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Comments: Good evening, Ms. Erickson,

Happy New Year! Thank you for your public services and for taking the time to read my letter.

I have had the pleasure of traveling to your great state 5 times in my life, for both pleasure, work, and to help protect the native wildlife. While I love my home state of Texas very much, I would venture to say that you Montanians are doubly blessed with natural beauty and wildlife.

With that in mind, I write to you today in support of Buffalo Field Campaign's evaluation of the Custer Gallatin's Draft Assessment, and agree there is a need to change the Forest Plan to identify wild buffalo as a Species of Conservation Concern and Focal Species.

The buffalo are a symbol of our national and natural heritage. They deserve our protection and respect. Wild buffalo are a keystone species, and are vital ecological engineers that shape grassland diversity and provide habitat for many plant and animal species. There is substantial concern among the public about the viability and future of wild buffalo in the Yellowstone ecosystem. Habitat on our National Forests is critical to ensuring the persistence of this beloved migratory species.

The most viable, current scientific information and public concern for wild buffalo support changing the Forest Plan to list wild buffalo as a Species of Conservation Concern and Focal Species on the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

While I understand that there are many competing interests and considerations in making this type of decision. I hope that you will put the natural interests of such a critical forest and species front of mind.

Respectfully,

Melissa Jones