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Comments:

Dear Custer Gallatin Forest,

I would like to comment on the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan Revision #50185.

I have been a mountain biker for over 35 years, since the early days of mountain biking. I have watched the sport evolve and with it the way mountain bikers typically care for the trails and areas they ride.

We as mountain bikers value the rugged, remote and natural feel of the country we ride, and do not feel that we degrade it in any way by simply riding a bicycle there. If anything, mountain bikers have left it better than we found it, volunteering thousands of hours of trail work over the years. Mountain bikes are low impact on the resource and are certainly less damaging to trails and erosion than horses, though we are not trying to eliminate horses. We Build trails, we maintain trails and advocate for trails and wild places. I personally have spent countless hours volunteering for such things. And not just for mountain bikes. Hikers and horsemen enjoy these trail maintenance benefits as well.

One of the key words in the Forest Service's mission statement is "Multi-use". We mountain bikers would like to be included in this ideal. We are all about preserving these special lands for all non motorized sports.

Outside of the Gallatin Forest Partnership Agreement Area, we believe managing these areas to exclude bikes (described in alternatives C and D) is unacceptable and could remove our preferred way of accessing an enormous portion of the forest. Alternative D would make many new Recommended Wilderness Areas and remove bicycles from hundreds of miles of trails across the Forest. Specifically, 256 miles of trails currently available to bikes, plus 172 which we share with motorized, plus any rides that become shortened to the point of no use. This would include trails such as Sypes, Truman, Middle Cottonwood, South Cottonwood, Mystical Bear and more. This would concentrate use in front country areas and degrade the experiences of cyclists and other recreationists alike. I believe that to suddenly exclude mountain bikes from this area would be a great injustice, especially in light of the fact that it has been open to bikes for many years.

I have never spent time in the Lionhead area, but have spent time mountain biking in the Gallatin national Forest and Montana while living in Bozeman, Montana a number of years ago. However the Lionhead area is one that I have been trying to get to for many years. A number of my friends have mountain biked there for many years and have told me of its significant beauty and great Trail system. I hope to visit there soon and enjoy this scenic area while riding my non-polluting, nonmotorized, low impact and quiet bicycle. Please keep my thoughts in mind while deciding this important decision.

Thank you,

David Saurman