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Mary Erickson, Forest Supervisor,  
Custer Gallatin National Forest  
P.O. Box 130  
10 East Babcock Ave.  
Bozeman, MT 59771

**RE: Custer Gallatin National Forest Planning Process—Draft Assessment Report of Ecological, Social and Economic Conditions on the Custer Gallatin National Forest and Draft Preliminary Need to Change the Existing Custer and Gallatin Forest Plans**

Dear Forest Supervisor Erickson,

On behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), I appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments specific to the “Draft Assessment Report of Ecological, Social and Economic Conditions on the Custer Gallatin National Forest (the Assessment)” and the “Draft Preliminary Need to Change.”

Since 1919, NPCA has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System, working together with our over 1 million members and supporters to preserve our nation’s natural, historical, and cultural heritage for present and future generations. NPCA has a longstanding interest in protecting national parks and their resources, both inside national parks and on adjacent lands.

The Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) borders much of the northern and western boundaries of Yellowstone National Park (YELL). Therefore management decisions and activities on the CGNF have the potential to impact YELL and park resources including wildlife, water and air quality, and visitor experience. We urge the Forest Service to coordinate and consult with the National Park Service during the development of the Custer Gallatin National Forest Plan.

The Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) is a key part of the broader Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), which includes YELL and is the largest remaining intact temperate ecosystem. Numerous species, including grizzly bears,

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bison, elk, and pronghorn antelope move between habitat on the CGNF and YELL. NPCA appreciates the Forest Service's recognition of the important role the CGNF plays in the long-term conservation of many of the iconic species of YELL and the region. We applaud the Forest Service's intent to address monitoring needs and incorporate management strategies into the Custer Gallatin National Forest Plan (the Plan) that contribute to the long-term conservation of GYE species. The Assessment recognizes that the CGNF may become a refugia for some species and thus will play a vital role in conserving GYE species in a changing climate. We urge the Forest Service to prioritize reducing barriers and improving habitat to promote connectivity, as well as ensure that management decisions do not threaten the long-term health of the wildlife populations of the GYE.

NPCA appreciates the Forest Service's recognition throughout the Assessment that wildlife does not adhere to political borders, and that effective management strategies for wildlife and habitat found within the CGNF must include careful coordination with those agencies responsible for managing public lands adjacent to the CGNF including the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We urge the Forest Service to coordinate and consult with the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks during the development of the Plan.

NPCA is eager to participate in this planning process to ensure that strategies for careful coordination and effective management are incorporated into the Plan. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input during the assessment phase of this planning process.

Best Regards,

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CC:

Dan Wenk, Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park

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