage areas, habitat connectivity, and food security for threatened grizzly bears.

- \* The Custer Gallatin must adopt a forest-wide standard for all grazing permits requiring "let-down" fencing and remove barriers that impede migration of native species.

\* Adopt a desired condition for the Custer Gallatin to be a leader in the development of wildlife safe passages and measures on highways constructed in migration corridors on the National Forest.

\* Restore more wetlands, creek banks, pond edges, and riparian habitat through strong standards and more yearly projects to benefit American bison and native species diversity.

Custer-Gallatin National Forest has a duty to manage the forest in a way that preserves long-term biodiversity and ecosystem health, prioritizing native flora and fauna, especially endangered species/species with low population numbers such as grizzly bears and the local sub-populations of wild, migratory American bison. This obligation goes hand in hand with its duty to fulfill its' responsibilities and trust obligations safeguarding treaty rights, sacred species, sacred sites, and traditional cultural places of significance to aboriginal people.

Relying on the best available scientific information, please select Alternative D and adopt strong standards for American bison, bighorn sheep, threatened grizzly bears, wilderness, linkage corridors, habitat connectivity, and water, and list American bison as a species of conservation concern.

Sincerely,  
Galia Outes  
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