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First name: Tim

Last name: Hoffer

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 1204 Buckrake Ave.

Address2:

City: Bozeman

State: MT

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code: 59718

Country: United States

Email: timhoffer@mysteryranchusa.com

Phone:

Comments:

The Gallatin Forest Partnership has agreed to a proposal that recommends nearly 125,000 acres for wilderness in the Madison and Gallatin ranges. This includes more than 100,000 acres in the Gallatins, from Hyalite Lake to Yellowstone, as well as 22,000 acres in the Cowboy Heaven and Taylor-Hilgard areas of the Madisons.

The GFP agreement nearly doubles the number of acres that would have been designated as wilderness in a bill that Congress passed in 1988.

The agreement also sets aside two new wildlife management areas in the Porcupine Buffalo Horn and West Pine area, preventing any kind of development that would fragment habitat and deplete wildlife populations.

Over 700 people have endorsed the agreement, as have the Gallatin County Commission, Mystery Ranch, Simms, Big Sky Chamber of Commerce, Big Sky Mountain Resort, Trout Unlimited and more than 60 other local businesses and organizations.

If we don't achieve protection for the Gallatins in the forest plan, we maybe never will. That would mean losing what we love about this range - the wilderness that supports grizzlies, wolverines, elk, and other species that roam the mountains, as well as the cold, clear, and clean streams that support some of the best fishing in the world and serve as the source of our drinking water.

I support the Gallatin Forest Partnership agreement.