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Comments:

Dear Custer Gallatin National Forest

I am writing to comment on the Custer Gallatin National Forest Draft Forest Management Plan And Environmental Impact Statement. This comment is being made by myself on behalf of myself, my husband, and my elderly father and mother. All of us deeply care about the landscapes managed by the Custer Gallatin National Forest, and we agree on the following important points:

The Pryors:

- The Pryor Mountains are a place of both ecological and cultural uniqueness and importance. Our society and the American people, especially Native American Indian people, gain much, much more from keeping this place intact, protected and undisturbed than could ever be gained from allowing activities that would compromise or impair it. The benefits of protection are long-term and multigenerational. The benefits of allowing motorized or mechanized activities or processes are very short-term and benefit only a very few individuals.

- This is why we support Wilderness designation. "Backcountry areas" is not a sufficient management status to ensure protection. Recreation is important as a focus of management efforts, but it is a short-term focus. In order for the ecosystem and cultural values to endure, Wilderness designation or Recommended Wilderness is necessary.

- We would like to see designation as Recommended Wilderness in the following Pryors Roadless Areas : Lost Water, Big Pryor, Punch Bowl, and Bear Canyon.
Landscapes west of the Pryors:

- We would like to see the implementation of the Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement.

- We want to see the boundaries of the current Recommended Wilderness in the Lionhead maintained.

- We support maximum protection for the Crazy Mountains, another singularly beautiful area of high cultural importance to Indian people of our region.

- We also want to state our strong support for retaining those areas that are recommended for Wilderness in the Absaroka Beartooth area. In addition we would like to see Dome Mountain, Emigrant Peak, Chico Peak, East Rosebud to Stillwater, Woodbine, and Red Lodge Creek given this status as well. Most of these areas are personally dear to us, as we have spent cherished time in them as a family.
Ashland Ranger District:

- In the Ashland Ranger District we would like to see the Tongue River Breaks, King Mountain and Cook Mountain managed as recommended wilderness.

In general, we want to make sure to make it very clear that we want recommended Wilderness managed just like designated Wilderness; only foot and horse traffic, no mechanized/motorized travel should be allowed.

Motor-free recreation is extremely important to the well-being of both people and the ecosystem members of the areas covered in this FMP and Draft EIS. Almost all Americans are constantly exposed to motors and machinery on a daily - even moment by moment - basis, and most of us are in or near vehicles and vehicle noises and smells daily. That is a compelling reason why it is so critical to safeguard what is NOT a common experience anymore - the opportunity for time away from motorized machines, noise and smells (and the pollution, scarring and long-term impacts that they cause). That is what RWA's and Wilderness can do. That is special, and it is scarce, and therefore it must be protected for those of the present and of the future. This benefits people and the ecosystem and the creatures that exist with in them for the long term.

Protective management also better secures the future in which the climate crisis will play out. As that happens, protected places will be critical as refuge for many species, for sources of fresh, clean water and clean air. The greater the expanse of protected areas, the more of a reserve of ecosystem health and resilience there will be. If we allow degradation of these places, the species and the ecosystem services that they and we depend on will be much more fragile and susceptible to species declines or complete devastation.

Thank you very much for incorporating our comments into this process. It is our hope that through the CGNF Forest Planning process and Draft EIS, our society can collaborate think long-term and safeguard these incredibly special, priceless places now and forever into the future.

Sincerely,

Kris Prinzing, Scott Prinzing, Robert Rickels and Thelma Rickels