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First name: Sallee

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear US Forest Service,

I am writing to you to express my support for protecting the wild in the Custer Gallatin National Forest. Since moving to Montana in 1971, my husband and I have extensively backpacked and hiked through these forests - especially loved are the wildernesses of the Gallatin, Crazy, and Absaroka-Beartooth mountains, though all places that still have wilderness values are treasured and must be protected. We strongly believe that recommended wilderness areas should continue to be treated just like designated wilderness with only foot and horse travel allowed - pristine wildlife habitat exists in so few places in this world, and once gone, are gone FOREVER. It is my hope that one day Congress will consider these areas for permanent wilderness designation.

We have grandchildren that we are just introducing to the wild roadless areas of these forests, and we share with them the priceless values of peace, solitude, beauty, the natural world, and unaltered wildlife habitat. I cannot express the feelings of rare privilege we have had when we have observed wild animals such as wolverine, grizzly and black bear, pine marten, wolf, elk, bighorn sheep, beaver, otter, mountain goat, and other animals, small and large, that are only seen by most in zoos. This land belongs to more than us, our children and grandchildren; it, and its inhabitants belong to all citizens of this country. Wilderness is not increasing and must remain as part of our heritage for all future generations. The Custer-Gallatin National Forest has some of the wildest lands in the lower 48 states, and animals that have been here before Lewis and Clark - it must be protected as a wild place!

Humankind is only one species among many - we share this planet and its resources, and need to be good stewards of other species. Unfortunately, we continue to exploit and recreate to the extent that wildlife is forced into small islands of habitat surrounded by the growing crush of humanity. The reality of this "crush" might be the implementation of the Gallatin Forest Partnership agreement, because it is a compromise between the desire for more wilderness designation and the pressing desires of human recreation.

We have had the precious opportunity to be in the Tom Miner Basin, camp at Ramshorn Lake, explore the Hellroaring plateau, swim in Thunder Lake in the Crazy mountains, and revel in the glory of Cowboy Heaven. As the Custer - Gallatin Forest Plan Revision nears completion, I hope that you will consider the fate of many vulnerable wildlife species and the health of the eco-system by protecting the wilderness character of the forest for all time.