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First name: Sarah

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Forest Supervisor Bill Avey:

I write to object to the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest 2020 Land Management Plan.

In particular, I first want to object to the failure to protect the Badger-Two Medicine area from mechanized recreational use. The Blackfeet consider this area sacred and we should honor their wish to designate the Badger-Two Med as unsuitable for mechanized recreational use. Due to the closure of GNP on the East Side, I have spent much more time than usual in the Badger. Although I miss access to GNP, I have been astounded at how wild, remote, and unspoiled the Badger is. It is in stark contrast to those areas of the L&C NF that have ATVs and vehicle tracks all over. The Badger should be free from vehicles both to honor the Blackfeet Nation's wishes and to preserve the extraordinary environment.

Second, I object to the exclusion of the Middle Fork Judith as recommended Wilderness. During the revision process, hundreds of people took the time to favorably comment in support of protecting this important Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The FS should adopt the boundaries in Alternative D, which includes 62,452 acres of RW and does not impact existing motorized use. The MF Judith is an important resource to protect from motorized vehicle traffic.

Similarly, I object to the boundaries for the recommended Wilderness in the Draft Record of Decision (DROD) in the Big Snowies WSA. It's wonderful that much of the WSA has been recommended as Wilderness, but the proposed western boundary is not sufficient. The Neil Creek Trail (#654), Blake Creek Trail (#655), and Timber Creek trail (#676) should be included in RW. The Crystal Cascades Trail (#445 and #445a) should also be included in the RW and the boundary aligned with the existing snowmobile area. The trail from Crystal Lake to the Ice Caves (#493) should be included in RW. The trail from Crystal Lake to West Peak and west should be included in the Grandview Recreation Area (#403, #490). This would provide an opportunity for a good ride for mountain bikers if trail maintenance is complete on trail #490, west of West Peak, and on trail #483 (Dry Pole Creek)

Finally, I object to the failure to protect the wild heart of the Elkhorns. This is crucial habitat and a connectivity corridor for key species. As the areas around central Montana are continually developed we must ensure our wildlife is protected. The DROD does not protect the wild heart of the Elkhorns, fails to keep the Elkhorns free of oil and gas leasing, and guts the foundational WMU principle of putting wildlife before development.

Instead, I urge (1) the adoption of Alt C (with boundaries of DEIS) to keep the remote "primitive" core of the Elkhorns wild and free of wheels and motors. Under this solution, 29% of the Elkhorns would remain wild and managed for traditional travel by foot and stock, and 71% of the WMU would include trails and roads open to mountain bike travel. Alt C (of the DEIS) best preserves the wilderness character of this largest roadless area on the old Helena National Forest.

(2) The insertion of a standard stating: "The Elkhorns WMU is unsuitable for oil and gas leasing and exploration."

(3) The restoration of the wildlife compatibility requirement by amending the wildlife guideline to change the language as follows (changes highlighted with \*\*).

"Maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of wildlife habitats should be the priority for resource management in the Elkhorns Wildlife Management Unit. Management activities and permitted uses are \*compatible with wildlife values and habitats?."

Thank you for offering a time for further public comment and objection. I am deeply appreciative of the magnificent resource (virtually in my backyard) that is the L&C National Forest. Just this week, I hiked

beyond Buffalo Lakes down to the Two Med river and then today climbed Flat Top and part of the ridgeline toward Elk Calf in the Skyland area. I thank the men and women of the Forest Service who protect and serve this beautiful area. I think we owe it to our children and their children to ensure it will still be available for them.