Custer Gallatin National Forest

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**SUBJECT: Comments on Draft Assessment of Existing Conditions Report**

Forest Planning Revision Team,

Thank you for accepting comments on the draft Assessment of Existing Conditions and draft Need for Change documents. This has been a long process and as a member of the public I appreciate the opportunity for input.

As detailed in the specialist report on Draft Recreation Settings, Opportunities, and Access Report, mountain biking is growing quickly and projected to grow significantly through the life of this forest plan. I would like to emphasize a few things:

Mountain biking is sustainable recreation. Sustainable recreation is defined as the set of recreation settings and opportunities on National Forest System land that is ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable for present and future generations. We want USFS to manage designated areas, such as Recommended Wilderness, as they currently do to allow mountain bikes where appropriate. Specifically the Buffalo Horn- Porcupine area near Big Sky should remain open to mountain bikes as this is a valuable and growing recreational opportunity for the residents and visitors to this resort area, and can lead to trail improvements as volunteers and advocate organizations get involved.

“Fat bikes” are pedal driven bicycles that allow cyclists to travel over the snow. Fat bikes require a groomed or packed surface to be ridden. I would like this new but growing use connected Semi-Primitive Nonmotorized areas and trails. Allowing grooming and connectors would link areas where fat bikes are currently allowed. The forest plan needs to have the flexibility to change as new yet-to-be-developed recreational activities appear.

Sincerely,

Philip Hess

Big Sky, MT