

Date submitted (Mountain Standard Time): 6/3/2019 7:19:05 PM

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Comments:

To: The Custer Gallatin National Forest Service

RE: Comments about CGNFS Draft Plan & Environmental Impact Statement for Draft Revised Forest Plan

In reviewing the CGNFS Draft Environmental Impact Statement I support the Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement (GFPA) for the Madison - Gallatin Range except:

In the Porcupine-Buffalo Horn area.

The Forest Service refers to this area as "Backcountry Area" while the GFPA refers to the area as the Gallatin Wildlife Management Area. It is indeed important habitat connectivity between the Gallatin and Madison Ranges for migrating wildlife moving out of Yellowstone.

The Big Ski Skimobile Trail is in this area and will stay because it is a National Recognized Trail. However, the Porcupine Creek - Buffalo Horn Creek Trail to the east of the Big Ski Snowmobile trail is worrisome. The trail really squeezes the width of the Porcupine Buffalo Horn WSA. Which means it squeezes the habitat for wildlife and plants. This trail should be restricted to horse and hiking only. No mechanized/motorized allowed. Or better yet, expand the proposed Wilderness further to the west but only a little east of the Big Sky Snowmobile Trail.

Seasonal closings help but are not enough. There are plenty of other trails for motorcycles and bikes. Wildlife don't have such options. Put on the brakes for wildlife - widen recommended wilderness to the West in the Porcupine Buffalo Horn WSA and restrict the Porcupine /Buffalo Horn Creeks Trail.

Pryor Mountains Geographic Area (GA)

This "Botanical Hotspot" with "exceptional biological diversity" deserves more protection. Having camped, hiked, driven on main road in early summer, the geology, the 400 species of plants are unique. In some cases, found nowhere else.

Important for scientific research, education, spiritual reverence and traditional reverence for many tribes, especially the Crow.

Although the proposed new Back Country Area (BCA) offers some protection, this category seems focused more on recreation than the landscape and ecosystem (including wildlife habitat).

1. Expand RWA of Lost Water Canyon to approx 13,000 acres (including Crooked Creek)
2. Include RWA for these areas:
 - * Big Pryors approx 12,000 acres
 - * Bear Canyon approx 10,000
 - * Punch Bowl approx 8,500 acres
3. Include specific management directives for the preservation of diversity and ecological integrity in the Pryors as well as providing balanced opportunities for motor-free and motorized access and travel.

4. Include in the plan's vision and management policies to be consistent with the BLMs and Bighorn Canyon NRA so that the same management policies flow across agency boundaries in the Pryors. Habitat, plants, wildlife don't follow boundaries but need consistent protection. These recommendations would still allow continued use of current motorized routes and popular 4WD loops yet balance these with protecting the wildest areas that remain.

Bridger/Bangtail and Crazies Mountains Geographic Area (GA)

These island mountain ranges each have their own unique characteristics and include many plant species and important wildlife habitat.

The Crazies are the "Crown Jewel of Montana". They are especially well special in this geographic area as they are made up of, "unique to Montana resistant igneous intrusions and "hard baked sedimentary rocks".

The Crazies high peaks, such as 11,000 ft Crazy Peak, wild upper elevations and patches of tundra by Sunlight Lake also make it unique.

I recommend in the Crazies part of the draft plan to:

1. Include in the narrative that they are a wild crown jewel of Montana
2. Include in the Vision for the Crazies to work with private landowners to maintain and increase public access. Some access that has been available for decades should not now be restricted.
3. Consider adding Special Emphasis Areas similar to what has been done in the Badger Two Medicine

Rivers

It is important that the draft CGNF plan identifies a number of eligible Wild and Scenic Streams that are not in the current Plan. It is a good start. I have fished, floated, camped and hiked by or in a number of the proposed streams and support those designations. However, since I am not as familiar with other streams in the CGNF geographic area, I support the American Rivers' recommendations inclusion in the final CGF Plan.

In conclusion, I support part of Alternative C and part of Alternative D. Wild public lands are important and NOT just about "US" or having a place to ride, hike or bike. It is important to the plants and animals that are trying to live in these areas. Pushed into smaller and smaller places. So difficult to recreate once people impact them. The revised forest plan will address recreation for people but must be wise for wildlife and fauna. Be strong for protection.

Thank you for your consideration of my recommendations as additions to the CGNF Draft Forest Plan.