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Comments: Custer Gallatin Plan

Regarding the Custer Gallatin National Forest Plan, I write in support of Alternative D with AT LEAST 230,000 acres of wilderness. The fact is that I would prefer an improved Alternative D, one that integrates climate change and watershed protection data based on the best available science.

As nature writer Todd Wilkinson noted, "The Gallatin Mountains, stretching between Yellowstone and Bozeman, are wilder than most national parks in the Lower 48 and renowned for their wildlife, yet they lack the landscape protection that other parts at the core of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem enjoy." That is from the attached article "Big Guns Want 230,000 Acres of the Gallatins Near Yellowstone Protected As Wilderness," Mountain Journal, May 14, 2019, <https://mountainjournal.org/gallatin-wilderness-debate-goes-national-with-prominent-people-weighing-in?fbclid=IwAR3RS0RtdWHRUsX7EZPs1gCkRuMaZbEhsh8B7ZrDYxWc2Pr8jJXs58j9Eul/>.

In supporting 230,000 acres of wilderness, I am aware that the area has been compromised, compromised, compromised into this small size. We should fight for what is left of our public wilderness, and not mechanized travel (bike or motor vehicle) or commercialized it out of existence.

When I say small size, that's by the standard of Montana where the Wilks brothers have over 350,000 acres, the Galt family over 240,000 acres, Stan Kroenke more than 225,000 acres, Robert Earl Holding more than 210,000 acres, and Coffee family more than 210,000 acres. I think that a public wilderness the size of large privately owned ranch lands is not excessive! And, as of 2016, the Plum Creek Timber company owned over 765,000 acres in Montana. Private property ownership data is from the attached article "Who Owns Montana? Top 10 Landowners," Great Falls Tribune, June 21, 2016, <https://www.greatfalls Tribune.com/story/money/2016/06/21/who-owns-montana-top-10-landowners/86179936/>

Wildlife biologist Frank Lance Craighead expressed very well the values of the wilderness in his 2015 report on "Wilderness, Wildlife, and Ecological Values of the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area," copy attached (also available to download from http://www.craigheadresearch.org/uploads/7/6/9/0/7690832/hpbh_wsa_report.pdf). Craighead highlighted the importance of this habitat for bighorn sheep, mountain goat, elk, grizzly bear, wolverine, pika, and cutthroat trout. This wildlife belongs in Montana! Historically, culturally, economically, these species belong in Montana. Let's protect their habitat from mountain bikes, motor vehicles, airstrips, and commercial development.

By the way, wild bison belong on this land too. Their omission should be corrected on the ground and in the law. Bison, rather than cattle, should be grazing in the wilderness of the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

Montana is big enough for private property and public property, for ranches and for wilderness, for cattle and for bison, each in its place.

We need legal protection for the wilderness that still exists in the Custer Gallatin National Forest - legal protection for now and for the future of the wilderness.

Respectfully,
Anne Millbrooke

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