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Comments:

I am writing to voice my support of continued management our amazing landscape and identify why this is important to me. First, I live to ski and am so thankful for all of the opportunities we have in this area. When the snow melts, I turn to hiking and biking to satisfy my mountain urges. I am worried that Recommended Wilderness Areas will take away many of the great trails I have come to love. Living in Bozeman, I frequently bike on trails in the Bridgers, but cherish the few weekends I get out for longer adventures, and none have provided experiences quite like the Lionhead area. It would be a real shame to lose mountain bike access to this area. There is a swell of mountain bike enthusiasm in southwest Montana right now, which has also created many new riders that are willing and able to help care for our lands. I truly believe that most mountain bikers will care for this land and give back in the way of trail maintenance and help keep the area clean. Many rides in the Lionhead area very physically demanding for a biker. When we are up there, we are working hard just to keep the bike moving on the trail, not wasting energy to trample vegetation and harass wildlife. I believe keeping this area and other Recommended Wilderness Areas accessible by bike is very important to our community. Not only does it keep our citizens engaged in a healthy lifestyle and connected to nature, but there is clear evidence that mountain biking is great for our local economies.

I think it is great that there are many passionate parties interested in the future of our forests and we must maintain our involvement. I support most of the goals of the Gallatin Forest Partnership and recognize the importance of working together as our population increases. We need to protect our forests, but with compromise. I agree that new trails in some areas (like Lionhead) should only be built after extensive science and public comment, but I do not see the value in shutting down mountain bike access. Let's work together to see what the new wave of mountain bikers is capable of achieving. I truly believe we can show the Forest Service and other trail users that bikers are willing to take care of this land, support it with trail clean-up and with donations. I am encouraged by the growth of SWMMBA and feel like they can be a good voice and vehicle to help keep all mountain bikers accountable (disclaimer, I am not a member, as I have not seen the value yet, but I am very encouraged by their recent involvement and positive messages about being responsible mountain bikers). I am strongly in favor of managing our forests to allow responsible mountain bike access.