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Comments:

I am writing in support of Alternative D, which includes 230,000 acres of proposed Wilderness. I believe that protecting areas such as the proposed Gallatin, Cabin Creek, Lionhead, and Buck Creek areas as wilderness is vital to providing wildlife corridors for the Greater Yellowstone Ecoregion. I am especially concerned with the fate of grizzly bears, which are absent from so much of their historical range. As a graduate student in wildlife conservation, my classes have often discussed the dangers of small population size and genetic isolation. The habitat protected by Alternative D is vital to providing corridors between Crazy Mountains, Bangtail and Bridger Mountains within the Absaroka Beartooth and Gallatin National Forests, and helps connect Yellowstone National Park with Glacier National Park on an ecological level. It is important that as much wilderness be protected as possible, keeping the area free of roads (that bring intense human use and habitat fragmentation).

The Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area should remain off limits to mountain bikes and motorized use which can disturb wildlife. This area should be made into wilderness, which will help provide a large corridor of protected habitat from Yellowstone National Park toward the Lee Metcalf Wilderness.

As humans, we are good at drawing arbitrary lines that have no ecological meaning. I support expanding the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone to encompass as much of the Gallitan National Forest as possible in order to protect that connectivity between Yellowstone and Glacier. All of Absaroka Beartooth, Bangtail, Bridger, Crazy Mountains, Gallatin, and Henry's Lake should be included. This protection is in support of the Endangered Species Act and maintaining a viable grizzly population in such a small fraction of their historical range. The wildlife in this area needs as much protection as it can get from encroaching human development and activities. We are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction, and continuing to chip away at protections and wildlife habitat is no longer appropriate.

Thank you,
Angela Rex