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Comments:

I live in Bozeman and hike and bird watch on many trails on U.S. Forest Service land, especially in the Gallatin National Forest. I have reviewed the Forest Service Summary of the suggested management changes to the region. In general, while Plan D appears to offer the most benefit/protection (in my heart of hearts I favor this one), I recognize the need for compromise. Plan C would appear to offer this compromise in the Gallatin/Madison ranges-with modifications as suggested by the Gallatin Forest Partnership (which I wholeheartedly support). I would emphasize that I favor NO increase at all in motorized access to ANY part of the Custer Gallatin National Forest.*

I also agree wholeheartedly with the stated views of Tom Tidwell (former U.S. Forest Service chief) in a speech he gave in 2009:

"..Wilderness comprises large unspoiled blocks of land that will be critical in helping natural systems adapt. These lands will serve as refugia for species stressed by rapid change . as nodes and connectors in the large landscape mosaics we need to facilitate adaptation . and as baselines and reference points for our researchers in trying to understand the effects and extent of climate change.... In an era of climate change, sound wilderness stewardship will become more important than ever... Not least, wilderness will remain vital for ensuring America's water supplies. Wilderness lands have the highest capacity for water storage and filtration. The rushing cascades and pristine meadows typical of wilderness areas contribute a disproportionate share of America's water.." (accessed 4/7/2019 at <https://www.fs.fed.us/speeches/importance-wilderness.>)

Every day, more than 6,000 acres of open space are lost to development, according to Pew Trusts. Only about 5 percent of the U.S. landmass is wilderness protected from this onslaught (and most of it is in Alaska). Tidwell said in a speech he gave in Montana in 2014: "A lot of [forested and grassland land] is protected from development, but it is not protected as wilderness. And that could be a concern, because once you use wilderness for something else, it is gone forever." Tidwell and others in the tradition of Aldo Leopold have addressed many reasons why we as a nation need to increase Wilderness acreage. High on my list is the maintenance of species diversity and habitat. To this end, I would like to see more wilderness designated areas than are suggested in Plan C for the Gallatin/Madison ranges. In this, I support the Gallatin Forest Partnership in urging the Forest Service to recommend Wilderness protection to some additional 124,000 acres of some of the most beautiful and diverse mountain landscapes in the world. I think the Gallatin Forest Partnership has done a lot of good work in bringing people with differing needs together. I urge the Forest Service to read carefully their recommendations. I also urge the Forest Service to consider carefully the recommendations for protecting the rest of the Custer Gallatin Forest by the Montana Wilderness Association, through whom I am submitting my comments.

On a final note, I applaud all efforts of the U.S. Forest Service to protect the nation's forested and grassland landscapes. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Patricia Craig, 3677 Johnson Rd., Bozeman MT 59718; 406-579-4131

* Motorized vehicles make noise, scare wildlife (and hikers and their dogs), and cause pollution and erosion. As obnoxious as they are, I see no reason to open additional trails to them. The hike I took last summer to

Emerald Lake from the Hyalite Recreation Area is representative of the usage I find on the trails that allow them. I encountered about 35 other people along the way. About six were on mountain bikes. Two were on motorized bikes. The rest were on foot. In my experience, this usage pattern is consistent-for every motorized person on Bozeman-area Forest Service trails there are about seventeen or eighteen nonmotorized people. There seems to be plenty of room for motorized traffic on existing trails. Perhaps it would even be possible to consider designating times these vehicles cannot operate on the trails they currently access.