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Comments:

Thank you for allowing us to comment.

There's no place in the lower 48 with such an intact wildlife rich ecosystem as the Gallatin-Custer NF. We cannot gamble away this resource by promoting development it its wildlife habitat. Alternative D would allow maximum protection of this world-class wildlife habitat. It would protect the most important economic driver in SW Montana, that being intact habitat and wilderness for wolverines (I've seen 3 here), elk, moose, bighorn sheep, grizzly bear, and other keystone species.

I've had the privilege of living and working in the Gallatin and Custer NF region for over 40 years. I'm proud to have used this forest and wilderness in an environmentally sustainable way during that time.

The forest allowed my businesses to flourish and take hundreds, if not thousands of guests, and the public to fish, hike and hunt and experience the incredible natural resources it offers. It has allowed dozens of my employees a good paycheck, and to educate and inspire the public about clean water and air, native and wild trout, impacts of climate change and healthy ecosystems and the economic benefits of them for area businesses and surrounding communities.

In a recent article in "Science" magazine world renown ecological economist Robert Constanza tells us, "we've been cooking the books for a long time by leaving out the value of wildness and nature". Researchers compared the economic value of maintaining intact wilderness, wildlife migration corridors and ecosystems vs. exploiting them for economic gain. They found the economic value of intact wilderness outstripped exploitation by a conservative estimate of a hundred to one.

Researchers also posited the question "what would the economic value of be if we increased the annual outlay of wilderness protection of today's \$6.5 billion to \$40 billion?" They estimated nature's resulting gift back to the economy at \$440 to \$520 trillion.

We must protect these areas of unaltered wilderness and diversity to have a baseline so we never forget what the real world is like in balance, the way nature intended the earth to be, the model we need to keep in mind on our way towards a sustainable future so business and local economies can continue to thrive 100 years from now. We do not want to be the last generation to know and can experience wilderness. We owe this to all future generations and wild things and places. If we fail them, they have the right to kick the hiking sticks out from under us and demand to know why we allowed it to happen.