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Comments:

I have grown up in Bozeman and spent as much time as possible in the mountains and wild places surrounding us. My favorite thing about being here is the incredible amount of variety in places available to me for the activities I love, namely trail running and backcountry skiing. I support many of the recommendations the Montana Wilderness Association is advocating for, like the Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement. The Gallatin Range, especially out of Hyalite, has instrumental in my development not only as a skier and runner but as a person, being the place I first started to backcountry ski to now being a place I love to explore, whether it be scrambling the ridge between Elephant and Bole in the early summer with skis to ski the Pinner couloir in the twin falls basin, or running the Gallatin Crest from Windy Pass to Hyalite Peak. Both of these adventures, compiled with countless others, have stood out in my memory as times I could travel long distances through wild places, both on and off trail, and find solitude. Being 20 and having lived in Bozeman all my life, I am witnessing a huge period of growth that often breeds frustration, but I take solace in knowing there are always wild places I can loose myself in exploring.

I also wish to emphasize the value of the Crazy mountains and their wildness, and agree with the MWA recommendation of no new expansion of motorized and mechanized trails. Being able to walk, scramble, and ski around the vast undeveloped areas of the Crazies is incredibly special, and they have developed into one of my favorite places to spend time, primarily because of their lack of motorized access.

Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of allowing foot and horse travel only in recommended wilderness areas, both for the enjoyment of other users and for an improved likelihood of becoming a wilderness area in the future. One of the things that makes wilderness so wild is only being able to walk on one's own feet (or ride a horse) to get where you are trying to go. This slows everything down, which, in the bustle of everyday life, is absolutely instrumental to the solitary and peaceful nature of the wilderness as a place to both recreate in and escape to.

The Crazies and Gallatin range, along with the Madisons and Beartooths, are places that became instrumental to my upbringing when I first began hiking and climbing peaks in high school. I can still remember the first day I climbed Beehive Peak, alone in river sandals, at age 16, or when I spent the summer after high school hiking all the prominent peaks in the Taylor Hilgards. Now, I frequent these mountains and often take for granted the ease of designing wild loop trail run/scrambles, like from Fladers mountain to Chisholm in Hyalite, or long ski days whose access is a mere half an hour from my house. To loose this capacity for spending time outdoors, on foot or skis, would be tragic not only for myself but for generations to come. In planning for the future, I encourage you to follow the recommendations put forward by the MWA and consider the experiences of Bozemanites like me and the power of these wild places in shaping and forming who we are, preserving that experience for the future.