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Comments:

Encompassing more than three million acres, the "Custer Gallatin National Forest", in Montana is a stronghold for iconic wildlife species like grizzly bears, gray wolves, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and, moose, which are very sensitive to human disturbance, and, development, and, are teetering on the brink!

As a gateway to "Yellowstone National Park", the "Absaroka-Bear tooth Wilderness" is home to Montana's tallest peak, the steep, rocky mass known as "Granite Peak", which tops out at 12,799 feet! The 155,000-acre "Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area" (HPBH WSA) in the northern "Gallatin Range" adjacent to "Yellowstone National Park" is one of the crown jewels of the "Northern Rockies" and, a stronghold for threatened wildlife! Meanwhile, the "Lee Metcalf Wilderness" is distributed across the "Madison Range" in southwest Montana! Elsewhere on the "Custer Gallatin National Forest", remote buttes, and, bluffs, stretch across southeastern Montana all the way to northwestern South Dakota!

As part of the "Forest Plan" revision process, the "Gallatin Range"-stretching from Bozeman to "Yellowstone National Park"-including the "HPBH WSA", is particularly at risk of being sacrificed as a motorized and mechanized recreational playground for the exploding populations of "Big Sky" and, Bozeman!

Wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the draft forest plan, with the suggested improvements outlined below, would offer the best protection for the "Gallatin Range" and, other critical wildlife habitat across the "Custer Gallatin National Forest"!

"Alternative D" creates 39 "Recommended Wilderness" areas totaling over 711,000 acres, including the "Gallatin Range", "Lionhead", "Crazy Mountains", "Bridger Range", "Cowboys Heaven", "Deer Creeks", "Line Creek Plateau", "Emigrant Peak", "West Fork Rock Creek", "Red Lodge Creek", "Pryor Mountains", and, "Tongue River Breaks"!

A public comment period is now open until June 6 for we, the public, to weigh in on the future of wild lands in the "Custer Gallatin National Forest"!

We are including the following points regarding the Gallatin Range in our comment letter:

OUR FAMILY STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS IN "ALTERNATIVE D" OF THE "REVISED DRAFT" IN THE "ALTERNATIVE D" FOREST PLAN; HOWEVER, THEY MUST BE IMPROVED BY ADDING THE ENTIRE 230,000 WILD, ROADLESS, ACRES OF THE "GALLATIN RANGE" AS "RECOMMEND WILDERNESS" IN THE FINAL FOREST PLAN! THE FOLLOWING THREE POINTS ALSO EXPAND ON THE IMPORTANCE FOR THE WILD "GALLATIN RANGE"!

The plan should prohibit all motorized, and, mechanized uses, and, any other activities not consistent with wilderness protection, in the Recommended Wilderness areas so as to preserve their wilderness qualities until Congress acts on the wilderness recommendations.

The draft plan has little direction for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The current wilderness management plans allows destructively large groups of up to 25 head of stock (horses and mules) and 15 people in most areas. Research shows that impacts increase significantly when group-sizes

exceed eight head of stock and 12 people. The Forest Service should reduce group size limits accordingly so as to protect all Wildernesses on the forest from harm! Further, the forest plan should put an end to ecologically destructive fish stocking in naturally fishless wilderness lakes, which significantly alters the areas' natural conditions.

The plan must address the issue of human and pack animal feces contamination of lakes and streams on the Beartooth Plateau in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. Eliminating fish stocking would likely go a long way toward solving this problem, but additional measures must be included if needed.

Help us protect Wilderness around the country. All first-time donat