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Comments:

My employment background includes being a backcountry ranger out of Red Lodge and West Yellowstone. Under the auspices of Kimberly Schlenker, I performed the initial Level-of-Acceptable Change inventory in the A-B wilderness, inventorying over 200 wilderness campsites in the East Rosebud, West Rosebud, and Stillwater drainages. I did the same job out of West Yellowstone, inventorying sites and rehabilitating them. While in West Yellowstone, most of my work took place in the Lee Metcalf wilderness; the Taylor Fork, Taylor-Hilgard, and Cabin Creek areas. I have witnessed first hand the impacts of recreational use on backcountry areas. In the 90's, when I was working as a backcountry ranger, there weren't many visitors to the backcountry.

Local use of these lands has changed dramatically with the exponential increase in human population numbers. It's only going to get worse with the continued burgeoning human population, of which Bozeman is the primary target!!! Bozeman's increase in the number of people moving here will only further increase the threats to wilderness characteristics. Wilderness Study Areas, if they are not deemed wilderness, will look more like outdoor recreationist theme parks rather than wild areas. The Custer/Gallatin is renowned for its high quality wildlands. There are few places like it in the contiguous 48 states. Hence, it's imperative to save as much land as possible for wilderness, not only to maintain the character of the land, but also for the sake of wildlife. Wilderness status will help maintain the integrity of the land, wildlife numbers, their migratory routes, and their habitat, all of which have grossly decreased as the local population has increased. ALTERNATIVE D provides the greatest protection for wildlife, maintaining habitat, important migratory routes, and population connectivity. The CGNF supports some of the best wildlife habitat in the country, home to grizzly bear, lynx, wolverine, wolf, elk, moose, mountain goat, and bighorn sheep to name a few.

In addition, these WSA's currently allow mountain biking and ORV's. Allowing these modes of transportation-mechanized vehicles, opens up the possibility for further degradation by extractive industries, such as mining, drilling, logging. Do we want this in our backyard????

With 1 million species on the precipice of extinction, all due to human activity, how can we not justify protecting as much land as possible? It is negligent, reckless, and selfish not to do so!!!! Humans have taken so much from this planet, and given virtually nothing in return. It's time not to put our selfish recreational desires first!!! ALTERNATIVE D or bust!!!