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First name: Elizabeth

Last name: Stone

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Mary Erickson,,

I am writing in regard to the CGFS Plan Revision. I am grateful for the opportunity to express my opinion. I have lived in the Gallatin, Shields, and Paradise Valleys since 1982. My family moved here from Colorado. So my comments are based on my personal experiences and years of observing the changes in SouthWestern Montana, as well as in Colorado, as we returned to visit every year. I have enjoyed public lands in a multi use fashion, including ATV riding, hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, skiing, and mountain biking. It is my hope that you will opt for Alternative D, including at LEAST 230,000 acres of designated Wilderness.

One of my favorite areas is the Porcupine Buffalo Horn. I enjoy its pristine, roadless nature, and the peace and quiet it provides, in addition to great wildlife viewing. It reminds me of Yellowstone Park, without having to go all the way to the Park. However, with the population explosion in the surrounding areas and the lack of Wilderness Designation it has changed. Two years ago I hiked up Tom Miner basin and got to the divide ridge, soaking up the beauty, and great expanse in all directions. Suddenly, the peace was disturbed as two motorbikes just below us zoomed up the top of porcupine. They were repeatedly revving their motors, I assumed in an effort to scale a steep section. It was so annoying and upsetting, and I couldn't help but think it strange that motorized travel is allowed in such excellent wildlife habitat and undisturbed area. It just doesn't make sense. In full disclosure, I used to mountain bike up Porcupine. However, as I matured out of my self-centered 20's and 30's, I realized that those rides were great not because I was on a bike, but because of the natural beauty of the area, and so few people went there. Not any more, more people go there and many use mechanized means, including electric mountain bikes. I simply believe this area should be protected with full Wilderness Designation. There are plenty of other places that already have roads and trails where I can mountain bike happily. Windy Pass is another place dear to my heart, where many mountain ranges converge into one of the most amazing stretches of wild land I have ever experienced. Moreover, it is the location for the ashes of several of my family members. Lastly, I believe the Crazy Mountains also deserve Wilderness Designation due to their wild and pristine nature. I have seen more elk hunting in the Crazies than other places. The Crazies are the only place I have seen a wolverine track. And, the 5 day trek I took over the many ridges of those mountains was stupendous, and one of the highlights of my life. They are very steep and so not friendly for bikes or motorized travel. It makes sense to preserve them for foot travel only, and as an option for the communities to the North and East of Bozeman to escape the noisier and mechanized areas of the other mountains of that region.

On a separate note, I think of the traffic in the Gallatin Canyon and if Bozeman continues to grow as predicted, it makes sense to funnel some of the recreationalists to the North, East and West by creating more Wilderness. In Colorado, a person can be in bumper to bumper traffic for a long time just to get to a trail, in part due to the trail being multi use. I think the trails in the Bangtails, Goose Creek, Trail Creek, Deep Creek, West Pine and Willow Creek, just to name a few, have already been logged and/or have roads and trails that are easily accessible for mechanized and motorized travel. When wanting to hike, I struggle to think of a trail close to Bozeman where I will not encounter mountain or motorbikers, which can be dangerous. On the other hand, when wanting to mountain bike, there are so many options within less than a 30 minute drive.

In addition to my personal experiences and preferences, I believe we as a society need to protect the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn area as it is an integral part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, an extremely rare and unique expanse of a nearly intact ecosystem. While the Forest Service Plan has been largely a local discussion, I would imagine many American citizens would want to preserve such an amazing place, including the wildlife corridors it provides and its proximity to Yellowstone Park. Our country simply does not have many such ecosystems. In fact, the GYE is a unique region on our planet given its abundance and diversity of native

animals and plants. I can't think of another place in the lower 48 where a person can travel for days without encountering civilization. It deserves to be protected.

Moreover, there is evidence that human activity of the mechanized sort is harmful to the watershed and wildlife:

Rocky Mountain Research Station, Ft. Collins. 2010. On-road and off-road Access May Increase Erosion and Runoff From Forests and Rangelands.

Vandeman, M.J., 2004. The Impacts of Mountain Biking on Wildlife and People.

KTVZ.com, 2019. Federal Judge Rejects Ochoco NF Off-road Trails Plan.

I concur with these studies after 37 years of exploring the CGNF, I see more animals and less land/trail and waterway damage in the areas not open to mechanized and motorized travel. These areas simply LOOK better, healthier and more intact, beside offering peace and quiet.

Lastly, I believe the National Forest Management Act of 1976 directs the Forest Service to value and strive to maintain ecosystem health as one of its main goals. This Act recognizes the significance and sensitivity of these ecosystems and commands that we mitigate disturbance. Adhering to the directives of the NFMA seems extremely important. Moreover, the MWSA instructed the Forest Service "maintain presently existing wilderness character." MWSA, 91 Stat. 1243 (1977) at 3(a). And then in 1988 the Montana Natural Resources Protection and Utilization Act flew through both the House and the Senate by overwhelming majorities only to sit on President Reagan's desk until the Congressional session was officially over resulting in a pocket veto. It would seem that many legal actions suggest that we preserve more land as Wilderness, only to get thwarted by red tape, special interest and politics. I think the writing has been on the wall since 1964, and again in 1967 and 1979 with the two Roadless Area Review and Examination studies recommending millions of acres Wilderness. If the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn WSA and the Crazy Mountains are not deserving of this protection especially in a time of increased human activity then I don't what to think.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Liz Muhs Stone