

To: Deb Enwistle

July 20, 2020

Forest Plan Revision

Team Leader

From: J.S. Mercenier

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Helena, MT 59620

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Dear Ms. Enwistle and Forest Plan Drafters,

I am very glad the Forest Service has recognized the importance of conserving the wildest areas along the Continental Divide and in the Big Snowies; but I am more than disappointed with the HLCNF plan to protect only 2/3 of the 98,000-acre Big Snowy Wilderness Study Area.

Yes, I did write earlier on the HLCNF Plan. But I do not have a computer, nor WiFi, at home, and have had no access to public libraries computers during the covid-19 pandemic.

Though I respect the Forest Service labor-intensive work done in drafting their plan, I am not happy with the results: as far as the Big Snowies

are concerned, the whole B.S. Wilder-
nest Study Area should have been
classified as "Wilderness Area" long
since 1986. The same goes for almost
everywhere along the Smith River, the Middle
fork of the Trinity, and in the Elkhorn
area. Those places provide clean water to
multiple communities, enable fish to
thrive, and often in all, humans, the
same we need now more than ever
for our well-being.
We need to realize now, before it is
too late, that once the "wild places"
are no longer protected, they're soon
gone and alas, do not return. Look
to Europe, if you need to be convin-
ced. What are we going to leave
to the next generations? Is the impor-
tant question: what amount of
fresh, clean water, intact ecosystems,
wildlife habitat and corridors, bird
nesting places; all these factors are
important factors for our survival
as a species depending on our
surrounding biological environment.

While I appreciate the forest

Plan to protect 32,000 acres for wilderness on Nevada Mountain - a major corridor for grizzly bears, wolverines, Canada lynx, elk, and many other species; and to protect the Red Creek and Silver King areas adjacent to the Scapegoat Wilderness, and keep in place the Electric Peak recommended wilderness from the 1986 plan - while I appreciate all these protection, I would also like to see more wilderness in the Big Belts protected - in the 1986 plan, recommended - and Camas Creek and keep portions of Baldy-Edition. And there needs to be wilderness protection for the Little Belts, which includes Middle Fork Judith Wilderness Study Area* and Deep Creek/Tenderfoot area along the Smith River. That area* have more than a thousand elk migrate to the WSA's parks year after year, while thousands of Montanans and Montana lovers - ie each year for a permit to experience the Smith River corridor, of which Deep Creek/Tenderfoot is part. Speaking of an "economic landscape", that in itself boasts Montana's

economy considerably.

And why are the Elkhorn Mtns not protected in the HLCNF plan? The historic remoteress of the Elkhorns' 70,000-acre wild core does need protection for reasons already mentioned.

If the Forest Service is looking for protecting forests from beetle infestation, present logging practices, use of soil destructive and forest masking feller bunchers, plus huge waste piles are certainly not the ways to solve that problem. Removing the sick infested trees manually (yes, like in the old days) or with horses would be a ^{much} more appropriate solution to that dilemma, as I have observed in the last thirty years.

I thus hereby encourage you to consider the richness of our Montana wildlands, and be very more generous in your protection of wilderness so as to hand a wealthy and more intact patrimony to future generations, and for our present well being and quality of life, beauty, peace, health of Montanans and visitors alike.

Sincerely, Jacqueline S. Mercier