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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:

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. I would like to see Cowboy Heaven protected as Recommended Wilderness because it is a corridor that connects Spanish Peaks and Bear Trap Canyon units of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and is already right next door to the Recommended Wilderness in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. This area remains pretty dang wild and untrammled and I'd like to keep it that way. Follow the recommendation of the Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement, and mountain biking can still take place while protecting the wild heart of this area. Please incorporate this important element of the Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement by recommending Cowboy Heaven for wilderness in the final plan.

Crazy Mountains:

Please expand the Recommended Wilderness in the Crazy Mountains. This is basically an island on the plains and Recommended Wilderness will better protect the unique and critical habitat for flora and fauna in the Crazy Mountains and the historic and sacred relationship with the Crow people. Allowing bicycles into the east side of the Crazies--where they have not been access before--will negatively impact the ecology of the area. 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. Horses and bikes don't mix very well. Bicycles cause far greater impacts on the terrain, especially erosion and transport of invasive species. 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. There are no trails and the landscape here is rough for bicycles. Please reconsider the BCA designation and preserve the unique ecosystems and quiet recreation that is particular to this area. 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. The Pryors have so many different faces--each area is special and different. That is why it was so amazing to have six different Recommended Wilderness areas. They were each different and each equally important areas ecologically and spiritually. It is a travesty that five of the six Recommended Wilderness areas were eliminated. The Forest Service should keep these pre-existing areas of Recommended Wilderness since nothing has changed to make them ineligible for Wilderness status and protections. 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. The elimination of these areas seems quite arbitrary since the conditions haven't changed which made them eligible in the first place. Protect these pockets of wild ecology for future generations.. 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. Bozeman's water comes from Hyalite. I go there to hike in the winter and summer. Protect the water quality, prevent habitat fragmentation caused by logging roads, and preserve the popular recreation activities by including South Cottonwood and Mt. Blackmore in protections for the Hyalite area. 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.

I like to camp, hike, take nature photos, and enjoy quite relaxation and would encourage the forest service to preserve more wild landscapes. Increase the amount of Recommended Wilderness and decrease the amount of Backcountry Areas please.

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.