

Dear Forest Plan Team Leader,

June 1, 2019

The Gallatin Range needs wilderness protection. The area including the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is unique and precious, one which was designated with the help of Senator Lee Metcalf in 1977. At that time Congress passed the Montana Wilderness Study Act, which directed the United States Forest Service to "review certain lands... as to their suitability for preservation as wilderness," and to "be administered so as to maintain their presently existing wilderness character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System." The criteria and characteristics were established under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

As a result, we have a WSA which stretches from the summit of Mount Ellis just south of Bozeman to the countless nine- and ten-thousand foot peaks and ridges in the Gallatin Range. This area contains about 360 roadless square miles running south along the mountain crest divide. This magnificent mountain range is the only major range contiguous with Yellowstone National Park that has not received congressional protection. Unsurpassed in natural scenic beauty, it is a haven for native fish and wildlife, and a place to experience solitude, freedom, and to develop skills for self-reliance in a roadless mountain environment.

Wildlife in the range includes deer, elk, moose, bighorn, mountain goat, mountain lion and more. These species require roadless areas for part of their life cycle. Gallatin Range roadless areas encompass some of the best elk habitat in the northern Rockies due to the rich mix of forest and meadows there. It is important as a connecting path for wildlife and raptors linking the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (including Glacier Park and the Canadian ecosystems) to the Yellowstone Ecosystem. This potential migration corridor is essential to the future of the survival of our endangered species and to provide genetic viability for all species.

The Gallatin Range provides clean air and is essential for protection of our watersheds. The proposed Wilderness encompasses only half of the Gallatin mountain range acreage. A proposed Backcountry Wildlife Conservation Area surrounds the proposed Wilderness, where there are countless miles of trails and logging roads that enable travel for snowmobiles, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and mountain bikes.

The Gallatin Range is one of the largest unprotected roadless areas in Montana. We still have the opportunity to do it right.

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