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Comments:

TO: Mary Erickson, Custer/Gallatin National Forest Supervisor

FROM: Craig E. Hash

Red Lodge, MT.

Dear Ms, Erickson,

This letter is to comment on my thoughts on the DRAFT REVISED FOREST PLAN for the Custer/Gallatin National Forest. I am commenting strictly as a Montana citizen who grew up next to the Beartooth and Pryor Mountains, and still participate in hunting, fishing and hiking in these areas every year since my family and I currently live in Red Lodge MT.

I have to admit that I do not consider myself an expert on this proposed plan. After spending 5-6 hours skimming over it, I agree that it seems reasonable to confirm future mining and oil exploration should be prevented on forest lands in the future. Of course there is always going to be situations in the future that may require revisions to these plans. Never the less I do have to speak out on two issues that I feel need to be expressed due to the fact I can see large tracts of lands off limit to logging and motor vehicle usage under this proposal in the future.

My overall concern is taking extreme action to quickly and designating forest land totally off limits to all logging and motorized vehicles usage. These two issues are connected in that roads for vehicles mostly come from logging trails used to log the timber. After the logging is complete the trails should be considered for motorized use to access to more remote parts of the forest. Any person who has lived in Montana in the last 20 years know that some forest logging needs to be done to prevent extremely large fires like we have experienced since the mid 80's. Along with this, access to remote parts of the forest for motorized vehicles mostly come from old logging trails that can offer easier access to the more remote parts of the forest for hiking and hunting. I just want to remind people that older citizens, wounded veterans and young kids may be more apt to enjoy more areas of our forest's. Trail heads that have vehicle access can provide more opportunity for these citizens. We all understand that OHV(4wheelers) have been a problem in the past but more education and enforcement I feel can curb some of the more serious offenders.

My comments to you have been sparked by a front page news article in the local news paper, the Carbon county News. In this article the Forest Service was requesting comments for this future plan. Unfortunately this article became a media outlet for an advocacy group called the MWA. The Montana Wilderness Association I feel is trying to pursue the Forest Service to designate thousands of acres in the local forest into Wilderness Areas and Primitive designations which would drastically restrict access to our Public Lands. I am just a local sportsman taking the time to add my two cents worth. I'm not a \$4.6 billion operating advocacy group of 5500 members trying to make our public lands off limits to everyone other than hikers. Hopefully myself and the roughly 1,000,000 citizens of the great state of Montana send you their views also on this proposed plan for our local public lands.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,
Craig E. Hash
Red Lodge, MT.