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Comments: Dear Supervisor Erickson and the CGNF Forest Plan Revision Team

My comment on the Custer Gallatin National Forest is in regards to bison management. First off, based on best available science provided in the summary itself, I conclude that bison who migrate into CGNF should be considered a, [ldquo]species of conservation concern[rdquo] rather than simply a [ldquo]species of interest.[rdquo]

The summary states on page 46 and 47 that bison are absent from most areas they have been historically abundant inside the national forest. It is stated on page 56 that expanded habitat is being considered. Can that point be elaborated? In regards to this management plan, what specifically does that mean and when can we expect to see it?

In regards to the best available science stated in the Terrestrial Wildlife Report, it is stated that, [ldquo]all known transmissions in the Greater Yellowstone area have been traced to elk and not bison[rdquo] and that [ldquo]bull bison pose almost no risk of transmission.[rdquo] Based on this, there is no reason to continue such a needless slaughter of this creature as they pose no actual threat to cattle. To allow hunting in such excessive numbers is worthless and detrimental to the ecosystem. In addition, bison should be encouraged to roam an increased territory inside the National Forest.

Bison are keystone species to the ecosystem. When allowed to roam, they shape help to increase diversity of the grassland ecosystem and the species that inhabit such by dispersing grass and forb seeds. Their urine and feces increase the nitrogen levels ultimately making the landscape a more healthy place. Bison also help to reduce excess fuel on grounds in areas they graze. This could be used as a strategy for prevention of wildfire. As stated in the Terrestrial Wildlife Report, this has all been documented in the Lamar Valley where bison are allowed to roam as they please.

Furthermore, I think it[rsquo]s vitally important to include the tribes perspective on this situation. Based on the lack of sufficient information in the summary document, I do not believe the tribes in this area have been adequately consulted. I would like to see that happen before the final draft comes out.

Basically I think it's time Custer Gallatin National Forest rethink its strategy in regards for dealing with bison. Based on best available science and that we now know brucellosis is not a threat to cattle anymore, I think the management strategy is outdated. Stated again, elk are more than likely the transmitters of the disease, not bison; the forest has the capacity to accommodate more bison than currently allowed; bison help increase

biodiversity and overall health of the land; bison could also be used to help prevent wildfire. Brucellosis is not a threat. Please update your plan.

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