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Comments: 'm writing as an interested party to submit an objection to the Custer Gallatin NF Management Plan.

I submitted 6 (six) substantive letters of objection, including cites, June 2019.

I am interested in participating in any resolution discussions between those objecting and USFS representative reviewing received objections.

Topics focused on the need for more Wilderness to ensure habitat options with climate change, protect migration corridors, to preserve inventoried roadless lands as a buffer against rapid population growth and to save wilderness for its own intrinsic value.

Looking at the Management Plan, Appendix B, the Vegetation and Timber Analysis Process, SIMPPLLE, copyright 2011, was utilized to assess appropriate usage with projected climate change. There is more recent information available, put together by Dr. Whitlock and fellow scientists who devised the SIMPPLLE assessment. The Montana Climate Assessment was written in 2017. The information found therein should be the basis for the Custer Gallatin NF Management Plan decisions. I cannot think of a finer or more horrific example of the climate-based consequences to our forests than the fires currently burning in CA and OR. Responsible planning requires the use of use of best science available for forest management. Logging, and the accompanying roadbuilding, diminishes if not outright destroys habitat. Clearcutting produces grasses that spread fire faster and burn hotter than forests.

How the Forest Service came up with Plan F is a stunner to me. While I support maximum wilderness, the Gallatin Forest Partnership (a de facto special interest group) had a plan submitted, diminishing protected lands, adding industrial recreation, and Plan F dropped the protection bar even lower.

While science and common sense support protection of roadless public lands, with over 800,000 acres inventoried, Plan F stingily recommended a mere 125,000 acres as Recommended Wilderness along with downgrading WSA acreage in the most notable Wilderness Study Area in Montana, the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn, to a 'backcountry' area. The weakening of protection for this area which borders Yellowstone National Park and supports its unique array of wildlife panders to industrial recreationists and the growing population of seasonal inhabitants at Big Sky. Additional backcountry areas that are heartily deserving of additional habitat protection from mountain bikers and dirt bikers include Cowboy Heaven in the Madison Range and the Lionhead area.

Recreation Emphasis Areas are complete capitulation to industry concerns. The fragile lands in the Gallatin Range, which provide a buffer and migration corridor for wildlife in Yellowstone National Park. A buffer will become increasingly important as population increases and temperatures rise. To have any chance at maintaining genetic diversity and keep the wildlife species this ecosystem is known for, there must be a way for connectivity to take place.

In addition, Bison deserve management as bison, and not as cattle in the Custer Gallatin National Forest as they are managed in Yellowstone National Park. Grizzlies and wolves are integral to the ecosystem and populations need to be not only maintained but the public educated in the value of these species. The 'Species of Conservation Concern' list is too limited. It needs to include bison, grizzlies, bighorn sheep, wolverine and lynx.

It's the USFS' job to protect wildlands. Wildlife habitat in Plan F is taking a back seat to logging and mechanized recreation. Climate change is essentially ignored. Population growth as a danger to the ecosystem and wildlife habitat is not addressed.

Congress designates both Wilderness Study Areas and Wilderness per the Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964. The 1977 Montana Wilderness Study Area Act requires that WSA lands be managed for eventual inclusion as Wilderness. The Custer Gallatin NF has repeatedly ignored this law. This disregard continues and must be addressed.

Steps to correct the inadequacies of Plan F include (and are not limited to) adoption of Wilderness acreages in Plan D. The Management Plan needs to state why areas have been excluded from Wilderness status.

I heartily concur with Roger Breeding's objection submission (9/7/2020).

I look forward to receiving a response to these objections. Thank you for the opportunity to submit them.

Linda Healow