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Comments:

Comment draft plan - CGNF

May 28, 2019

Forest Plan Revision Team

PO Box 130

Bozeman, MT 59718

Dear Revision Team,

I am commenting on the Absaroka Beartooth and Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin geographic areas which provide valuable wildlife habitat, headwater streams, and a variety of recreational opportunities within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Urban development, advances in recreation technology, and climate change are negatively impacting our public lands more and more. It is critical that the new management plan protects wildlife populations and implements strategies that allow adaptation to a changing climate.

I support the full incorporation of the Gallatin Forest Partnership (GFP) Agreement into the plan for the Gallatin and Madison ranges. While alternative C incorporates parts of that agreement, it does not accurately reflect the GFP's recommendations for wildlife protections or recreation monitoring. It is also critical to protect other areas, including wildlife linkage areas and existing wilderness, and include enforceable climate change components.

I recommend the following revisions to the draft plan:

Ensure wildlife connectivity in portions of the Madison, Henrys Lake, and Gallatin Geographic Area that aren't otherwise protected by the grizzly bear recovery zone. The Madisons are critical for wildlife movement to areas beyond the National Forest.

Habitat protections for grizzly bears must extend wherever population health is monitored and into areas important for connectivity.

Grizzlies must be designated as a Species of Conservation Concern.

Plan components must support a year-round self-sustaining bison population within tolerance areas on National Forest System lands.

West Pine and Porcupine Buffalo Horn backcountry areas must mirror Cabin Creek Wildlife Management Area in wildlife protection and wild character plan components.

Recreational use must be monitored more extensively by area, and standards must ensure that increasing recreation is balanced with wildlife protection.

Manage existing wilderness areas in line with the 2020 Vision.

Given the uncertainties of climate change, monitoring questions for vegetation, invasive species, aquatic resources, fire, and more must explicitly assess the effects of climate change and guide adaptive management as required by the 2012 planning rule (219.12(a)(5)(vi)).

In addition to the 30 rivers recommended as eligible for Wild and Scenic designation, Taylor Creek, Hellroaring Creek, and the South Fork of the Madison must be included due to their outstanding wildlife values.

The Draft Plan and DEIS includes many strong points, and with some revisions the new management plan will be an important tool to guide decades of sustainable forest management. Thank you for your work on this important issue and thank you for the opportunity to comment on The Custer Gallatin National Forest's Draft Management Plan.

Respectfully,

Ms. Christine Baleshta
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