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Comments:

I have read the GFP agreement numerous times--and I am not reassured by it. The proposal has more specific details about trails and management than wilderness, because the GFP allows more intensive use and impacts than would be permitted under wilderness designation. Since, wilderness designation does not preclude management of recreation users, the very same management prescriptions of monitoring and enforcement of restrictions that the GFP proposes could be implemented in a designated wilderness if needed.

There are two issues here that others have mentioned. The first is that this area is not just any old piece of public lands. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is one of the last relatively intact temperate ecosystems left in the world. As such we (US citizens) have a global responsibility to use the precautionary principle--which is to say if there is a choice to be made about any use or management, defer to the least impactful and most respectful of the wildness and wildlife needs.

The BHP in particular and the Gallatin Range, in general, contain some of the best wildlife habitats in the northern Greater Yellowstone region. It has been recognized as such since 1910 when Gifford Pinchot, first head of the FS, recommended creating a wildlife refuge. I will not bother with the rest of the history of this area, but suffice to say that for decades conservationists have wanted to protect the area as wilderness, in part, to ensure that the wildlands and wildlife values would be preserved.

However, the problem with the GFP is that it relies on non-existing funding for monitoring, and also assumes the FS would actually enforce any limits while allowing more intensive recreational uses.

Keep in mind that S. 393 which created the HBHP Wilderness Study Area in 1977 specifically said the FS "shall" manage the area to preserve "existing" wilderness quality. "Shall" means there is no discretion, but the FS did not preserve the "existing" wilderness quality.

Despite this very clear mandate, the FS did nothing to restrict ORVs, mountain bikes, and a proliferation of new trails. Mountain biking was not an "existing" use in 1977. Nor were there nearly as many trails in the BHP as well as other parts of the range. I know because I was hiking, camping, fishing and hunting in the Gallatin Range before 1977. So I have seen the slow erosion of habitat security and quality. cumulative impacts of all these uses and new trails, along with logging roads and clearcuts that also chewed up portions of the range--all of which has already created a significant degradation of the range. I do not know how long you have been experiencing the Gallatin Range, but we all tend to be like frogs in hot water and do not notice the gradual changes until it is too late. There may well already be too much recreation use of the Gallatin Range.

There are numerous examples where mountain bikers in particular (ORVers as well) have made numerous new trails without any kind of environmental review or consideration of the effects on wildlife, other forest users, and ecosystem function. The recent spate of trails created in the Elkhorn Wildlife area near Helena, the proliferation of trails in the Rattlesnake NRA near Missoula, the creation of trails in the Blue Mountain Recreation Area by Missoula, new mountain biking in proposed wilderness areas like the Lima Peak by Lima and along the Rocky Mountain Front not to mention many other parts of the country like San Juan Mts. in Colorado, the "invasion" of the Palisades WSA on the Bridger Teton N'F in Wyoming by mt bikers, the numerous new undesignated trails in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the increase in new trail in the Lookout Mountain proposed wilderness and North Fork of the Malheur in Oregon, the many mountain biking

trails created on the Sequoia NF in California, the proliferation of new trails all through the canyon country of Utah on BLM WSA, and so on. I could go on and on with examples of where mt bikers, more than any other group, have violated the basic principles of public lands management,

And I am supposed to have confidence that the Gallatin NF will monitor and enforce limits for the Buffalo Horn and Porcupine drainage as well as West Pine in the best wildlife habitat in the northern GYE.

i really wish everyone would put aside their personal recreational desires and recognize that we have an opportunity that doesn't come very often in one's lifetime--the chance to preserve some of the best of the best. And we know that with wilderness designation, we get the best chance to protect the best. 'there are other places to ride a bike. There are even other places to hike, ski, etc. if that would help preserve the special wildlife values of the Gallatin Range. I hope you can join me and support a 230,000 acre or so wilderness here.