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Comments:

Custer Gallatin National Forest,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the forest revision plan. Being a Montana native and neighbor of the CGNF, I find it very important to comment on something that is so important to our county and way of life. Several of the proposed alternatives are very concerning to me as they could restrict access, have negative impacts on the local economy and create a forest that is overrun with noxious weeds, unmaintained trails and no stock allotments

First and foremost, any alternative that eliminates the Stillwater Complex would have a devastating effect on our community. The Stillwater Complex contributes over 50 % of our tax base. They employ numerous workers from our county that contribute to the economy in several different ways. Their employees are hard working people that get involved in community activities and support local groups. They are outstanding stewards of the land, they interact exceptionally well with local residents and provide financial assistance to various groups in the area.

The second concern is the weed management plan on national forest land. In looking at the alternatives provided, none of them offer any sort of effective weed management. It seems that weed management has taken a backseat to a wide variety of other concerns. My thought is, if we don't manage the weeds, the other concerns will fail. All of the alternatives are favorable to wildlife, scenery and recreation. They will all fail if we don't manage the noxious weeds on national forest land.

My third point deals with livestock allotments on national forest land. I worked for the U.S. Forest Service from 1987-1992 as a seasonal range technician. I spent countless hours working on spring developments, fencing, riparian projects and yes, weed management. One of the things I distinctly remember is a Range Management Specialist telling me how important livestock allotments were to forest and wildlife management. Has that changed over the years? I guess I'm confused.

My last point deals with the implementation of more wilderness and back country areas that are proposed in the Absaroka/Beartooth and Crazy Mountain areas. First of all, how could the U.S. Forest Service manage the various boundary issues that affect the Crazy mountains? I don't think it's possible. The checkerboarded ownership negates the possibility of having enough contiguous parcels of land to make a wilderness area effective and enforceable. The wilderness proposal in the Absaroka/Beartooth area will further restrict certain age groups from enjoying the public land. It will restrict access to foot and horse travel which is

mostly suited for younger visitors. What are the benefits of more wilderness? It seems to me that it has more of a detrimental effect in areas such as fire, weed management and access. The U.S. Forest Service has been financially strapped lately. How can they possibly maintain the numerous miles of trails without the financial support. The direct effect of this will be reduced access due to blown down on trails and trail surface degradation. As of right now, several recreational associations maintain the trails and keep them clear for forest visitors to enjoy. And to top it off, who will enforce the new changes? The forest service does not have the resources to enforce the additional proposed wilderness areas in some of the alternatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the new forest revision plan. Please take those of us who live here seriously when adopting a forest plan. We are the ones that will be directly affected by the plan you approve. Don't succumb to special interest groups that don't even know where our forest is located. Look at the form letters that have been submitted and take note of the addresses of those people that will not suffer the consequence of a bad decision.