

First, thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Custer-Gallatin Forest Plan Revision Team has done a fantastic job of getting the information out to the public, engaging at public meetings, and taking public input. You have made the public feel welcome and made it easy to engage in the planning process.

I live in Bozeman and am awed daily by the views of the Custer-Gallatin National Forest that dominate the skyline. The Spanish Peaks, Hyalites, and Bridgers are instantly familiar, but endlessly complex. We are indeed lucky to live in a place surrounded by the Custer-Gallatin.

I want to voice my support for Alternative C of the DRAFT Revised Forest Plan. I feel that it is the alternative that offers the 'greatest good to the greatest number of people' while conserving forest resources and the wide variety of recreational opportunities that we in southwest Montana enjoy because of public lands.

Specifically, I appreciate the 'close to town' dispersed recreation opportunities that are preserved in most all of the alternatives: groomed skiing on the Sourdough Trail; skiing in Hyalite and Brackett Creek; and hiking at the 'M' and other trails in the Bridger Mountains and in Hyalite Canyon. I have lived in Bozeman for 10 years, and on and off before that since 1984. Yes, we have seen recreation grow in these areas, especially the 'M' and Sourdough. I have also seen it sort itself out. For example, I hiked to the Ridge above the M in late May this year, about 7pm. The parking lot was full, as it often is, but I only saw 10 people on the way up. Once one gets above the M it is easy to enjoy solitude. Similarly, I have seen fewer people up Sourdough in the last couple of years; Sourdough is especially fun when the days get longer in February. Even during the rush, above the 2-mile marker is pretty tame. All this is to say that I don't see the need for recreation limits at this time.

I would support a recreational use fee, especially if it went back to the CGNF. I think non-hunters like myself should pay our fair share—make it easy to do that and I believe people will support a fee. This is not unlike the in-town grooming fee for skiers.

Comments on Geographic Areas

Bridger Mountains. I strongly support both the Bridger Key Linkage Area and the two Backcountry Areas proposed in Alt C. The Key Linkage area designation is supported by the connectivity modeling undertaken by the Center for Large Landscape Conservation. I think the Backcountry Area designation will maintain the current character of the Bridger Mountains as well as current recreational activities, and fit the description on page 131 of the Draft Revised Forest Plan: "Backcountry areas are generally undeveloped or lightly developed. They are either unroaded, or have few, primitive roads." I think the Bridgers are an exceptional resource and I support the direction that the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum is essentially unchanged between Alt A (current plans) and Alt C.

Concerning the **Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatins Geographic Area**, I like Alternative C for several reasons. First, I like the addition of the Gallatin Key Linkage Area (again, supported by the CLLC science). I think the combination of recommended wilderness and backcountry areas in the Hyalite, Porcupine, Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area is a pragmatic approach to protecting the character and resources of the area without seeking full Wilderness designation, which I believe will be difficult to achieve. The summer ROS dominated by primitive designation (appendix A, p. 92) is appropriate and provides for a near-full range of recreation while protecting the character, resources, and primitive experience. While

I certainly understand the many users that support Alternative D and its proposed increase in Wilderness Designation (the Gallatin Front is an incredible resource); I believe that the approach taken in Alt C will protect wilderness character, be achievable, and provide for some increased recreational opportunities. Also, though I am not a motorized user myself, I support well-defined opportunities for motorized recreation on the forest. Alternative C seems to mostly codify existing opportunities, especially around West Yellowstone. It seems appropriate that existing uses like this are allowed to continue.

Climate Change

I would like to see climate change more fully incorporated into introduction, desired conditions, goal, objectives or standards sections for specific resources (such as you have done for Watershed and Aquatic Resources). For example:

- p. 33, add a guideline for PRISK, like “Use best available science to understand the effects of climate change on whitebark pine and guide management activities where they have the best chance of success.”
- P. 49 (FIRE). Introduction. Climate change is altering the frequency, intensity, and amount of fire in the western U.S. and is increasing the length of fire season (Westerling 2016). U.S. Forest Service researchers and fire managers are working to understand how these changes might impact fire preparedness and management on the CGNF.
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Monitoring Plan

The DRAFT Revised Forest Plan contains an extremely robust monitoring plan. When I first saw it, I was concerned that it would be impossible to actually implement. Monitoring is always one of the most difficult actions to maintain.

However, taking a closer look, I understand that you have a sound, seemingly stable Data Source/Storage entity for each of the monitoring components. It is a well thought out and hopefully achievable monitoring plan for the life of the Forest Plan.

Reference

Westerling ALR. 2016 Increasing western US forest wildfire activity: sensitivity to changes in the timing of spring. Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B 371: 20150178. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2015.0178> ERRATA

Again, thanks for the opportunity to comment.