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Comments: District Ranger Rob Davies,

Thank you for allowing public comments during the process of this project. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this issue since the proposed project area is critically important to wildlife connectivity from Glacier National Park to the Bob Marshall Wilderness and threatens the wilderness character to proposed wilderness areas.

Terrestrial generalists such as grizzly bears, mountain lions, and elk depend on the area between the Bob and GNP to stay as intact as possible for their habitat. All three of the species can be classified as an "umbrella species", a species whose proper long term management would likely help ensure the persistence of many other species which also occurs in the ecosystem. Maintaining areas of connectivity or designating them as a protected area, aides in the improvement of biological diversity. A number of connectivity models have addressed corridors where movement is reduced, consequently resulting in terrestrial species moving across land as an energetic expense and added risk of mortality. Continuing to find opportunities to benefit connectivity allows healthier ecosystems. These three large terrestrial forest generalists were chosen based on their economic importance (in the state of Montana), varying diets, similarities in stressors, and similar habitat preferences.

The spatial and temporal migrations of mountain lions highly influence the population of mountain lions in a given ecosystem. A typical male mountain lion territory covers more than 100 square miles, females cover 50 square miles. In the Bob Marshall there are about 2-4 mountain lions for every 63 miles, in conjunction with a healthy elk and deer habitat. This average can jump up to 6 mountain lions in the same 63 miles scope depending on the subadult cat population. This occurs when habitat fragmentation disallows adolescent pumas to find immediate unoccupied territory. With fewer opportunities to migrate from adult mountain lions, population numbers increase and result in increased management. The species requires large territorial areas because they have low population densities, therefore undisturbed wilderness is an ideal habitat. New road construction in this area will continue to fragment the habitat and cause long-term sedimentation and habitat degradation.

Forest stands of varying ages, briar thickness, and thick brush provide elk with security cover. This security cover provides protection from predators (such as the mountain lion) and enables individuals to safely rest periodically throughout the day. Elk depend on security cover most during calf-rearing and hunting seasons. Adequate cover for an 8 ft (male) to 4 ft (female), provides 90 percent of a standing vegetation at a distance of 75 yards or less . Expanses of security cover should be large enough to hide a number of elk at one time.

Woody cover that is at least 800 ft wide can suffice as hiding cover as well. Lack of roads and human trails are key elements in effective security cover, also noting the necessity of forest edge proximity to provide sufficient cover. Roads have been viewed as a major factor influencing the distribution of elk across the landscape. By evaluating habitat effectiveness (HE), for elk, during the initial forest planning stages habitat effective models are able to determine the effects of single management activities. There are continued concerns with low calf : cow and bull: cow ratios in certain hunting districts that are lower than the listed in 2010-2013 Forest Plan population objectives. In conjunction with incorporating evaluations in early forest planning, the Montana Action Plan Secretarial Order 3362, "Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration," seeks to enforce recommendations to improve elk migration. These recommendations include prioritizing evaluations of the effectiveness of habitat treatments in sagebrush communities, and identifying needs related to developing a greater understanding of locations used as winter range corridors.

Grizzly bears are a sensitive and regional indicator of fragmentation. By identifying their requirement of large,

relatively undisturbed habitat, solving for the habitat requirements of grizzlies can assist in defining core protected areas, and smaller protected areas to serve as nodes in a networked regional landscape habitat system. Through examining the grizzly bears' needs in a seasonal scope, it is important to note their winter denning needs and requirements. Male and female grizzlies have similar habitat requirements when selecting dens, and females do not avoid sites associated with a greater probability of male encounter. Dissimilar to most hibernation cycles, grizzly bears are aroused easily while in their dens. Disturbances can result in fitness costs if bears become active during this period. Grizzly bears do seek high elevations away from wetlands dry conifer stands with abundant a high-quality source of food. During a focus study grizzly bears selected areas of low-road density and dense conifer associated with little high-quality autumn food. Slope angles had the most influence on den selection followed by percent autumn food, road densities, percent wetland, and percent spring food. Within these stands they are selected for sites with low road densities and dense conifers associated. The recommendation for the grizzly bear is to limit human disturbance including open roads, within core Grizzly bear conservation areas with high suitable den habitat.

Conserving habitat for the regional movements for the three example umbrella species would provide protection for other mammals moving through the landscape. Protecting adequate corridors for these three species; a large carnivore, ungulate and omnivore provide a protective umbrella for a number of other smaller inhabitants of the region.

Given the importance of this area within the Yukon to Yellowstone corridor, I would like to recommend a public meeting to further listen to the importance and impact of the work that will potentially undergo in the Granite Moccasin proposed project area. As you move forward with the project take these umbrella species under consideration, as they are important both to the wilderness character of the area and to the economic benefit to the state of Montana. This project should also consider its impact on the outstanding and remarkable values which would be affected within the Middle Fork of the Flathead. I would like to further inquire regarding the measures that will be included to ensure these values are protected and stay intact.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I invite you to contact me to discuss this topic further.