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Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Forest Plan Revision. We live in Gardiner specifically for its proximity to the forest and park, the wildlands around us being a mainstay in our daily lives. I have been a guide/instructor for these public lands for over 20 years, and my husband is an ecologist with a private consulting business. We know our lands well, and care for them deeply.

I support Alternative D, because:

- it has the most proactive support for bison in the national forest
- prioritizes this native wildlife above non-native, weed transporting cattle
- maximizes the number and total area of recommended wilderness areas
- minimizes timber production
- has the best disease prevention measures for bighorn sheep
- includes wildlife connectivity components/key linkage areas

I would like to see these inclusions in Alternative D:

- Aircraft Landing Strips should be considered where they are proposed near existing roads and infrastructure, and only outside of wilderness areas.
- Aircraft landing strips in roadless areas should only be considered if those are deemed necessary for the maintenance and management needs of the Forest Service, not for private use.
- Keep and maintain existing recreation cabins. We do not need to build new ones.
- I do not support forest-wide exclusion of domestic sheep or goats for weed control. This should remain a management option with appropriate mitigation measures.

Any plans should focus on inclusion of the Gallatin Forest Partnership, a well mapped effort that increases stewardship and success of partnering with a diversity of stakeholders.

Alternative C has some good components, but would I would suggest the following inclusions:

- Use of domestic sheep or goats for grazing, outfitting and recreation pack animals is not suitable because of disease risk to native bighorn sheep (already an historic and current issue) and because of the difficulties of mitigating and managing these uses in the National Forest. Agency use of sheep or goats for weed control should be considered where risks of disease transmission can be minimized.
- Bison support should be most proactive because they are a native wildlife species. Their habitat needs should be prioritized above non-native domestic cattle. As wildlife, they are a shared resource for all Americans as opposed to the private resource of a cattle operation. Their grazing promotes the growth of native grasses and increased primary productivity overall by 30% or more.
- I do not support an expansion of Stillwater Mines, nor do I support the allocation of Forest Service lands for the specific purpose of mining. There are better places to do this, not in the most intact ecosystem in the lower 48.
- Areas that are recommended wilderness areas (RWAs) in Alternative D, not included as RWAs in Alternative C should be designated as Backcountry Areas. This would bring the Backcountry Area acreage to 564,870 instead of 252,896. Backcountry Areas provide more use opportunities while minimizing impacts and limiting future development, a critical component as our area sees a human population explosion.

Additionally, I recommend the following changes to the draft Plan:

--Riparian management zones must NOT be reduced from the current 300 ft/200 ft area in fish bearing/non-fish bearing streams. Riparian management zones and buffers are important for protecting aquatic resources, riparian associated flora and fauna and they provide important habitat linkages or corridors for wildlife in areas where disturbance to the rest of the landscape (timber harvest) is or has occurred.

--Ensure wildlife connectivity in portions of the Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin Geographic Area that aren't otherwise protected by the grizzly bear recovery zone. The Madisons are critical for wildlife movement to areas beyond the National Forest, a key component in their long-term survival.

--Related, habitat protections for grizzly bears must extend wherever population health is monitored and into areas important for connectivity.

Grizzlies and bison must also be designated as a Species of Conservation Concern.

--Plan components must support a year-round self-sustaining bison population within tolerance areas on National Forest System lands.

--West Pine and Porcupine Buffalo Horn backcountry areas must mirror Cabin Creek Wildlife Management Area in wildlife protection and wild character plan components.

--Recreational use must be monitored more extensively by area, and standards must ensure that increasing recreation is balanced with wildlife protection.

--Manage existing wilderness areas in line with the 2020 Vision.

--Given the uncertainties of climate change, monitoring questions for vegetation, invasive species, aquatic resources, fire, and more must explicitly assess the effects of climate change and guide adaptive management as required by the 2012 planning rule (219.12(a)(5)(vi)).

--In addition to the 30 rivers recommended as eligible for Wild and Scenic designation, include Taylor Creek, Hellroaring Creek, and the South Fork of the Madison due to their outstanding wildlife values.

Thank you all for your hard work, public process including productive local meetings, and efforts to ensure a sustainable future. I have a 6 year old and the decision to have her was largely based on the landscape into which she was born. Thank you for carefully managing it for her and all our future.