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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Provisions for Buffalo in the Custer-Gallatin National Forest

Ms. Erickson,

I implore you make provisions for the wild buffalo who make the wildlife the Custer-Gallatin National Forest. The old plan used for 29 years makes no mention of buffalo. This is wrong and I hope you will include these animals in the updated plan, as they are an integral part of the landscape and health of the forest.

I ask you include the following:

- \* Use the best available science to ensure a place for migratory buffalo on America's National Forests.
- \* Adopt standards to manage habitat on America's National Forests to support viable populations and genetic diversity of migratory buffalo.
- \* Assess local, traditional, and scientific knowledge of how migratory buffalo use America's National Forests. Biologists view buffalo as a keystone grassland species whose presence on the land enhances animal and plant diversity. In Hebgen Basin, buffalo seek out fire burned lodgepole pine forest and help restore fire-dependent habitats. Buffalo don't linger near water sources, making a positive contribution to watershed recovery.
- \* Assess using migratory buffalo as an indicator species for grassland recovery, animal and plant diversity, and watershed restoration.
- \* Update your long-term habitat plan to include a keystone wildlife species that has made their presence known on America's National Forests: America's last wild buffalo.
- \* 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).
- \* As a driver of biological diversity, the health of grasslands and watersheds, the buffalo are well suited to indicate whether key conditions on the forest are declining or improving based on the natural distribution and migrations of this native keystone species.
- \* It's up to you to see that migratory buffalo have a place and a secure future on America's National Forests.

Thank you for your time and please ensure there is representation for buffalo!

Best Regards,

Donna S. Hull

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