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Comments:

Re: Custer Gallatin Forest Plan Revision #50185

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft plan for the Custer Gallatin. While I recognize the hard work that has gone into this draft plan, I believe that the best way forward for the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) is not contained within a single alternative. I support the Sierra Club's vision for recommended wilderness in the Custer Gallatin.

Specifically, I would like to see two roadless areas in the northern Bridgers around Blacktail and North Cottonwood recommended for wilderness. I would like three roadless areas within the Crazies to be recommended for wilderness (significant areas of polygons 36, 37 and roadless area between these). The forest plan should recommend a significant portion of the Gallatin Range for wilderness, including the exceptional wildlife habitat in the Porcupine-Buffalo Horn area, South Cottonwood, Hidden Lakes, and West Pine.

In the Absaroka-Beartooths, several drainages adjacent to existing wilderness are also worthy of wilderness recommendation including Line Creek, West Fork/Lake Fork of Rock Creek, Mill Creek, East Rosebud, and Main Fork Rock Creek. In the Madisons, the area south of the Taylor Hilgard Wilderness Unit should be recommended for wilderness designation. Cowboy's Heaven should be recommended for wilderness due to the important wildlife linkage it provides to portions of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness. I support the previous forest plan's recommendation of nearly 23,000 acres of wilderness in the Lionhead. Large portions of the Pryors roadless areas including Big Pryor, the Punchbowl, Lost Water Canyon, and Bear Canyon should be recommended for wilderness. I want recommended wilderness to be managed in the same way as designated Wilderness, excluding mechanized and motorized recreation to preserve the wild character of the landscape.

The management plan should facilitate the return of bison to their historic range and allow them to move freely through their native habitat, with the goal of a year round self-sustaining bison population in the CGNF. I support the designation of the 30 eligible wild and scenic rivers as a key component of protecting riparian ecosystems of the CGNF.

I believe that these wilderness and wild and scenic recommendations are necessary because this forest will face tremendous challenges in coming years. The rapidly increasing population of Gallatin county and climate change will significantly impact the CGNF. The revision of this forest plan is our best opportunity to protect this incredible ecosystem. The management of this forest should lean towards wilderness preservation because I fear if we do not act now, we will not get a second chance.

This is extremely important to me and my family here in Montana and around the country.

Thank You,