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Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest Plan Revision. For context, I am a professional geologist (Professor of Geology at Montana State University, but these comments represent my personal input). I have spent most of my career doing "boots on the ground" geology across the Beartooth Mountains, Madison Range, and Bridger Range (among others outside the Custer-Gallatin Forest). I am also an avid hunter, fisherman and trail runner/hiker, cross country skier, and occasionally get in some back country telemark turns. I have personally traversed much of the terrain covered in this Forest Plan during the past 40 years, and indeed access to this country is the reason why I chose to reside and raise my family here.

I strongly support the USFS mandate for multiple use. But competing uses have to be balanced carefully. I highly value protection of our last remaining wilderness areas ("In wildness is the preservation of the world"--H.D. Thoreau). However, I am also a conservationist, and recognize the need to appropriately utilize natural resources (to preserve, protect and responsibly use resources such as timber, soils and water, but also to recognize the societal need for extractive resources such as minerals and energy). Protection of headwaters areas, and watershed management, should be a high priority as this ultimately impacts all downstream uses by the larger community. As a science educator, I have interests in providing educational opportunities for learners of all ages to get out and explore and learn about Nature in all its awesome wonder. As a citizen, I hope that all citizens (local and from across the United States) will be able to access our national heritage established and managed in our National Forests.

My highest priorities in proceeding with the forest plan are: 1) Preserve those areas that truly have a wilderness character. This is a precious resource that is now exceedingly rare, and any infringement of development will be irreversible. I have run the "Devil's Backbone" from Hyalite to Windy Pass and recognize this area as an area that absolutely must be protected as wilderness for all time. This extends to the Buffalo-Porcupine area. Similarly, the Cowboy Heaven area in the Spanish Peaks deserves protection as a wilderness area. 2) Wildlife Habitat: I am extremely concerned with preservation of critical wildlife habitat areas. This includes safeguarding critical areas such as elk calving grounds, managing forests to ensure there is appropriate forage, and preserving traditional game migration routes. 3) Access to forest amenities: I am very concerned about availability of access to Forest lands. I would like to see a) more access points to the Forest secured (e.g., clean up the mess with private ownership in the Crazy Mountains); b) better trail maintenance (I know that Forest budgets are tight and funds are often redirected towards fire control, but perhaps there are other partnerships with sportsmen's groups that can help); c) even though I'm a hiker/runner I do respect the right of mountain bikers to ride the Forest trails, and I always enjoy seeing equestrian trail riders; and, d) with respect to motorized access (motorcycles, 4-wheelers, snow mobiles) I do recognize that a segment of society enjoys their motorized rides on trails and that this is particularly important for people with disabilities and for the elderly. But, motorized access should be restricted to areas that do not have significant impact on fragile ecosystems (I have seen dirt bikes rip across the high meadows adjacent to the Windy Creek cabin, tearing up the fragile soil and plant cover), should not be allowed to harass wildlife, and I know enough of avalanche danger to be concerned about safety issues with snowmobiling in the avalanche-prone Lionshead area--this personal pursuit of a thrill should not endanger other users and Search and Rescue teams.

I have carefully reviewed the numerous options presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Draft Revised Forest Plan. In light of the considerations above, and balancing the desire to protect wilderness, prioritize wildlife habitat, conserve essential resources (water, soil), provide access by the public to the Forest

lands (in ways that don't have a large environmental impact, and that can be done in a safe manner) I believe that Alternative C is the best path forward. This has been carefully crafted by the Gallatin Forest Partnership, and represents reasonable balance among the many interested in using the Custer-Gallatin National Forest into the future.

Thank you for your consideration. I will look forward to future actions as the Forest Plan is formulated and implemented.