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Comments: I commend the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan Assessment Report and associated documents for their thoroughness and attention to science. I would like to respond to the assessment with a focus on two areas with which I am most familiar: the Beartooth Mountains near Red Lodge and the Pryor Mountains.

* Climate Change: I am extremely glad to see the USFS focus on climate refugia, and I hope that there will be a firm commitment to preserve high-altitude areas for such climate-threatened animals as pika, wolverine, and lynx. I do find it interesting that discussions about providing corridors for wildlife passage and about the intricacies of genotype response to climate change are not deemed important enough to analyze at some length in the summary document. Also, emerging research suggesting that the use of beaver activity to conserve and enhance water resources in a changing climate should receive more emphasis.

* Sixth Extinction: I would be pleased to see more emphasis on the broad view of animal and plant extinction in the Anthropocene. The Custer Gallatin NF could very well provide a world-class model for wildlife management. As, for example, the Pryor Mountain botanical inventory is truly impressive, that small mountain range's importance for biological diversity is truly staggering and cannot be overemphasized. Similarly, the arrival of white-nosed syndrome in bats needs to be more proactively prepared for, hopefully in thoughtful collaboration with spelunking groups. White bark pine conservation needs more emphasis as well.

* Carbon Storage: The case could be made that carbon storage by forests and grasslands is mankind's top priority use for mountain and high steppe areas. There should be much, much more emphasis on timber management as a way to enhance this important service. The connection between carbon storage, sustainable forestry, recreation, and mineral/energy extraction should be made explicit. Local residents may benefit more from preservation of resources than from their exploitation; surely an economic study of such a holistic approach could be added to the draft assessment.

* Preservation: I applaud the assessment of proposed wilderness areas. I can speak personally to the outstanding scenic and natural historical characteristics of the Line Creek Plateau and Mystic Lake area. The Dry Head in the Pryors should indeed be noted in the National Register of Historic Places. And the Stillwater River is definitely a suitable candidate for Wild and Scenic River status.

* Social issues: As per your map of poverty levels in the inhabited areas surrounding the Custer Gallatin, I would like to see a more imaginative approach offered concerning how the USFS can partner with the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations to enhance educational and economic opportunities for youth and others. Citizen-science projects could definitely benefit from such a collaboration.

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard.

Sincerely,

Cara Chamberlain