

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

First name: Eileen

Last name: Hennessy

Organization:

Title:

Comments: January 5, 2016

Mary Erickson, Forest Supervisor

Custer Gallatin National Forest

P.O. Box 130

10 East Babcock Ave.

Bozeman, MT 59771

EMAIL: cgplanrevision@fs.fed.us

Subject: Request for Extension of Public Comment Deadline on Custer Gallatin Forest Plan

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to submit my comments on the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan, which is being revised for the first time in over thirty years.

As myriad changes have occurred on the National Forest in all that time, it is of paramount importance that sufficient time be given to the public to offer relevant input in the planning process.

If the deadline for submitting comments is not extended, members of the public who would have otherwise wished to comment, may not be able to contribute their input due to other engagements during the Christmas holiday period that may keep them from participating in a meaningful way, not to mention the likelihood of the Custer Gallatin National Forest Planning Revision Team being equally unavailable at this time. Seeming to rush into such an important public comment period during a time when many have prior commitments due to family obligations may give the impression that the public's involvement is irrelevant and not truly needed or

wanted.

Public participation is a substantive and procedural principal in the National Forest System Land Management Planning rule designed to help guide development of a Forest Plan in a manner that meets all legal requirements the U.S. Congress intended.

Barring an extension of the January 6, 2017 public comment deadline to allow for more in-depth feedback at a later time, I request that, for the time being, you consider these important facts:

The Custer Gallatin identifies wild bison as a [ldquo]Species of Interest[rdquo], not a species of conservation concern. This meaningless designation is not defined in the Forest Planning rule and carries little weight. The Forest Planning rule requires the Custer Gallatin to document "in the report how the best available information was used to inform the assessment.[rdquo] 36 C.F.R [sect] 219.6.

With less than 5000 genetically pure wild bison remaining in and around the Yellowstone National Park area couples with the perpetual persecution and slaughter of the species due to hunting and intolerance by gross mismanagement and pandering to special interests -- namely livestock ranchers -- a more appropriate designation for these rapidly vanishing animals would be a [ldquo]Species of Concern[rdquo] which, according to the Forest Planning rule, is defined as [ldquo]a species, other than federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area and for which the regional forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the

If any other native species were reduced to such low levels as wild bison currently find themselves, every effort would be made to attain protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). At the very least, placement of wild bison on the list of potential [ldquo]Species of Conservation Concern[rdquo] is most definitely in order. It would be highly appropriate for the Custer Gallatin National Forest to reassess and reevaluate the best available science to ensure native wild buffalo are placed on the list for consideration as a species worth conserving. Apparently, many others agree with me on this point.

This is not just my personal opinion but that of countless Americans including conservation experts.

Just this past year, the U.S. Congress passed the National Bison Legacy Act, designating buffalo as the national mammal. Therefore, it is only fitting that, due to their new official status, these majestic and awe-inspiring living national treasures be included in the revision of the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan, yet the Custer Gallatin's draft assessment fails to identify wild bison as a potential Species of Conservation Concern. How can this be?

In fact, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has listed Wild Bison as [ldquo]Near Threatened[rdquo].

Additionally, the Montana Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has listed Wild Bison as a [ldquo]Species of Concern[rdquo], a designation which denotes a native Montana species considered to be [lsquo]at risk[rsquo] due to declining population trends, threats to their habitat and or restricted distribution.

Moreover, scientists deem the last remaining genetically pure wild buffalo in and around the Yellowstone area to be ecologically extinct in their original range as they now occupy less than 1% of their original habitat.

With such overwhelming agreement by experts that Yellowstone[rsquo]s wild bison are in danger, there is little doubt that this unique, irreplaceable keystone species must be protected for future generations.

As an American citizen, I consider wild buffalo an important part of our national heritage as well as that of our children and the generations to come. Therefore, we must preserve and protect these iconic animals to ensure their future survival. Not so long ago, America[rsquo]s wild buffalo barely escaped oblivion. Sadly, these sacred animals continue to be harassed and killed by federal and state government agencies at the behest of special interests.

To stop this deadly trend, wild buffalo must be allowed to reestablish themselves on their historic range in sustainable populations as their presence is essential for a healthy, balanced ecosystem that benefits the land and other native wildlife. The American people and tourists will also benefit from the privilege of viewing these magnificent beings in their natural habitat.

Wild bison must be given priority on public lands and be allowed to exist for their own sake in self-regulating herds. America[rsquo]s national mammal deserves no less.

Thank you for your serious consideration of my comments on this most important issue and I request that I be added to the mailing list and kept informed throughout the public process.

Sincerely,

Eileen Hennessy

39 Berwick St.

Melrose, MA 02176