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Comments:

Here are my comments on the proposed forest plan revision for the Custer Gallatin National Forest. I have been a public lands manager in the GYC for 14 years and have been living in the GYC for the last 29 years. I have hiked the Gallatin Crest Trail from the Hyalite area to Yellowstone Park eight times. I have also spent many day hikes exploring the Hyalite/Porcupine/Bufalo Horn Wilderness Study Area.

First, I am very concerned that the recommendation from the Gallatin Forest Partnership offers too little protection for the Gallatin Crest between Bozeman and Yellowstone National Park. The entire Hyalite/Porcupine/Bufalo Horn Wilderness Study Area deserves Wilderness designation under the 1964 Wilderness Act. The proposal to include significant portions of this area as a wildlife management area is insufficient to insure its wildness, wildlife values including connectivity and protection for future generations. During my many days and nights of hiking and backpacking in this area I have NEVER encountered a USFS representative, let alone an enforcement officer. I have never encountered a wildlife researcher. I HAVE encountered during every trip, illegal motorcycle and bicycle users or sign of very recent motorized/bicycle use. It is impossible to overstate the importance of keeping the connective corridor between Yellowstone National Park and areas to the north in a wild state. Wilderness designation is the best way to accomplish this goal. The recreational pressures of a rapidly growing Bozeman, Big Sky, Belgrade and Livingston demand strong affirmative action to protect what wild country remains before it is lost.

Second, I generally support Alternative D across the Forest in the Revised Draft Forest Plan as long as it is improved by adding the entire 230,000 acres of the Gallatin Range as recommended in the Wilderness Study Area proposal. The final plan should treat all proposed wilderness study areas as Wilderness areas and prohibit all motorized and mechanized uses and any other activities not consistent with Wilderness until Congress acts on the wilderness recommendations. I specifically support the Sierra Club's vision for recommended wilderness in the Custer/Gallatin National Forest.

Third, I support the designation of 30 eligible wild and scenic rivers as an affirmative means to protect water quality, wildness and insure the protection of the riparian ecosystems.

Forth, withdraw all vacant grazing allotments within Wildernesses, including the study areas, so they can begin to return to a wild state.

Fifth, reduce backcountry stock group limits from the current 25 head and 15 people to a less destructive and intrusive level.

Sixth, stop the fish stocking of high country wilderness lakes that were naturally fish free.

Finally, there should be a general prohibition of new road and trail construction in current trailless areas throughout the Forest's Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas.