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Comments:

Dear Mary

One of the problems with recommendations like Backcountry is the continued expansion of trails by mountain bikers. This is not a unique problem to CGNF. See the report from the Colorado BHA.

However, just today I just did a hike up Suce Creek outside of Livingston which I have visited for decades. Today I found a well hidden (at the start of the trail) mountain bike trail that went about a half mile before reuniting with the main trail where it crosses Suce Trail. I would not have even seen this trail had it not been for a mountain biker who unloaded his bike and then disappeared down the bank.

So now there are two trails in this area. And the impacts of mountain biking are not equal to a hiker. A number of studies have concluded that elk (and other wildlife) flee at much greater distances from mountain bikes (and ORVS) than horses and hikers. For instance, one study found that elk would flee from bikers sometimes up to a mile from the trail. That is a corridor up to two miles wide.

The problem with Backcountry is that mountain bikes do not stay on the official trail. There is much evidence that they continuously make new trails. There is no funding for monitoring or enforcement. So over time you have a significant cumulative impact.

Worse as time goes on we can expect more technological improvements that will expand ever more the areas impacted by mechanical transportation.

I hope you will do something to close this new illegal trail by Suce Creek, and more importantly, when you make your decisions about the CGNF alternatives, you choose to recommend a considerable amount of wilderness as in Alt. D.

Also in the new Forest Plan I hope you make a clear effort to make it illegal to be on any trail that is not official. That way if someone is creating a new trail or someone is found on a new trail, at least they can't claim that the sign was down or something like that. If there is no sign saying open to bikers, than it is automatically closed.

Thank you for your consideration.

George Wuerthner

Livingston, MT