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Comments: Custer-Gallatin National Forest Assessment

Hello Ms. Erickson!

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to comment on an assessment that includes the area around Yellowstone National Park.

In an effort to preserve as much natural environment as possible for the future, migratory Bison must be allowed to use the Custer-Gallatin National Forest land.

It is ridiculous to keep a naturally migratory animal within the National Park Boundaries. If necessary, special areas should be offered and allowed for the use of migratory species. Yellowstone National Park is not a zoo. The animals that inhabit the GYE should not be forced into an unnatural, static existence. No restrictions are placed on elk which is the animal that is transmitting the Brucellosis virus throughout the GYE, not the Bison. The Bison are vilified for this virus but it really comes down to sharing the land with cattle, a non-native species. Custer-Gallatin National Forest should not be told what to do in regards to the stewardship of the land and the animals it protects. That also includes Bison.

As a naturally migratory animal, they do not overgraze or endanger watersheds. They in fact help with the natural grasses and bio-diversity of flora and the wildlife that depend on that diversity.

Humans have impacted and adversely effected the eco-systems they have inhabited and it is very important to preserve and/or re-introduce the natural environment as much as possible.

Tourism dollars are spent on seeing and experiencing. If there is nothing there, what is the point of going? To look at trees? We have trees in the east. Lakes? We have lakes also. Mountains? Got them. Maybe not as majestic but awesome enough. To go a region and only be able to imagine "what it could have been like if only"? We also go to see wildlife that is no longer living on this side of the continent. In our past visits to WY, MT, ID and other Western States, we have seen elk, grizzly, black bear, moose, eagles, wolves and a score of others that no longer roam here. Memories we cherish.

The Bison named as the National Mammal was long overdue. The sustainable viability of westward expansion would not have taken place if the bison were not there. They, along with many other animals, were eradicated for many reasons which I will not go into here. You cannot do the math with only part of the equation is what my daughter's teacher once said. To put it another way, you should keep as much of the eco-system you are trying to preserve. If they it there, use it. In fact it must be part of the equation. If you deny parts, you are condemning it and in doing so you are doing it wrong. End of story.

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). That includes the Bison.

Please preserve the Bison's natural habitat. Provide migratory corridors and sanctuaries for them. Do not let big business or over-development do to your areas what it has done in ours. Keep it wild. Let them roam.

Thank you for your attention.

Jennifer Bollen
Buchanan, Georgia USA

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