

## CUSTER GALLATIN FOREST COMMENT

6/5/2019

I am a lifelong resident of Clyde Park located between the Bridger and Crazy Mountains. I have spent a life time with my family enjoying what the great outdoors has to offer in the Custer Gallatin Forest. I have been engaged in every Forest Service management action since the 1970's when Rare 1 and Rare 2 were introduced. The Forest Service told the public that this new Absarokee/Beartooth Wilderness would be all they would take from the motorized recreating public and extractive resources industries like logging, mining and cattle grazing. We have seen that this was not true.

Now we see the Highlight Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area managed as de facto Wilderness by the Forest Service, when by their own rules state that all historic uses of the forest were supposed to remain in place until such a time that it received Wilderness designation. It has not been made Wilderness because it does not meet the requirements. The original intent of any WSA was to take 2 or 3 years to study it and determine whether or not it met the qualification to be Wilderness. Then they were either Wilderness or they were managed the way they were prior to the study. Wilderness Study Areas were never supposed to stay in place for 40 years like they have. Another example of arbitrary, capricious actions taken by the Forest Service to remove motorized recreation and extractive resources from the forest.

I care deeply about our ability to enjoy our sacred places in our mountains. I have watched as more and more areas are closed using flawed, untrue and cherry-picked information as an excuse to do so. Every time there is action there are more closures. Why are there never protected motorized areas set aside, or recommended logging areas?

We have been lied to in the past by Forest Service officials Hosea Castro (Bozeman District Ranger), Ron Archuleta (Livingston District Ranger) and Becky Heath (Gallatin Forest Supervisor). (they were part of the hit squad sent to close our Gallatin forest in the early 2000's). We had many meetings with them trying to help guide the process. At one of those meeting, we were told that if we identified our riding areas that they would remain open to us. When the travel plan was implemented, we lost most of those areas in the Bridger and Crazy Mountains that we identified. At the time, I was a board member of Citizens For Balanced Use (I have since resigned as a board member, but I am still a proud member and supporter). We (CBU) created a folder that we submitted as comments with over 2000 pages of comments and documentation that showed existing and historic use with our comments and concerns about more closures with the new travel plan. These comments were from hundreds of avid outdoorsmen who used and enjoyed the forest. When we asked why none of our information was considered to create the travel plan, we were told that they did not have to include it. Really! But they can use comments from people who do not use the resource, or in many cases even know where it is. The "Tree Hugger" groups send out an email to all their members with a

nice pre-written comment about how we need to close these areas to protect them and since that fits the agenda it carries the same weight as those of us who live here and use the forest.

As a citizen, I feel disenfranchised. The Forest Service process is a joke. They try to make you feel like you are part of the process and your input has importance and will be considered in the planning process. It is crystal clear that they have an agenda of eliminating motorized recreation and extractive resources in the forest. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. I overheard a conversation between 2 Forest Service officials where it was said that, "if we try to take too much away at one time the public will revolt and start riding closed areas". I fear that we may be reaching that point. The pattern here is obvious.

I will continue to fight for public access against an unfair opponent who does not act in good faith or even follow their own rules with regards to forest management. The continued closures and restrictions cause a great hardship for businesses. The more you restrict access, the more money it takes from area businesses who count on it for their livelihoods. Not to mention all of the money generated by the logging industry and cattle grazing permits. Not only do we get the benefit of the income to the Government is stumpage fees for logging and grazing fees from cattle it also creates jobs that make the economy better. Those businesses and individuals pay taxes on all of it as well.

No one wants to see the forest developed or destroyed. There are already protections in place that protect the resource. It bothers me that those advocating for more closures and restrictions use false fear tactics like "someone will build a lodge on Crazy Peak because it is privately owned". What a joke. It will never happen, because as I said there are restrictions in place to prevent it.

We all need to be good stewards of the land. More Wilderness is not the answer. Locking the majority of users out is not the answer. Proper Forest management is the answer. This includes extractive resource management like logging, mining and cattle grazing. Trees mature and die. If you allow logging, you not only create jobs that have a very positive affect on people and business but it also reduces the fuel load that has caused the catastrophic forest fires that we have to put up with every summer. We did not have the terrible huge fires when the forest was managed with sustainable logging practices in the past. Stop the influence of the extreme environmentalists from ruining all of our lives by dictating forest management policy.

The "Tree Hugger" groups (extreme environmentalists) have a sneaky way of making money by using the Equal Access to Justice Act to sue the Forest Service over every positive action that they try to do. This means that they use our tax dollars to sue the government that we pay to manage our forests. Congress needs to change this gross exploitation of a law that was never intended for this purpose.

End of comment!

Sincerely, Mark Hoffman