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First name: Edward

Last name: Wood

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 506 E Cottonwood St

Address2:

City: Bozeman,

State: MT

Province/Region:

Zip/Postal Code: 59715

Country: United States

Email:

Phone:

Comments:

Attachment Wood

* Please accept the following comments for consideration as you complete the Custer Gallatin National Forest plan revision.

My name is Edward (Ted) Wood, and I have been a resident of the Livingston and Bozeman areas since 1994. I am a frequent visitor to the Custer Gallatin National Forest and many of my most cherished, memorable, and rewarding outdoor experiences have been on lands in the Custer Gallatin National Forest. Some of the activities I enjoy include backcountry skiing, backpacking, trail running, fishing, birdwatching, and day hiking. I was also formerly an ice climber and mountain biker so I can also appreciate the need for those activities as well.

I would like to preface my comments by pointing out the obvious: the economy of the Gallatin Valley and surrounding areas is booming, and to a large extent that is due to the amenities provided by the nearby public lands and forests. It is NOT a resource economy; logging and mining are fairly small uses and should not be expanded on the Forest. The current prosperity is driven by the protection of the Forest and the amenities such as recreation, scenery, wildlife, and water that it provides. Those values should not be compromised by additional resource extraction.

Second, I would like to state in general I support the maximum amount of wilderness protection possible in the plan, including recommended additions to existing Wilderness, protection and expansion of wilderness study areas (WSAs), and other limits on resource extraction and motorized and mechanized uses. My reason is that wilderness provides the best management for long term protection of the resources and the amenities it provides. The economy as noted above is doing fine with the amount of undeveloped land we have now; there is no reason to develop any more. Furthermore, I believe wilderness designation is the best way to protect the resource for future generations to have a say in land management in the future. Recent generations have compromised much of the land available; the rest should be protected for future generations to preserve or develop based on the priorities and needs they have, rather than being limited by the choices we make now.

Specific comments:

Absaroka Beartooth area:

I have spent many days (months in total) on foot and skis in the Absaroka-Beartooth wilderness (and adjacent wild lands) over the years and recognize it as a wild land of internationally significant size, beauty and wildness. I support all possible additions to it and that the following areas be managed as recommended wilderness: Line Creek Plateau, Red Lodge Creek, Chico Peak, Emigrant Peak, Dome Mountain, West Fork Rock Creek, and Rosebud-Stillwater. (Alt A and Alt D)

I also had an excellent spring backpack in the nearby Bad Canyon area, and support its management as a non-motorized, non-mechanized backcountry area (Alt B). It is steep, fragile, and recently burned, and not suited to motorized/mechanized uses.

Madison-Gallatin Ranges:

I support the recommendations of the Gallatin Forest Partnership. This was a difficult collaborative effort to find consensus and compromise regarding some of the most contentious recreation issues on the Forest, and I believe the results should be supported. In particular I support recommended Wilderness (102,000 acres) of the Gallatin Crest. I have skied the length of the crest and it is a wild land jewel that should be recognized and protected as such. It is also a vital corridor for wildlife connectivity and wilderness designation is the best way to protect this vital function. I also strongly support adding Cowboy Heaven in the Madison Range to the Lee Metcalf wilderness. I have hiked in this area and it is a beautiful area of transition zones and meadow complexes which provide important wildlife habitat. Similarly I support addition of the Quake Lake area to the southern end of the Lee Metcalf wilderness. I have skied several times in this area and it is remote and rugged, and provides important elk and bighorn sheep range.

Crazy Mountains:

I support management of the roadless area of the Crazy Mountains for primitive (non-motorized or mechanized) recreation. I have hiked and skied in the Crazies many times and the special nature of the Crazies-wild, isolated, and rugged in the extreme-never fail to inspire awe. I further recommend management in close coordination with the Crow nation to recognize their treaty rights and longstanding use of the Crazies for spiritual practices.

Pryor Mountains:

While I have only visited the Pryors a few times, I am well aware of the many priceless features they contain. I support the recommendations in Alternative 0-protecting Bear Canyon, Big Pryor, and Punch Bowl by managing as recommended wilderness, along with expanding the Lost Water Canyon area to 13,000 acres. Limiting motorized recreation in these areas will best protect their endemic species, cultural significance and wilderness character. The Pryors are already substantially fragmented by roads, therefore these areas should be retained and protected from any further alteration.

Lionshead (Henrys Lake Mountains) area:

I support the maximum recommended wilderness for the CGNF portion of this important wild land. This would amount to managing about 22,800 acres as recommended wilderness, including the Mile Creek drainage. While there is an emerging tradition of mountain biking in this area, I believe protecting the wilderness values including wildlife corridors and grizzly bear habitat is more important.

Management of Recommended Wilderness

Lastly, I urge the Forest to adopt clear language for the management of recommended wilderness, including eliminating all non-conforming uses (mechanized and motorized recreation) within recommended wilderness areas (RWAs). The proposed standard is not clear enough. It states that motorized or mechanized recreation is "not suitable". This wording should be clarified to state that motorized and mechanized vehicles are prohibited in RWAs. The Beayerhead Deerlodge NF Plan standard is clearer and should be adopted by CGNF for clarity and consistency.

Thanks you for you consideration of these comments and the work you do to protect the Custer Gallatin National Forest for future generations.