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Comments:

As Montana and the Bozeman area grows, as the world warms, wilderness is our best hope. It is wilderness that is the most lasting gift that we can bequeath to our children and our children's children. I have spent much of my life hiking, backpacking and climbing in and around wilderness areas. In wilderness, there is the quiet or sounds of nature with few human intrusions. Wilderness is the healthiest setting for the animals, trees and fish. In wilderness, the trees provide the natural carbon sink that can help preserve us from our own foolishness and greed. For these reasons, Alternative D must be the favored alternative.

At the same time, as a member of the boomer generation, it is increasingly difficult physically to climb the highest peaks, backpack and complete the longest circuits in the wilderness. My wife and I are now looking for more gentle hikes with less vertical. We are not disabled but we are no longer as able as we once were. Unfortunately, when I scan the Forest Service maps, topos and GIS the gentle trails in the valleys and along creeks are frequently motorized trails that leave your ears ringing and your nostrils stinging from fumes and dust as you walk in the machine's exhaust.

Now is the time that the Revised Forest Plan must address the availability of trails that are less challenging to make them available to the older hiker and to plan for new trails with this in mind. This should be addressed throughout the document to establish the less able hiker as a legitimate forest user so that, later, when trail use is determined these trails can be used by hikers on alternate days with motorized. A fine example is the Porcupine Creek trail in midsummer. A long approach road such as the end of the Storm Castle road, could be reverted to a more gentle trail on alternate days. There are examples like this in every range from Bozeman to the Beartooth and from the Crazies to the Lionshead.

It is my fervent hope that the Alternative selected will increase the availability of trails for older hikers without having to deal with the intrusion of motorized.