My comments are based on my knowledge of the Gallatin portion of the Custer Gallatin National Forest and many years of hiking, horseback riding and backcountry skiing as a resident of Bozeman and also Black Butte Ranch which borders the National Forest.

I commend the Forest Service for its public involvement during the Forest Plan Revision process. My comments:

**VISION**: Except for a brief mention of the Greater Yellowstone Area, the Vision Statement does not reflect the unique status of the Gallatin portion of the Forest. My comments all flow from the fact that the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is one of the largest, essentially intact ecosystems in the temperate zone of the earth with an unparalleled variety and number of wildlife species. The vision should reflect this. As we move into the future we have a responsibility for stewardship of this unique landscape – for the intrinsic value of its habitats and wildlife so our next generation won’t be saying, “Remember when Grandma used to see bears and wolves, and even mountain lions and now and then a wolverine?” Many factors will influence this future, among them… climate change, corridors for wildlife movement, increased pressure from growing populations for recreational uses. My comments all flow from the need to look to the future. Will this ecosystem be whole and thriving? What measures do we need to take to insure this.

I generally endorse the recommendation of the Gallatin Partnership. This collaborative effort respected the value of the ecosystem while recognizing the needs of a variety of recreational users.

WILDERNESS AND HABITAT PROTECTION:

1. I applaud the Forest Plan’s recommendation prohibiting mechanized or motorized use in a WSA. However, I recommend adopting the wording “Wheeled or motorized vehicles designed for the primary purpose of transporting people, except for wheelchairs, are prohibited in recommended wilderness.”
2. I strongly support the inclusion of 70,614 acres of recommended wilderness in the core of the Gallatin Range but also the additional extension of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness as proposed by the Gallatin Forest Partnership.
3. I recommend the inclusion of the Big Creek drainage as proposed Wilderness. It is important for its wild character and for wildlife.
4. The Hyalite Peak area should not be deleted from the present HPBWSA.
5. I support the eligible Wild and Scenic rivers recommendations proposed in the plan. This seems obvious for protecting water quality. Many places no longer even have this opportunity.

Hyalite Recreation Area and Bozeman Creek Watershed:

I agree with changing the boundaries the heavily used northern portion of the Hyalites. Heavy recreational use has compromised the requirements for proposed wilderness. However this area still has values for wildlife and is our water supply. I concur with the Gallatin Forest Partnership proposals for a Hyalite Watershed Protection and Recreation Area and a West Pine Management Area. These areas need strong management and prohibitions on timber harvest, mining and increased motorized use, extensive new trails and any activities that impact water quality and wildlife. The Gallatin Partnership recommendations have merit. However, I believe the areas need a special designation that will put real teeth into protecting the natural values and keep recreational overuse from becoming an unpleasant experience. The CGFS would know what special designation is best. The ability to strictly manage recreation to not expand uses or build a new network of trails in these important parts of the ecosystem apply to the Porcupine Buffalo Wildlife Management also.

CORRIDORS:

A critical decision for the Forest Plan is to view the ecosystem as a whole. As weather patterns change it is critical that wildlife species are not blocked from the ability to move throughout the ecosystem. I think of this for the many smaller species like pine martens or pikas, etc. who may have to move for a better food source or because their “home” has burned. I think of this from struggling increasingly rare species such as wolverines and lynx. I think of this for winter/summer migrating species such as elk and antelope. I think about this in particular with Grizzlies who need access throughout the forest to expand to the north beyond the CGNF. Roadless areas to the north need special protection as they are presently being squeezed.

RECREATION/HUMAN USE:

With a #1 priority of sustaining ecosystems and fulfilling our stewardship responsibilities as users of the forest, we have a challenge with a growing population. new recreational vehicles, etc. The Gallatin Forest Partnership has a number of excellent recommendations . I add and and emphasize:

1. A need to have a way to limit numbers of users (permits, lotteries, fees) as many parks and forests have had to do. Over congested trails in recreational areas detract from why we are out there.
2. Closures for trail repair, seasonal prohibitions for trails and for wildlife needs
3. Volunteers: This is a key component. The Forest has been doing this. Working with user groups that repair trails, help with weed control and other damage. Groups often lead outdoor education activities and are there to help people out. Volunteer emphasis is excellent and should be expanded. It takes money to manage this and should be in the FS budget.
4. Outdoor Education: The best way to have future stewards for the forest is to teach and involve kids. Additional permits for groups doing outdoor education programs, may be necessary. Leadership from the Forest Service is important. This too should be part of the FS budget.
5. Enforcement: Unfortunately not all users are responsible. A strong enforcement program is necessary and forest rehab projects can be part of the penalty and hopefully the re-education of forest abusers. Another important part of the FS budget needs.
6. Inter governmental/agency collaboration has fallen short in past years. As a part of the GYE, planning and joint programming is essential.