

Forest Plan Revision Team
P.O. Box 130
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Bozeman, MT 59771
Custer Gallatin Forest Plan Revision #50185

To the Forest Plan Revision Team,

As a citizen of Bozeman, I urge you to protect the wild nature of the Gallatin and Madison ranges, as well as the Lionhead, and the Crazy and Pryor Mountains. These areas are full of crucial wildlife habitat, hold historical cultural significance, and provide opportunities for primitive recreation. We are fortunate to be stewards of the land that makes up the Custer Gallatin National Forest, and I encourage the Forest Service to implement the Gallatin Forest Partnership agreement ("GFP agreement"), which was created by a diverse group of local stakeholders. (See Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement, Gallatin Forest Partnership (2018), <https://www.gallatinpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Final-unified-agreement.pdf>.)

As an avid skier and hiker, as well as a wildlife enthusiast, I am particularly concerned about the Gallatin and Madison ranges. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is an important place for grizzlies, moose, mountain goats, wolverines, and lynxes. When snow comes to stay, I see elk wintering in the Gallatins and recognize how important the range is for these animals. To continue to support our treasured wildlife, while also allowing people like me to recreate in what feels like my own backyard, I recommend the Forest Service implement the GFP agreement, which, as it pertains to this area, is best reflected in Alternative C. The GFP agreement calls for the Forest Service to recommend Wilderness for 102,000 contiguous acres between Yellowstone National Park and Hyalite Peak to ensure north-south connectivity. This recommendation would protect a diversity of lower elevation habitat for grizzly bears.

The Lionhead (Henrys Lake Mountains) is the only place in the Custer Gallatin National Forest through which the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail passes, and is consequently deserving of protection. This area is a critical link between the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the High Divide, providing essential habitat for grizzlies, elk, lynx, sage grouse, and westslope cutthroat trout. I urge the Forest Service to maintain the existing 22,800 acres of recommended Wilderness in the Lionhead, which is reflected in the no-action Alternative A. Managing this area to allow for foot and horse travel only would make it eligible for congressional Wilderness designation, making it an important step toward forever preserving this crucial wildlife habitat.

I also urge the Forest Service to protect the wild Crazy Mountains, which are sacred to some of Montana's tribal members. The Crazies are historically significant to the Apsáalooke (Crow) people, who still travel to these mountains to pray for spiritual guidance. Please manage the Crazies to protect their wilderness values – 83,000 roadless acres allow for solitude and

primitive recreation – and for their cultural significance. To best do this, the Forest Service should manage the area in close consultation with the Crow Nation.

The Pryor Mountains are also critically important to the Apsáalooke people. These mountains were their traditional homelands, and remain their homelands today. Apsáalooke people continue to practice traditional cultural rituals in the Pryors, and need solitude to do so. Further, the Pryors are home to plants and animals found nowhere else in Montana. In 2012, the Forest Service, BLM, Rocky Mountain College, and Montana Wilderness Association conducted a “BioBlitz,” finding 812 species of plants and animals in just 24 hours near Crooked Creek. (See Kayhan Ostovar, Rocky Mountain College, BioBlitz 2012 (2012), http://wildmontana.org/downloads/Pryor_Mountains_BioBlitz.pdf.)

I encourage the Forest Service to protect the Bear Canyon, Big Pryor, and Punch Bowl areas by managing them as recommended Wilderness, which is best reflected in Alternative D. Additionally, I encourage the Forest Service to expand Lost Water Canyon Recommended Wilderness to 13,000 acres, which is reflected in Alternative D. None of these areas is suitable for motorized or mechanized recreation, which degrades wilderness quality and threatens irreplaceable cultural values.

The Custer Gallatin National Forest contains some of the wildest lands in the United States, and we are privileged to be custodians of them. Please use this planning process to ensure protection for these special places we hold so dear.

Thank you for considering my comments,
Megan Maier