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Comments:

Alternative D is the "Gold Standard" and was developed to address comments and themes of emphasizing natural processes and restoration. Some of the main points for Alternative D are summarized in the list below with details in the text/paragraphs that follow the list below:

1. Wilderness:

- a. Gallatin Range comprises a very important piece of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem which is the largest essentially intact functioning ecosystem in the temperate zones of the world.
- b. Need to safeguard key wildlife habitat areas and secure a 40-mile long unbroken habitat link for grizzly bears, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, deer, pronghorn, and bison.
- c. There is 230,000 of roadless lands that meet the criteria of wilderness character. Anything less would be short changing future generations of the spectacular wildlands for wildlife.
- d. There is 711,000 of potential wilderness lands that has been set aside in Alternative D. Some of these lands will be in the Gallatins, Pryors, and other current wilderness areas.

2. Wildlife:

- a. Proclaimed by prominent scientist that the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area (HPH WSA) is renowned for its wildlife. Species such as elk, grizzly and black bear, wolverine, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, deer, pronghorn, and bison and so many other species that inhabit the slopes of the Gallatin Range.
- b. The Gallatin Range serves as a wildlife corridor and connectivity route for a variety of species which should include the I-90 corridor between Bozeman and Livingston as a permeable barrier to wildlife. There needs to be among the Forest Service the acknowledgement of a greater number of species of conservation concern.

3. Watershed/Climate Change:

1. Wildlife species which require large landscapes need to be able to move in order to fight ill effects of climate change, hotter drier weather patterns, more chances for fire.
2. Wilderness and National Parks are best to sustain an ecosystem when the effects of climate change are factored in.

Alternative D is the draft forest plan that will offer the best protection for the Gallatin Range and other critical wildlife habitat across the Custer Gallatin Forest. Alternative D creates 39 recommended wilderness areas totaling over 711,000 acres across the forest. First, the original Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area (HPBH WSA); an area composing of the 155,000 acres is protected in Alternative D. In fact, Alternative D comes the closest to protecting all the roadless lands within the Gallatin Range by proposing 230,000 acres of wilderness. The remaining acres of designated wilderness include the Lionhead, Crazy Mountains, the Bridger Range, Cowboys Heaven, Deer Creeks, Lime Creek Plateau, Emigrant Peak, West Fork Rock Creek, Red Lodge Creek, Pryor Mountains and Tongue River Breaks.

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) is universally recognized as the best intact ecosystem in the lower 48, and is widely recognized as one of the last remaining and best functioning temperate ecosystems in the world. The Buffalo Horn-Porcupine drainages just north of Yellowstone National Park contain critical grizzly bear habitat, elk winter range, and a vital elk migration corridor, and are one of the best places for recolonization by wild bison. We also need to think about the connectivity potential that the Gallatins and other forests within the CGNF play in providing a critical pathway for species of the GYE to make contact of those Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem.

It should be noted that Alternatives B and C propose legitimizing decades of illegal mountain biking and ORV use in the HPBH WSA. The S. 393 Wilderness Study Area SEC. 3 (a) states the wilderness study areas designated by this "ACT" shall, until Congress determines otherwise, be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture so as to maintain their presently existing (i.e. 1977 and prior years) wilderness character and potential for inclusion in the "National Wilderness Prevention System"

The Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) is one of the most spectacular wildlands in the Nation and Montana specifically. These wildlands are home to some of the best wildlife habitat in the country, and is habitat to grizzly bear, lynx, wolf, elk, moose, mountain goat, and bighorn sheep, as well as the source of waters that support genetically pure Yellowstone and West Slope cutthroat trout.

The Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) is not the nation's woodbox, nor should it be the nation's outdoor gymnasium. What the CGNF does best is provide for high-quality Wildlands, Wildlife and Watershed ecosystem. Wildlands protection is critical to the quality of life of the region's communities, and essential to the outdoor economy that draws visitors, as well as contributing to the well-being of residents providing clean water, important fish habitat, critical wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty. In addition, some wildlands are critical corridors for the movement of wildlife between other protected landscapes. For example, the Bridger Range can serve as a corridor connecting the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to other lands further north. With that in mind, the CGNF proposed wilderness recommendations in its draft Forest Plan are inadequate. Below are suggested comments that will improve the CGNF wilderness recommendation.