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Comments:

While I don't live in the immediate vicinity of the Custer Galatin NF, I travel around Montana frequently, and I've ridden bikes in the CGNF a number of times.

As a mountain biker, I support preserving bike access throughout the forest. Particularly, I support allowing mountain bike use within recommended wilderness where appropriate. This does not mean that bikes should be allowed on every trail within RW designated areas, but it does mean that bikes should be allowed on trails within that management designation absent a clear, scientifically grounded reason to exclude them from a particular trail. In other words, any exclusion of bikes should be done on a case by case basis, and there should not be a forest plan level exclusion of all bike access within recommended wilderness. Such a broad exclusion is at odds with the intent of the recommended wilderness designation, and it does not comport with the management framework in place for national forests in other regions.

Similarly, I support continued bike access in the Lionhead, as described in management alternative E. The opportunities for remote, rugged mountain bike rides is increasingly limited in Montana. Preserving bike access in the Lionhead would keep an excellent opportunity for that sort of experience, and mountain bikers in the area have put in considerable effort in maintaining those trails over the years. In an era where the Forest Service trail maintenance budget is minuscule, it makes little sense to cut out a user group that has demonstrated its willingness to help maintain trails. Especially when there is scant scientific basis to support banning that user group. While there are certainly users that strongly advocate against bike access because they prefer a forest experience that does not include bikes, there are millions and millions of acres of designated Wilderness around the state where those users can happily travel without interruption from mountain bikers. Excluding bikes from the Lionhead amounts to a nominal gain for those users but a substantial loss for mountain bikers.

Finally, I support the positions of the Southwest Montana Mountain Bike Alliance as well as Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement. Those groups have done great work at arriving at reasonable compromises, and their recommendations should be followed.

Thank you for your consideration,
Noah Bodman