

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/4/2019 4:18:03 PM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: To Whom it may Concern,

It is with great sadness that I am once again submitting a letter to the US Forest Service to request that that a draft Forest Plan be revised to allow for continued mountain bike access to areas that have historically been utilized by mountain bikes. Over the past several years I have seen Region 1 continue to exclude mountain bikes from trails that I have ridden for the past 25 years by creating defacto wilderness areas in the form of Recommended Wilderness Areas. There are other ways to manage the Forest.

In particular, this letter is to provide comments regarding the draft Custer Gallatin National Forest Plan. The draft Plan includes alternatives that would create new Recommended Wilderness Areas and remove bicycle access to hundreds of miles of trails across the forest. In my opinion, Alternative E would be the best management practice for the CFNFP. This approach is also broadly supported by the Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement.

similar to other recreation groups, mountain bikers cherish the wild land and solitude offered from backcountry experience. I heard this morning on National Pubic Radio that hikers and horseman want certain areas closed to mountain bikers so that they have a place to find solitude. That comment made me laugh. Apparently we all want the same thing; however, hikers and horseman already have areas that keep out everyone but a select few. Mountain bikers do not degrade the rugged, remote, natural feel of wilderness areas.

One area in particular that is cherished by mountain bikers is the Lionhead area. Since 2006 Mountain Bikers have invested thousands of hours maintaining the trails in this areas. There is no reason to close this area to mountain bikers. There are other alternative to managing this area than a RWA. It is sad to me that the vast majority of people advocating for exclusion of bicycles from trails rarely get a few miles from a trailhead. They do not know that on an all day mountain bike ride that explores the beautiful areas of the Gallatin National Forest they will rarely see another person, that Mountain Bikers are maintaining the trails they want to themselves.

I urge the Forest to explore other alternatives for managing RWA besides closing access to mountain bicycles, i.e. Backcountry Area. A designation that is already utilized in other national forest plans.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bret George