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Comments:

Comment draft plan - CGNF

May 17, 2019

Forest Plan Revision Team

PO Box 130

Bozeman, MT 59718

Dear Revision Team,

Dear Custer Gallatin National Forest Management Team,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on The Custer Gallatin National Forest's Draft Management Plan.

Before I begin, I want to let you know that I am a frequent visitor of this area and just returned from a two week stay, where much of it was spent in these areas hiking and sight seeing. Specifically, I am commenting on the Absaroka Beartooth and Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin geographic areas. These areas provide valuable wildlife habitat, headwater streams, and diverse recreational opportunities that I and my family personally take advantage of and are part of the the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Surrounding areas are seeing significant urban growth, new, different and other advances in recreation technology, and climate change related impacts are putting more and more pressure on our public lands. It is critical that the new management plan get ahead of these threats by cementing our recreation footprint in place, protecting wildlife populations, and implementing strategies to better understand and adapt to a changing climate.

I support the full incorporation of the Gallatin Forest Partnership (GFP) Agreement into the plan for the Gallatin and Madison ranges. However, while alternative C incorporates parts of that agreement, it does not accurately reflect the GFP's recommendations for wildlife protections or recreation monitoring. Looking outside the GFP agreement, it is also critical that we protect and enhance other areas, including wildlife linkage areas and existing wilderness, and include enforceable climate change components.

I recommend the following revisions to the draft plan:

Ensure wildlife connectivity in portions of the Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin Geographic Area that aren't otherwise protected by the grizzly bear recovery zone. The Madisons are critical for wildlife movement to areas beyond the National Forest. I have seen this first hand and we desperately need to protect this linkage. Habitat protections for grizzly bears must extend wherever population health is monitored and into areas important for connectivity. Grizzlies must also be designated as a Species of Conservation Concern.

Plan components must support a year-round self-sustaining bison population within tolerance areas on National Forest System lands. West Pine and Porcupine Buffalo Horn backcountry areas must mirror Cabin Creek Wildlife Management Area in wildlife protection and wild character plan components.

Recreational use must be monitored more extensively by area, and standards must ensure that increasing recreation is balanced with wildlife protection.

Manage existing wilderness areas in line with the 2020 Vision.

Given the uncertainties of climate change, monitoring questions for vegetation, invasive species, aquatic resources, fire, and more must explicitly assess the effects of climate change and guide adaptive management as required by the 2012 planning rule (219.12(a)(5)(vi)). In addition to the 30 rivers recommended as eligible for Wild and Scenic designation, include Taylor Creek, Hellroaring Creek, and the South Fork of the Madison due to their outstanding wildlife values. Once these areas are developed they can never be taken back to their original wild state.

I am excited to see the Custer Gallatin National Forest taking a fresh look at our ecosystems and the many species that depend on them. The Draft Plan and DEIS includes many strong points, and with some revisions the new management plan will be an important tool to guide decades of sustainable forest management.

Again as a frequent visitor and user of this area, I want to personally say a big "Thank you" for all of the time and effort that you and the many others who are working on this have put in. Your efforts on behalf of all of us are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

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