

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/5/2018 3:57:01 PM

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Comments: To those making important decisions regarding the future of the Pryor Mountains:

1) I have lived in Billings for most of my adult life, although I've also considered Missoula and Colstrip my home for a number of years as well. For most of that time I have been a hiker. There is no doubt that the beauty of our ranges here in Montana is spectacular, and because I live close to the Beartooth range I have spent many wonderful hours basking in the solitude and beauty they offer me. But they are currently not the only place, and not even the first place, I would chose to spend a day exploring. We have a treasure here in this state, that many people have never experienced, and that treasure is the Pryor Mountains. Although it is true that each mountain range has it's own unique landscape, flora and fauna, the Pryor Mountains are in a category all their own. There is no other place one could hike amid abundant junipers and sagebrush and become almost intoxicated with the scents they produce. These are old mountains, with a rich native history as well, and their treasures are worth preserving.

* Therefore, I ask the Forest Service to designate four Recommended Wilderness Areas in the Pryors - NOT "Backcountry Areas."

2) It's true that people experience a natural landscape in many different ways, and it's important for all of us to recognize and appreciate those differences. That's why it's perplexing to me that the Forest Service has not proposed any new quiet trails in the Pryors going forward. Given that currently there is one designated motor-free trail that's 1 1/2 miles long, and 124 miles of motorized access, the current balance seems tilted toward motorized access.

* That's why I'm asking the Forest Service to clearly state a "Desired Future Condition" for the Pryors which gives balanced opportunities for motor-free and motorized access and travel.

3) As I stated earlier, the Pryor Mountains are unique. Because some of the ecological communities in this place occur no where else in the CGNF, and in some cases the WORLD, it's imperative that we take the preservation of this place seriously. A generic management directive does not suffice.

* That's why I'm asking the Forest Service to include Pryors-specific management directives for the preservation of the ecological integrity and diversity of the Pryors.

4) The question could be asked, "Who is in charge of managing the Pryors?" The answer is confusing, at best. Three federal agencies currently manage them, with arbitrary boundaries, management policies, and goals. Unfortunately, the flora and fauna of the Pryors can not distinguish between boundary lines and policies. Wouldn't it make more sense if the vision for the whole of the Pryors was consistent and clear?

* That's why I'm asking the Forest Service to make its desired future conditions and management policies for the Pryors consistent with those of the BLM and the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area.

In closing, I would like to reiterate how precious this area is to our region. It is truly a place worth visiting, and definitely one that merits returning to again and again. As many trails as I have walked, none can compare with the magic and beauty found in my own back yard in this place called the Pryors. Please give it the attention and consideration it deserves. It is a place our children, and their children, should be given from us, so they can wander and linger within its magic.

