

Date submitted (Mountain Standard Time): 6/3/2019 4:18:10 PM

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June 3, 2019

It gives me great pleasure to see that the process of revising the Forest Management Plan for the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) is alive and well. It is an enormous project, complicated by the great expanses of landscape separating the component parts of the Forest. I wish you all success in bringing the project to fruition in a fashion that results in minimal pain to your clientele.

I believe that my profession, as well as that of my wife's, is relevant to our choices of alternatives. I am an emeritus professor of geology/geophysics and zoology/physiology from a Rocky Mountain university. Even though retired, I persist in doing active, research-oriented fieldwork within the northern Laramide Belt of the Rockies. Specifically, of late I have been involved with a project of geologic mapping within full eyeshot of the Pryor Mountains as seen to the immediate northeast. Thus, although I have interest in the entire scope of your revisions, my comments are principally focused upon the Pryors. I have spent most of my adult existence pursuing diverse aspects of the evolutionary history of vertebrate life, especially as related to mammals. My basic life-interests, therefore, continue to cross many boundaries between biology and physical geology. Although my wife was academically trained both in the fields of representational art and evolutionary theory, she is utterly absorbed in developing oil-paint representations of magnificent Rocky Mountain basinal and montane landscapes.

I provided the information above such that you might better understand the sincere enthusiasm that we both experienced upon reading the description of '2.5.6 Alternative D' in your DEIS. By far it is scientifically the most enlightened of the five alternatives. Also, from a recreational point of view, it is the best for those few who prefer the serenity of wilderness areas in preference to the mechanical roaring-and-tearing toys that today attract so many of us. Additionally, Alternative D best fits the official mission statement of the U.S. Forest Service itself, which claims the basic requirement . . .

"To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

Clearly, the Pryor Mountains exhibit both highly scenic mountainous topography as well as virtually unique expanses of high-elevation grassland floras.

Particularly appealing to us is the possibility of gaining up to four newly designated or expanded Recommended Wilderness Areas (RWAs) in the Pryors, and many more across the entire scope of the CGNF. We recommend acceptance of that status as widely as feasible, because only by being left alone will threatened or endangered species of plants and animals actually recover. Please do not equate the much weaker 'Backcountry Areas' with RWAs. Ecosystem preservation is possible only by way of RWAs, be they in any case ever so small. We fully realize that the Pryors can not be protected as strongly as National Parks, but even very small, mostly protected areas can have profoundly positive impacts within otherwise open landscapes.

Thank you most sincerely for your efforts in allowing co-existence of wise use along with the protection of these most precious segments of the original Wild West.