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Comments:

I am writing to comment on the Custer Gallatin National Forest Plan proposal. While much of the plan is acceptable I think there are some added protections needed and I would like to address them.

I would like to see the Forest Service maintain the existing 22,800 acres of recommended Wilderness in the Lionhead, reflected in the no-action Alternative A. I would also like to see this area managed to allow foot and horse travel only, so that it may one day be eligible for congressional Wilderness designation.

I support the Gallatin Forest Partnership agreement, which is reflected in Alternative C. The entire Big Creek drainage, Rock Creek, and Tom Miner basins - all of which include a diversity of lower elevation habitat and significant densities of grizzly bears need to be protected to ensure the stability of our grizzly populations and has the best bio-diversity left in the state of Montana, which also needs protecting- once these ecosystems are damaged there is no getting them back. I support the Gallatin Forest Partnership agreement. The GFP agreement also urges the Forest Service to recommend Cowboy Heaven and Quake Lake in the Madison Range as additions to the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area. I lived in West Yellowstone for a couple of years in my twenties and spent quite a bit of time around Quake Lake and the surrounding forests. This eerily beautiful area must be protected as the unique ecosystem created by the earthquake in the 1950s.

I support the Forest Service manage the Crazyes to protect their wilderness values and cultural significance. I would like to see no new expansion of motorized or mechanized trails. I also urge the Forest Service to manage the area in close consultation with the Crow Nation in order to protect and honor Crow reserved treaty rights and traditional cultural practices.

I support the Forest Service protect the wild character and cultural significance of Bear Canyon, Big Pryor, and the Punch Bowl areas in the Pryor Mountains by managing them as recommended Wilderness, as reflected in Alternative D. We would also like to see the existing Lost Water Canyon Recommended Wilderness area expanded to 13,000 acres, also reflected in Alternative D. These four areas are not suitable for motorized recreation and mechanized recreation, both of which degrade the wilderness quality of the areas and threaten irreplaceable cultural values. There are multiple other places in the Pryors where ATVs and mountains bikes are allowed and appropriate. This spectacular area of Montana is home to plants and species found nowhere else in Montana and needs to be protected from motorized and mechanized use.

I support the Forest Service manage the following places as recommended Wilderness as reflected in Alternative D: Line Creek Plateau (the entirety of the plateau), Red Lodge Creek-Hellroaring Plateau, North Fork, Strawberry Creek, Chico Peak, Emigrant Peak, and Dome Mountain. We also support managing Bad Canyon as a Backcountry area with no mechanized and motorized recreation as proposed in Alternative B. I have spent some time hiking in the Abosroka-Beartooth region and would like to do more- it's stunning views and pristine jewel lakes are worthy of protection.

I support that Tongue River Breaks, King Mountain, and Cook Mountain all remain off-limits to motorized recreation, while still allowing ranchers the option to use ATVs to administer essential components of their permits, as reflected in Alternative C. These areas are not appropriate for mountain biking and should be managed to reflect that. Alternative C designates these places as "backcountry areas," prohibiting motorized and mechanized recreation. This alternative reflects the current use and realities of the area.

I support that Chalk Buttes be managed as a "backcountry area" prohibiting motorized and mechanized recreation, as reflected in Alternative D. Since little demand for mountain biking or OHV use exists in Chalk Buttes, the Forest Service has no reason to allow these types of recreation in this area.

Overall I support Recommended Wilderness areas (RWAs) should be managed to protect their wilderness character and improve the chances that Congress will one day consider these areas for Wilderness designation. RWA management can also be used to improve the wilderness character of an otherwise outstanding area, so that it may qualify for future designation. This means allowing foot and horse travel only. Recreational uses that do not conform with the Wilderness Act -- such as mountain biking, snowmobiling, OHV riding, and other mechanized and motorized uses -- are not allowed. The forest service needs to adopt clear standards that prohibit non-conforming uses in RWAs.

In closing I would like to say that we in Montana are blessed to still have wild and diverse ecosystems flourishing in our state. We must do all that we can to protect the pristine wilderness we have left to ensure that species, such as grizzly, wolverine, trout, and countless others can survive so our children and grandchildren can explore and appreciate these stellar landscapes just as I have done for the last 40 plus years. If we don't protect these precious ecosystems we will have done a grave disservice to all who come after us. It is our legacy to protect and preserve our nation's heritage in some of the last remaining places of untold beauty and wilderness for all to enjoy.

Thank you for taking my comments.

I have visited the Pryor Mountains and Chalk Buttes; please include these areas of roadlessness as wilderness.

I have hiked, skied, and run in the Madison and Gallatin Ranges and would like to see the Wilderness areas expanded upon.