

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/10/2017 7:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you

As conservationists and frequent non-motorized users of CGNF, we thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Assessment of Existing Conditions and draft Preliminary Need to Change reports. We appreciate your hard work and public involvement in this process.

We would like to share with you our thoughts as you finalize these documents:

-We urge the CGNF to change its approach to managing recommended wilderness and stop allowing non-conforming uses (such as mountain biking and motorized activities). Allowing these kinds of uses in recommended wilderness compromises an area's wilderness characteristics and creates conflict among user groups.

-The draft Assessment of Existing Conditions acknowledges that land swaps on the east side of the Gallatin Range consolidated public lands within the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area (HPBH WSA). The Forest Service acknowledges that the previous checkerboard situation was [largely responsible] for the Forest Service not recommending HPBH WSA as wilderness in the 1987 plan. Now that the public land is largely consolidated within the HPBH WSA, we urge the Forest Service to change the management status of this landscape.

-The Assessment of Current Conditions emphasizes the importance of identifying landscapes that are culturally significant to Native American tribes. The draft [Areas of Tribal Importance] report also specifies a need to identify traditional locations that may affect management direction. In areas that have not adequately been surveyed or not been subject to consultation with tribal leadership, we strongly recommended the Forest Service manage these areas to preserve potential culturally significant sites until adequate surveying and consultation take place.

We greatly value our wild public lands and waters and want to see them managed for the health of the land and waters and the native wildlife that depends upon effective management. We appreciate that your job is a difficult one, balancing people using our lands with the health of the lands under your management. We urge you to look to the future as you continue this process, considering challenging issues like climate change. We believe that our federal public lands belong to all Americans, and that while local input is important, it must not be allowed to drive your process.

Thank you for your hard work. We appreciate our federal land managers. We look forward to participating as forest planning moves forward.

Gail and John Richardson

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