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First name: Michael

Last name: McLaughlin

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Include Bison Migration, Grizzly and Wolf Protection in Forest Management Plan Revision

Dear Supervisor Erickson

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Custer-Gallatin National Forest Plan Revision.

I am a student of ecology and population biology with previous education and experience in behavioral science. I am also a visitor to the National Forests, Fromm Arizona to Washington, Idaho, and Montana. Because I am strongly aware of wildlife behavior and conflicts with private National Forest users, I often visit the Yellowstone area and surrounding NF's.

America's National Forests suffer from the failure to return important interactive species to these last vital places available ; the forests suffer from the lack of resilience of fully-occupied ecosystems, with absence of the most important few species contributing most to the empty forests and vulnerability to system collapse.

Please use the best available science to ensure a place and protection for seasonal protection for Bison, Grizzly, and Wolf genetic diversity in America's National Forests.

Yellowstone National Park to the south, is presently an isolated refuge for these three species, separated from important source populations by agricultural and excessive public-hunting-as-management death traps.

Habitat in America's National Forests is increasingly vitally necessary to support viable populations and genetic diversity of migratory Bison, Griz and the isolated Wolves of the Yellowstone ecosystem outside the small National Park island.

Biologists view bison as a keystone grassland species whose presence on the land enhances animal and plant diversity.

I have walked in area forests noting that these forests are also important habitat for Bison.

In Hebgen Basin, bison seek out fire burned lodgepole pine forest and help restore fire-dependent habitats. Wolf and Grizzly will always help to keep them moving, interactive and enriching soils and plant variety.

Bison are quite mobile on a diurnal basis, not browsing on needed riparian vegetation, and thus do not contribute to erosion.

Such native species assist broad-scale riparian recovery.

Grizzly and wolf prey sufficiently on bison to keep management economically cheap, IF they, too, are allowed sanctuary though policy.

Migratory bison, Wolves, and other large species are indicators of steam, wetland, forest and grassland recovery, biodiversity, and help system retention of water, With a full complement, beaver can return and add to fire safety and wetland return.

Bison also historically moved just the right amount to restore grassland and diminish fire vulnerability. Since the initial eradication attempts over 145 years ago they have not been allowed their strong interaction and part in diverse ecosystem.

Please vastly improve the long-term habitat plan by including these three keystone wildlife species of Western National Forest ecosystems.

The National Forest Management Act requires the Custer-Gallatin National Forest to "provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives." 16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(B).

Because the prairie dog species have also been wrongly targeted by private interests, this group of species, too, needs protection, recovery, and where necessary reintroduction. Prairie dogs have been shown to help raise groundwater levels and aquifers.

Cattlegrazing seems inimical to the return of bison, beaver, wetlands, wolves, the isolated grizzly bears and therefore the fire safety of our National Forests. Instead, policy needs updating to reflect scientific understanding, to enrich our public lands.

National Forests are under increasing climate stress, and a robust protection and presence of original species will be found to help prevent extreme loss to wild ecosystems.

Bison and grizzly presence indicate whether key conditions of forested west are declining or improving based on the natural distribution and migrations of native keystone species.

Please act strongly in favor of, and mandate the protected presence of, these species in our National Forests. Thank you for your consideration. Please keep me posted as this process moves forward.

Michael McLaughlin
PO Box 3286
Eureka, CA 95502