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Comments:

The Custer Gallatin National Forest is a valuable resource that I personally have enjoyed for the last 33+ years while living in the Gallatin Valley. Of prime importance to me are clean water, protection of sensitive flora and fauna, and preservation of the wild and roadless portions of the forest for future generations to enjoy. Most of my experience has been in the Gallatin and Madison Ranges so I will limit my comments to those areas although my sentiments would be applicable to other areas of the CGNF as well. I am in favor of Alternative D because it represents the most protection for the concerns mentioned previously. In particular, I feel the upper reaches(bowls) of the streams flowing in to the Gallatin need to be part of the wilderness designation. These areas are extremely important to Big Horn Sheep, mountain goats, mule deer, and grizzly bears. Mechanized use on the trail crossing from Hyalite Canyon over Divide Peak and in to Storm Castle is especially troublesome. Those two upper basins have no lakes so they receive less impact from fishermen and campers. Bighorn sheep regularly graze out across those meadows in the daylight offering hikers a chance to view an incredible species.

The trails leading to the Gallatin crest and upper basins were designed and built for foot and horse use. Many were originally wildlife trails. Mechanized use of these areas negatively impacts wildlife, water quality, and the quiet serenity that can only be found in wild places. There are thousands of acres and miles of logging roads and trails in lower elevations that are and can continue to be open to mechanized use. Reducing the human impact on steep sensitive pristine areas is what only Alternative D can do.

Moving South along the west side of the Gallatin Range, the upper reaches of South Cottonwood, Swan Creek, Moose, Portal, Porcupine and Buffalo Horn all need to be protected with wilderness designation. These meadows are the very life of the range. This is where the clean water originates, where the wildlife retreats in summer, and where mans impact on the land is still not easily found. On the East side of the range similar concerns exist. Big Creek especially is an incredible canyon that is accessed by a narrow trail leading to Windy Pass. It is one of the wildest yet easily accessible canyons in the range. It must be protected from over use.

In the Spanish Peaks I feel the entire portion of the forest lying between the wilderness boundary and Turner Enterprises should be added to the Spanish Peaks unit and connect with the Bear Trap. Leaving a narrow corridor open for mechanized use will only encourage user conflicts on a trail that currently sees very little mechanized use.

To summarize my sentiments, protecting our roadless areas should be the primary goal of any forest plan revision because once they are gone, they can never be regained. There are already thousands of miles of logging roads open to mechanized use and far too little funding to maintain what already exists.

Please choose Alternative D to designate our roadless lands as wilderness.