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Comments:

Dear CGNF Forest Planning Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the current Forest Plan revision process. To begin, my connection to this process itself began almost 6 years ago when I joined the Gallatin Community Collaborative (GCC) whose goal was to gain consensus from an open group of individuals and stakeholders on a series of management recommendations to the Forest Service. In 2013, this preceded the formal Forest Planning process currently underway.

At the time our hope was to bring together anyone willing to collaborate in an effort to end the divisive bickering and resulting lawsuits between wilderness advocates, motorized advocates and the Forest Service. Our intention was to create a proposed recommendation to the USFS addressing future management of the HPBH WSA in particular. After 4 years, the GCC disbanded in 2017 w/out reaching a formal consensus document. Toward the end we felt we were inching closer and another collaborative grew out of the ashes to form the Gallatin Forest Partnership (GFP). One of the biggest lessons learned from the GCC was that allowing hundreds of individuals to have an equal voice, although extremely democratic, was too unwieldy and fostered digging-in of stakeholders rather than compromise. The GFP wisely brought together individuals that represented constituent groups rather than just themselves. This more effective platform has produced a consensus agreement that I wholly support. The fact that the signers of this agreement - national and local Wilderness organizations, human-powered mountain bike advocates, wildlife advocates, business owners, back country horsemen, climbers and winter sport enthusiasts - have endorsed this agreement speaks volumes to the spirit of compromise that produced it. This is not easy and has taken years to develop. Please consider it as the well crafted, negotiated document built upon collaboration that it is. It takes into account all users' concerns and values the health of the forest balanced with recreational interests.

Alternative C largely aligns with this GFP Agreement but I have some personal comments which differ in some select areas. The GFP Agreement purposely did not address certain areas and one is the Lionhead. As a well managed Recommended Wilderness Area for many years I feel mountain bikes should remain an allowed use for these reasons:

For the last 12 years, mountain bicyclists along with the Backcountry Horsemen have collaborated in clearing and maintaining these hard to reach trails. Every year in July, hundreds of downed trees blocking these trails are painstakingly removed. This work is beyond the currently funded capacity of FS staff and has been a labor of love for these volunteers without whom these trails would scarcely exist. This has fostered an ever increasing appreciation and respect of these high, wild places by young mtnbikers, mentored by their more experienced peers.

The resource impact of human-powered bicycles is quite minimal, close to but perhaps slightly more than that of hikers but considerably less than equestrians.

As a long time lover of trails - I volunteer as a Trail Ambassador for GVL & SWMMBA - I prefer to access these wild places on my bike. Mountain bikers as a whole remain an extremely committed group when it come to trail maintenance and stewardship.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Jeff Mazer