

Date submitted (Mountain Standard Time): 6/5/2019 4:26:30 PM

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Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan revision. For background, I am a hydrogeologist and soil scientist and worked on the Gallatin Forest in the 1970s. As a long-time resident of Bozeman, I feel compelled to preserve as much of the forest as possible for future generations. I did have some issues with the all encompassing nature of the plan. The Custer and Gallatin have two very different user profiles, so I feel that I need to qualify that my comments predominantly address the Absaroka-Beartooth Mountain GA; Bridger, Bangtail and Crazy Mountain GA; and the Madison, Henry's Lake, and Gallatin GA. I do not really understand the issues in the Pryor Mountains or other areas listed above and do not feel qualified to comment.

With this in mind, I am compelled to choose Alternative D (for the GAs defined above), with the following exceptions: 1) The Stillwater Complex Land Allocation should be included. 2) Inclusion of rental of existing cabins within the wilderness areas would be maintained. 3) Management of the forest to minimize fires be continued.

I choose the most restrictive alternative as a stop gap measure to preserve unaltered areas into the future for wildlife habitat, ecosystem diversity, and preservation of the areas for future generations (who will determine their worth as wild lands long after we are gone). Once an area is developed, there is no going back. As a long time forest user, I am continually shocked at the number of people in the recreations areas (e.g., Hyalite) and trails. I live by Sypes Canyon Trailhead and there are cars 1/4 mile down from the parking areas along the road on any given weekend. I feel like we are loving the forest to death and we need to have some areas with restrictions. While including the existing cabins is usually not part of wilderness, I would note that many wild areas in Alaska have small cabins that do not take away from the wilderness character of the area.

Approval of the additional wilderness acres in the GAs listed above will add 630,384 acres to Montana's 3,443,038 existing acres. That still remains a relatively low percentage of Montana's land base of 94,109,038 acres - 4.3% versus 3.7% currently. This would still rank us at about 6th in the nation regarding wilderness %.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.