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Forest Plan Revision Comments

I am an 86-year-old retiree from 36 years with the National Park Service, including 17 years in Yellowstone, during which I helped to restore wolves there. I have witnessed legislation and management of public lands for a long time, following graduate studies in Forest Recreation and Wildlife Management. I have hiked, hunted, and skied for three decades in the Custer-Gallatin National Forest. I would like to offer a few historical perspectives before my specific comments on the Forest Plan Revision.

First chief of the U.S. Forest Service Gifford Pinchot is credited with saying that in managing the national forests, "we must aim for the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run." Little could he have known the magnitude of our current environmental footprint on Earth's natural systems, including initiating the sixth great extinction and changing the Earth's climate. Conserving large natural areas is essential to slowing or reversing those effects of human overuse.

After a five-day horse packing trip into the southern Gallatin Range, Olaus Murie, a founder of the Wilderness Society with Bob Marshall and its first president, recommended that everything from Yellowstone National Park to Bozeman be protected as wilderness. His arguments were similar to those we hear today from conservation biologists about the need for large protected areas. Biologist Edward O. Wilson suggests devoting half of Earth for the survival of biodiversity and human well-being.

In 1944, forester and game manager Aldo Leopold bemoaned the fact that Yellowstone National Park was not large enough by itself to conserve a wolf population. In his review of Young and Goldman's *The Wolves of North America*, he took the authors to task for asserting, "There still remain...some areas of considerable size in which...(wolves) may be allowed to continue their existence without molestation." But then he asked, "Where are these areas? Probably every reasonable ecologist will agree that some of them should lie in the larger national parks and wilderness areas; for instance, the Yellowstone and its adjacent national forests." Chipping away at the size and integrity of the Custer-Gallatin is unacceptable to me, because it is part of the greater Yellowstone ecosystem to which Leopold was referring.

In supporting Alternative D, I recommend that 230,000 acres of Wilderness Study Areas be designated as wilderness, including the Buffalo Horn, Porcupine, and West Pine Creek drainages, in perpetuity.

I would strengthen provisions for bison conservation in Alternative D by setting strong standards rather than weak guidelines to achieve the "desired condition" of viable, self-sustaining herds of wild bison on the National Forest. Manage fire as a natural force to expand and improve habitat. Provide secure habitat connectivity across the bison's range, and remove impediments to their migration.

A study by the Craighead Institute identified the Gallatin as an important corridor for greater Yellowstone grizzly bears to connect with the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem. That corridor must be maintained.

"A world without wilderness is a cage," said environmentalist David Brower. Edward Abbey wrote, "Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit, and as vital to our lives as water and good bread."

The protection that wilderness designation provides is essential to retaining the carbon sequestering function of mature forests. That may be the most important reason for protecting the maximum possible wilderness on the Custer-Gallatin.

Logging forests in Oregon is responsible for 35% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the state-more than transportation in Oregon, while forest fires only contribute to 4%. Forest managers say if they don't thin a forest it might burn and produce CO<sub>2</sub>. It may, but nowhere near as much as the thinning itself.