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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Re: Comment on Custer Gallatin Revised Draft Forest Plan

To whom it may concern:

At the onset, let me say I appreciate this opportunity to comment. I have been a resident of Montana since 1980. I am familiar with the Custer Gallatin having hiked and back packed in various parts of the Forest as well as Yellowstone National Park which it adjoins. The Custer- Gallatin determines the long term ecological health and viability of Yellowstone National Park and its unique wildlife.

Accordingly I support Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan. In particular all 230,000 acres of the Gallatin including the entire Hyalite-Buffalo Horn- Porcupine Wilderness Study Area must be protected as Wilderness in the near future. This area provides essential wildlife corridors and a wildlife refuge which is critical to a functioning ecosystem in the Park. Additionally its wilderness values far exceed its use as an industrial playgrounds for mechanized sports that can be conducted on existing ski areas and non-wilderness forests service land. In particular, fragmentation of this important ecological area will have an extremely detrimental effect on all wildlife including grizzly bears and wolverines. These animals in particular will increasingly become an "island" population since fragmentation will severely impact connectivity to other populations.

There are modifications to the Alternative D that need to be made to address public access in the Crazy Mountains. All the roadless areas in the Crazy Mountains need to be included in Alternative D in order to preserve and enhance public by keeping current trail heads and trails as well allowing for future trails and trail heads.

Also having hiked the Beaten Path with my family several years ago, and done many day hikes around Cooke City, I am concerned with the reports of over use of the area by through hikers. Accordingly I, urge you to consider a lottery permit system for the Beaten Path. Over the years I have seen the beneficial effect of a lottery for limited backcountry permits in Glacier National Park. I favor such a system. Although it has meant several years between hikes, I have witnessed first-hand how it preserves the integrity of the natural resources of the Park's interior. I urge you to consider a similar system for the Beaten Path.