

Date submitted (Mountain Standard Time): 6/6/2019 9:52:10 AM

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Comments:

My husband and I grew up in Montana. He works as a Park Ranger in Yellowstone National Park and I am a Family Nurse Practitioner as well as an adjunct professor at MSU College of Nursing. We love Montana and enjoy recreating outdoors as much as possible including hiking, mountaineering, kayaking, and backpacking. We have spent most of our free time in the areas that we are advocating to protect.

Firstly, we recommend that the Forest Service adopt the Gallatin Forest Partnership agreement, which asks for 102,000 contiguous acres between YNP and Hyalite Peak. We have spent many summer, fall, and winter days recreating in this area. This area is a popular one, especially with locals as it is relatively easy to access from Bozeman and the surrounding communities. The Gallatin Range supports a variety of wildlife and is an essential source of clean water for nearby residents including us. The Bozeman and Big Sky area continues to grow rapidly, so it is of the utmost importance to confirm protections for the area so that it does not lose wilderness qualities, compromise wildlife, or water. The Gallatin Forest Partnership considers this growth and plans to prepare for these population changes, which is why we highly encourage the Forest Service to adopt the partnership plans.

We secondly recommend the Forest Service to protect the Crazy Mountains by allowing no new expansion of motorized or mechanized trails. I encourage the Forest Service to work in close consultation with the Crow Nation to protect treaty rights and cultural practices in this area. There cannot be effective work to address issues of public access and protection without tribal representation.

Public access to the Crazy Mountains should also be maintained so that everyone may access this public land. Unfortunately, the controversies, nuances, and proposed plans surrounding the Crazy Mountains do not seem entirely transparent to the public. For the first time last summer, my husband and I visited the Crazies and climbed Crazy Peak. We were overwhelmed by the ruggedness and wild beauty in this mountain range. We now have a personal understanding of why people have been advocating for protecting this area for decades.

We lastly advocate for further protecting the Absaroka-Beartooth area. There are a few places that have been recommended as Wilderness such as Line Creek Plateau, Red Lodge Creek-Hellroaring Plateau, North Fork, Chico Peak, Emigrant Peak, and so on as outlined in the Alternative D recommendations. We have spent some summer days in these locations, including climbing Emigrant Peak. On our trip, we nearly ran into a Grizzly with cubs. We are constantly in awe of the Absaroka-Beartooths and surrounding areas with diverse landscapes, numerous lakes, and wildlife. We would encourage the Forest Service to adopt the Alternative D recommendations so that the areas mentioned are not compromised.

Thank you,

Sarah Sentz & Ryan Edwards