

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/10/2020 4:18:39 PM

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Comments: RE: Custer Gallatin Forest Plan Revision #50185

Follow-up Comments/Objection on recommendations for the Crazy Mountains

Dear Custer-Gallatin Forest:

Thank you for your work on a challenging process, with many competing interests that it has to be very difficult to try and balance. I appreciate your efforts and many of the conservation recommendations embodied in the Final Plan. However, I have some follow-up comments regarding the proposed management plan for the Crazy Mountains, particularly the south portion.

The proposed wilderness designation for a small block in the south Crazies is welcomed, but is pretty much a token designation (not even including Crazy Pk, which I realize is privately-held and can't be designated at this time), and I'm not sure how much value that is to the future effort. There is another somewhat monolithic block of public land in the 'center-south' (Cave and Cascade Lakes drainages) and one roughly along the north side of Sweetgrass Creek, in the 'northern-south'. These two 'blocks' should also be designated as wilderness, which would provide a superior foundation for future consolidation of the south-Crazies as a protected wildlife, watershed and recreational asset area. The 'center-south' area would extend to the public boundary, while the 'northern-south' would include the roadless public portion south of the Shields watershed. The revision plan should also include a stated goal of pursuing eventual acquisition of the non-public, 'checkerboard' inholdings in the south Crazies for incorporation into the foundational designations noted above.

The Sweetgrass Creek drainage is one of the larger watersheds in the south Crazies and holistic protection of this important resource is appropriate. The Cave/Cascade Lake basins are traditional, and important, habitat for the mountain goat population in the Crazies, due to the lesser amount of human travel and trails in those areas - wilderness designation here would provide more-secure habitat for their continued well-being.

Any designated BCA areas in the Crazies should be non-motorized and non-mechanized. The Gallatin Valley has seen an explosion of mechanized recreation in the past few years, and the impact is readily noticeable - popular area trails that used to offer wildlife habitat (and viewing opportunities) are now generally devoid of wildlife sightings, and have presumably become lower-quality support habitat as well.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.