

Date submitted (Mountain Standard Time): 6/1/2019 5:49:20 PM

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Comments:

Adopt Alternative D and list American bison as a species of conservation concern

Custer-Gallatin National Forest Plan Revision

Custer-Gallatin National Forest

P.O. Box 130

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Bozeman, MT 59771

RE: Adopt Alternative D and list American bison as a species of conservation concern

Dear Forest Plan Revision Team

I support Forest Supervisor Mary C. Erickson adopting Alternative D, the environmentally preferred alternative in the Custer Gallatin National Forest plan.

I also support Regional Forester Leanne M. Marten listing American bison as a species of conservation concern in Region 1.

Please strengthen Alternative D by adopting the following standards and desired conditions:

* To close and not permit cattle grazing allotments in the American bison range in order to restore the connectivity and viability of the American bison's distinct genome.

This standard is essential to restoring and preserving the American plains bison. According to the US Forest Service, "no self-sustaining herds of wild plains bison exist on National Forest System lands" (U.S. Forest Service 2011; US Forest Service 2015). Thus the priority of the Interagency Bison Management Plan in 2000 (U.S. Dept. of the Interior & U.S. Dept. of Agriculture 2000 Vol 1 at 731) to ensure the American bison population persists in the wild remains unfulfilled. This should be a forest wide standard.

* To restore connectivity, and conserve the viability and diversity of native bighorn sheep populations, the Custer Gallatin needs to adopt a standard to not permit domestic sheep grazing in bighorn sheep range.

* The best available scientific information supports including enforceable forest-wide standards to protect key linkage areas, habitat connectivity, and food security for threatened grizzly bears.

* The Custer Gallatin must adopt a forest-wide standard for all grazing permits requiring "let-down" fencing and remove barriers that impede migration of native species.

* Adopt a desired condition for the Custer Gallatin to be a leader in the development of wildlife safe passages and measures on highways constructed in migration corridors on the National Forest.

* Restore more wetlands, creek banks, pond edges, and riparian habitat through strong standards and more yearly projects to benefit American bison and native species diversity.

* The Custer Gallatin has a duty to fulfill its' responsibilities and trust obligations safeguarding treaty rights, sacred species, sacred sites, and traditional cultural places of significance to aboriginal people.

Relying on the best available scientific information, please select Alternative D and adopt strong standards for American bison, bighorn sheep, threatened grizzly bears, wilderness, linkage corridors, habitat connectivity, and water.

Sincerely,
Keith Schuette
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