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Comments:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the draft CGNF Forest Plan. I currently serve as the Deputy Mayor of Bozeman, and these comments are my own. The City of Bozeman separately submitted comments which I fully support. I also previously served for more than ten years as the Policy Director at Headwaters Economics. The work, research, and collaboration done with my colleagues during that time heightened my appreciation of the importance of Forest Plans to nearby communities, and how the adopted Forest Plan will have a significant impact our community for decades to come.

Growing Community Necessitates Tradeoffs and Practical Solutions

In preparing my comments I reviewed the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS); and the [Idquo]Reviewer[rsquo]s Guide to Commenting[rdquo] published by CGNF. As such my comments seek to consider the long-term [Idquo]tradeoffs and benefits[rdquo] for Bozeman and the many other communities and citizens that enjoy and benefit from the CGNF.

As you are aware, this region of Montana, and of the nation, is one of the fastest growing in the country, and the challenges of managing what is already an already popular landscape will require practical, balanced solutions. Furthermore, the factors present in Bozeman and across the communities adjacent to the CGNF[mdash]the combination of good schools, low crime, natural amenities, growing airport, relatively low tax load, skilled workforce, growing university and many other reasons[mdash]mean that above average population growth likely will continue in this region for some time; and that future National Forest staff are likely to face even stronger challenges and tradeoffs.

Gallatin Forest Partnership Option

Because of this population growth and other stresses to the CGNF landscape, the status quo is not sustainable. As such I urge the Supervisor to select alternatives and options that balance the protection of the resource with the enjoyment of that resource by our citizens; both now and tomorrow. This multifaceted responsibility, I believe, is best achieved through the Gallatin Forest Partnership[rsquo]s proposal as it represents the opportunity for a lasting solution for how to manage this resource, provide for recreation and economic benefit, and then to successfully pass the resource onward for future generations to enjoy.

The Gallatin Forest Partnership[mdash]which worked with a diverse group of citizens, whether business owners, hikers (like myself), mountain bikers, or others[mdash]sought out a wide base of inputs. As such, I support both the details of that proposal, and, also important, the possibility that the Partnership[rsquo]s proposal is most likely to provide a lasting solution where everyone can [Idquo]see themselves on the landscape.[rdquo] This practicality of consideration increasingly is important because of the stresses placed on the CGNF by population, climate change, and difficult budgeting. We can, and should, seek solutions that are sustainable and most likely to provide benefits to a broad variety of perspectives for years to come.

Gallatin and Madison Ranges

This region faces the starkest challenges in terms of balancing pristine resources and amenities with a rapidly growing population and proliferation of user groups and expectations.

Home to both roadless areas and one of the most heavily used National Forest Roads in the Region, our community must partner with the Forest Service to develop and implement policies that protect the area's wildlife, drinking water, and undeveloped lands; while balancing this by maintaining existing recreation access to account with the large and growing demands that will be placed on this region. At one public meeting I heard a citizen express that she hoped both citizens and wildlife would have "room to roam."

I believe the balance contained in the Gallatin Forest Partnership proposal—expanding mountain bike trails while also creating some Wilderness—will help preserve the recreation access enjoyed today. At the same time, the proposal correctly limits more significant impacts to the landscape such as road-building, logging, mining and other similar development. As such, I believe the Gallatin Forest Partnership proposal is most likely to achieve the "room to roam" goal in a balanced way for the largest landscape adjacent to Yellowstone National Park that is not permanently protected.

Hyalite Watershed Protection and Recreation Area

As the City of Bozeman letter notes, all of the City's drinking water is impacted by the CGNF, and the Hyalite region is a primary part of our municipal watershed. As such a clearer statement or policy that ensures clean, reliable drinking water for the greater Bozeman area is essential. As such, I am concerned that "high density recreation development" in the region be kept to a minimum wherever it could harm or negatively impact the City's drinking water.

In addition, I am told that other portions of the CGNF proposed National Forest Plan have restrictions on the development of minerals and the Hyalite region should be included in such a policy.

Drinking Water and Key Linkage Areas

The City of Bozeman comments already address this in full. I support the concept of this designation to help improve wildlife habitat and migration—but that it be done in a way that protects existing City plans (to which USFS is a partner) and the need for water in the growing Gallatin Valley.