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Comments: Comment draft plan - CGNF

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Forest Plan Revision Team

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Dear Revision Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on The Custer Gallatin National Forest's Draft Management Plan. Specifically, I am commenting on the Absaroka Beartooth and Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin geographic areas. As a girl growing up in the already crowded San Francisco Bay Area, I reveled in my time vacationing with my family in the Custer Gallatin National Forest each summer. Beyond the solace of open space that brought out the very best in every member of our family, we came to appreciate that these areas provide wildlife habitat, headwater streams, and diverse recreational opportunities within what is now known as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

It is critical that the new management plan get ahead of the threats of population growth and booming development in close proximity by cementing our recreation footprint in place, protecting wildlife populations, and implementing strategies to better understand and adapt to a changing climate.

I support the full incorporation of the Gallatin Forest Partnership (GFP) Agreement into the plan for the Gallatin and Madison ranges. However, while alternative C incorporates parts of that agreement, it does not accurately reflect the GFP's recommendations for wildlife protections or recreation monitoring. Looking outside the GFP agreement, it is also critical that we protect and enhance other areas, including wildlife linkage areas and existing wilderness, and include enforceable climate change components.

I recommend the following revisions to the draft plan:

Ensure wildlife connectivity in portions of the Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin Geographic Area that aren't otherwise protected by the grizzly bear recovery zone. The Madisons are critical for wildlife movement to areas beyond the National Forest.

Habitat protections for grizzly bears must extend wherever population health is monitored and into areas important for connectivity.

Grizzlies must also be designated as a Species of Conservation Concern.

Plan components must support a year-round self-sustaining bison population within tolerance areas on National Forest System lands. West Pine and Porcupine Buffalo Horn backcountry areas must mirror Cabin Creek Wildlife Management Area in wildlife protection and wild character plan components.

Recreational use must be monitored more extensively by area, and standards must ensure that increasing recreation is balanced with wildlife protection.

Manage existing wilderness areas in line with the 2020 Vision.

Given the uncertainties of climate change, monitoring questions for vegetation, invasive species, aquatic resources, fire, and more must explicitly assess the effects of climate change and guide adaptive management as required by the 2012 planning rule (219.12(a)(5)(vi)).

In addition to the 30 rivers recommended as eligible for Wild and Scenic designation, include Taylor Creek, Hellroaring Creek, and the South Fork of the Madison due to their outstanding wildlife values.

Thank you for your work on this important issue. I am truly grateful for your thoughtful approach to this place that is so very special to me.

Respectfully,

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