

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/4/2020 5:44:27 PM

First name: Rita

Last name: Harding

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I would like to thank the Forest Service for all of the work that has gone into the Forest Plan. I was especially excited to see that the Forest Plan includes the following:

Recommended wilderness in the Crazy Mountains and recognition of the area as important to the Crow Tribe. Expansion of recommended wilderness in Lost Water Canyon and the addition of Bear Canyon in the Pryor Mountains. Maintaining the primitive character and management of the roadless areas in the Ashland Ranger District (Tongue River Breaks, King Mountain, and Cook Mountain). Ensuring recommended wilderness will be managed without non-conforming uses. Incorporating many elements of the Gallatin Forest Partnership, including recommended wilderness for the Gallatin Range..

Statement of issues and/or parts of the plan revision to which the objection applies:

My objections apply to the following issues in the Custer Gallatin Land Management Plan:

Cowboy Heaven (MG-CHBCA)

Crazy Mountains Backcountry Area (BC-CMBCA)

South Crazy Mountain Recommended Wilderness

Chalk Buttes Backcountry Area (SX-CBBCA)

Pryor Mountains BCAs

Elimination of recommended Wilderness, including Lionhead

Hyalite area (MG-HREA)

Concise statements explaining the objection and suggestions on how the proposed plan should be improved:

Cowboy Heaven (MG-CHBCA):

I strongly object to Cowboy Heaven not being recommended for Wilderness. We live in a modern world with many wonderful industries and convenience. But we are rapidly losing our pristine wild undeveloped landscapes with all their unique flora and fauna that I have explored and enjoyed during my lifetime. Remember once these unique wild areas are destroyed, they are gone forever. Cowboy Haven is one of these rare locations. Please protect it for generations to come! Please incorporate this important element of the Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement by recommending Cowboy Heaven for wilderness in the final plan.

Crazy Mountains:

The Crazy Mountains are a unique island mountain range in Montana. In addition to a unique wild undeveloped landscape, the Crazy Mountains have a tremendous spiritual significance to the Crow Tribe who explored and prayed in them during early history before white settlers arrived. We need to respect the Crow Tribe heritage, culture, and government. The proposed Backcountry Area should be modified to prohibit mechanized use. There are no existing mountain bike trails in this area and leaving the door open for the trails to become designated down the road only invites conflict where there doesn't need to be any. I respect all people and all types of recreation. That, however, does not mean that all activities work everywhere. Please limit east side of Crazies to hikers and horsemen so the quiet environment can be enjoyed and so injuries do not happen due to rapidly approaching vehicles and bikes do not cause accidents and create injury to others! I feel very strongly that the area should include a suitability component similar to the Bad Canyon backcountry area: The backcountry area is not suitable for mechanized transport, except use of game carts.

I would also like to see the Crazies BCA expanded east to include sections 4, 22, 26, and 34. If the proposed East Crazy Mountains land swap goes through, this will be a contiguous area and should be managed consistently with the adjacent backcountry area.

I was extremely pleased to see the Crazies receive some recommended wilderness protection. While I wish it was much bigger, I understand that there are many interests Supervisor Erickson is balancing. However, I ask that the South Crazy Mountains recommended wilderness be expanded east. That would help to make a larger contiguous recommended wilderness area.

Chalk Buttes:

The Chalk Buttes are another important place where I would like to see improved language in the backcountry area plan components. I have often visited Chalk Buttes. I love the environment but totally recognize it is not a landscape conducive to or safe for mountain bikers. Although some rare extremely good bikers might "try" this as a thrill, the majority of bikers and potential rescue staff would be placed at great risk. Similar to the Crazy Mountains, there are no existing designated mountain bike trails here. The Backcountry area should include the following suitability component in order to protect the current wild character of the area: The backcountry area is not suitable for mechanized transport, except use of game carts.

Pryor Mountains:

While I appreciate that recommended wilderness was expanded in Alternative F, I would like to see Punch Bowl and Big Pryor also recommended for wilderness. I have explored the Pryors Mountains in depth. They are a unique mountain range in eastern Montana with fauna and flora not seen in other places. It is very hard to divide up this smaller mountain range into different protection levels when it is remote and rugged. For these reasons, I request that the Big Pryor and Punch Bowl areas be recommended for wilderness in the final plan.

Elimination of recommended Wilderness:

I was extremely disappointed that the Forest Service decided to eliminate 26,135 acres that had been previously recommended in the 1986 and 1987 plans respectively. I am particularly disappointed to see that the Lionhead recommended wilderness has been eliminated. I have travelled the world to see natural wonders. I totally understand the world has a tremendous growing population that wants and needs many things. One of these crucial irreplaceable "things" is truly wilderness. It offers flora, fauna, history, culture, life that cannot be replaced. Remember once these things are developed, they are gone forever!. Please consider reincorporating the Lionhead, Burnt Mountain, Republic, Mystic, and Line Creek Plateau as recommended wilderness in the new plan. It is important that we continue to protect these areas as recommended wilderness because the wilderness character has not changed there since they were recommended in the old plans.

Hyalite:

I encourage the Forest Service to fully implement the Gallatin Forest Partnership agreement, including key elements of the agreement that would protect Hyalite. Currently the plan doesn't offer any protection for the South Cottonwood Area or Mount Blackmore. I have hiked in this area several times and have been impressed with all the other hikers that are out enjoying the rare environment. It is physically and spiritually invigorating. Logging and roads would destroy this. Our world has other modern products that are often used in place of timber. So why destroy this precious environment for short term logging?. It is rare pristine environment! It is important that these areas receive protection as the Gallatin Forest Partnership recommends.

In addition, I would like to see the Hyalite Recreation Emphasis area include the standard that was in Alternative C in the DEIS: Construction of new motorized trails shall not be allowed. It is very important that we ensure that the motorized footprint does not continue to expand because of the impact it has on the opportunity for high quality recreation for other users. There is plenty of motorized opportunity in Hyalite as is. Please include this important standard to ensure that Hyalite continues to be a place where users of all types can have high quality recreation experiences.

THANK YOU - I appreciate you have a challenging and demanding job!

Statement demonstrating the link between objection and prior formal comments:

I submitted a comment on the draft plan and draft EIS last spring. While I appreciate that many things I supported are included in the final plan, my objections speak to those priorities from my prior comments that were not included. Thank you for considering these objections that I believe could significantly improve the final plan.