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Attention: Mary Erickson
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Purpose: Provide inputs to the Draft Custer Gallatin Forest Plan Revision (March 2019). The Billings Gem and Mineral Club inputs focus on the Pryor Mountain area alternatives.

Background on the Billings Gem and Mineral Club: The Billings Gem and Mineral Club is a non-profit organization devoted to the enjoyment of mineralogy, geology, paleontology and lapidary arts with specific attention to the Montana/Wyoming/Dakotas region. The Billings Gem and Mineral Club is affiliated with the Montana Council of Rock & Mineral Clubs, the Northwest Federation of Mineralogical Societies and the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. The club is over 80 members strong and is represented by members of all age groups, from youth to seniors.

Input on the Plan: The Billings Gem and Mineral Club strongly urges you to consider and choose Alternatives A or E for the Pryor Mountain region. Past and present members of the club have enjoyed accessing the public lands of the Pryor Mountains for decades, especially the Bear Canyon and Big Pryor areas. We would like to continue accessing these areas with current and future members, families, and friends for decades to come.

By far the most important reason for keeping these areas in the Pryor Mountains open (as advocated by the Billings Gem and Mineral Club) is to ensure access for recreational rock hounding. This area is rich in collectible fossils and minerals and recreational rock hounding is enjoyed by thousands of people (not just club members), located in the lower Montana and upper Wyoming regions. In fact, the Pryor Mountains are prized for the Bear Canyon agate, which brings recreational rock hounds from across the US for a chance to find one of these agates. This area is also important for the study of geology due to the unique formations and fossils contained within the Pryor Mountains region. Recreational rock hounding is enjoyed by all generations, youth to senior citizens alike. The Billings Gem and Mineral Club advocates for and follows a code of conduct while collecting to ensure rules are followed and the land is kept as intact as possible to ensure it can be enjoyed and collected upon for generations to come.

Selecting an alternative other than A or E will have a detrimental effect on access to the Pryor Mountains for recreational rock hounding, the associated study of the geologic formations and fossils, as well as general outdoor activities (camping, hiking, outdoor recreation, etc) enjoyed by the people engaging in these activities. Alternatives B, C, and D will effectively make public lands inaccessible to the majority of folks that access them today. This would greatly limit if not effectively eliminate a past time of youth, disabled and senior citizens, and a good portion of able individuals who require motorized vehicles to access the area for recreational rock hounding and general outdoors enjoyment. It would also cut off some tourism in the area from people from the Montanas, Dakotas, and Wyoming region as

well as the greater United States and would have an economic impact to the Montana and Wyoming cities along the Pryor Mountains (which is not addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement). Access to public lands is vital to ensure we all have an opportunity to enjoy what the United States has to offer and ensure our public treasures are not locked away from the majority of those individuals who enjoy them today.

Conclusion: The members of the Billings Gem and Mineral Club strongly urges you to consider and choose Alternatives A or E for the Pryor Mountain region for your final Custer Gallatin Forest Plan. This selection is vital to ensure we have continued access to our public lands for recreational rockhounding and general enjoyment. Thank you for allowing us to comment and if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact myself or the Billings Gem and Mineral President, Cari Adamek at the above number and address.

Very Respectfully,



Daniel E. Githens

Billings Gem and Mineral Club