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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:

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. Cowboy Heaven should be protected as wilderness. This area, sandwiched as it is, between a designated wilderness and a recommended wilderness can help provide a much larger, undisturbed habitat for plants and animals. Places like that can not be easily recreated. It is best to save it while we can, and now is the perfect time to do that. 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 have lots of wilderness value to them and everyone one of those areas should be treated as wilderness. Once other uses get into those areas, there is no turning back, wilderness is lost. Wilderness values can not easily be recreated. Every last chance we get to protect every last wild area will make a difference in the future. We may not be able to see what the future holds, but these special spots need to be saved. 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. Mountain biking should not be allowed in the east side of the Crazies. Newer research is showing that wildlife is much more disturbed by mountain bikers than it is from horses, mules and people on feet. 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. The Chalk Buttes area near Ekalaka should not be open to mountain biking. There are no trails in the area now and opening up new trail systems will change the character of that area. Trail-less areas, outside of near vertical, rock terrain, is now a rarity. Keep it that way. Mountain bikers have a huge amount of areas and trail open to them now. 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 applaud the inclusion of the wilderness status for Bear and Lost Water Canyons in the Pryor Mountains, but am saddened to see that you failed to give wilderness status to the Punch Bowl and Big Pryor areas. It is essential for future generations of people, plants and animals, to save

every area that currently has wilderness characteristics. These areas can not be easily recreated. They must be protected now. 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 am deeply saddened to see that you want to remove five recommended wilderness areas, including the Lionhead area, from the forest plan. Every area that currently is recommended wilderness must be saved as such until a time that congress gives it an official wilderness designation. Once these recommended areas are removed from status, the ecosystems they hold and the view sheds they provide will be lost for ever. We can not easily recreate those things, but we can easily protect them as wilderness.. 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. Logging on federal lands is a federal giveaway. We, the people of the United States, lose money when it is done and it is not necessary. It is especially important to keep logging out of areas that are all ready being used by people for recreation like in the South Cottonwood and Mt Blackmore areas in Bozeman. In addition, these areas do not need more road added to them. 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 again for working so hard on this management plan.

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.