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Comments:

I moved to Montana less than 2 years ago from Alaska. What I have seen of Montana is beautiful, but it needs to be protected! There is simply not enough "wilderness". For my wilderness "chops" I report that in Alaska I have rafted the Copper River, kayaked the John River in the Gates of the Arctic, kayaked in Prince William Sound, experienced Denali National Park several times, hiked around Turnagain Arm, etc. I lived in Alaska from 1962 until 2017.

Generally I support compromises in coming up with solutions, but Montana needs MORE wilderness to protect its wildlife, not LESS. Plan D of the Custer Gallatin National Forest Plan is the best solution offered with its 230,000 acres, but even that falls short of what is needed. Giving something to everyone in this case will leave out the most important beings in the formula: wild animals. They have not been able to join the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, nor to send a representative to their meetings. I particularly worry about the insistence that bikers have the right to invade every wild space, when there is plenty of evidence that their presence is detrimental to wild animals and bears in particular. Brian Horejsi wrote specifically about the bikers' impact on bears: "The basic science solidly supports the general claim that bikers and bikes are displacing bears, can contribute to their habituation and are consequently adding negative load on human / wildlife conflict." That is from "Mountain Biking Impacts on Bears and Other Wildlife by Brian Horejsi," Wildlife News, August 5, 2014, online at <http://www.thewildlifeneeds.com/2014/08/05/mountain-biking-impacts-on-bears-and-other-wildlife-by-brian-horejsi/>.

In my short time here I have gained very limited experience, but in Hyalite Canyon I have enjoyed three different hikes in that area with friends. At my age of 74, I do not expect to be able to enjoy much of the wilderness in question, but I care deeply about it.

Wilderness is essential to the health of the planet: it nurtures water, soil and animals, adding to the overall health of our environment. These things cannot be measured by dollars or hours of human enjoyment. Wilderness must be preserved as precious in and of itself. No bikes. No roads. Just wilderness with the appropriate connections for animals to maintain healthy populations and movement. Once it is "developed" in any way, it is impossible to return to wilderness.

This is an incredibly important decision to be made and should include all available science, including climate change science; watershed protection; and wild bison grazing. Please choose D.