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Comments:

To Whom It May Concern:

My husband and I are emailing you because we love the wilderness and outdoors and are concerned that as part of the Forest Plan revision process, the Gallatin Range-stretching from Bozeman to Yellowstone National Park-including the HPBH WSA, is PARTICULARLY AT RISK of being sacrificed as a motorized and mechanized recreational playground for the exploding populations of Big Sky and Bozeman.

WITH THIS IN MIND AND TO PREVENT THIS FROM OCCURRING, WE SUPPORT Wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the draft forest plan, with the SUGGESTED improvements outlined below, would offer the best protection for the Gallatin Range and other critical wildlife habitat across the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

-The draft plan has little direction for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The current wilderness management plans allows destructively large groups of up to 25 head of stock (horses and mules) and 15 people in most areas. Research shows that impacts increase significantly when group-sizes exceed eight head of stock and 12 people. The Forest Service should reduce group size limits accordingly so as to protect all Wildernesses on the forest from harm.

-Further, the forest plan should put an end to ecologically destructive fish stocking in naturally fishless wilderness lakes, which significantly alters the areas' natural conditions.

-The plan must address the issue of human and pack animal feces contamination of lakes and streams on the Beartooth Plateau in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. Eliminating fish stocking would likely go a long way toward solving this problem, BUT ADDITIONAL measures must be included AS needed.

-Vacant grazing allotments in the Wildernesses should be closed so these areas can return to a wild condition.

-No trail construction or reconstruction in the currently trailless areas of the Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. This provides remote areas for wildlife as well as premier areas for solitude.

-WE support the wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan. HOWEVER, they must be improved by adding the entire 230,000 wild, roadless acres of the Gallatin Range as Recommend Wilderness in the final forest plan. The following three points also expand on the importance for the wild Gallatin Range.

OF ADDITIONAL IMPORTANCE AND NEED TO BE IMPLEMENTED, the plan should prohibit all motorized and mechanized uses, and any other activities not consistent with wilderness protection, in the Recommended Wilderness areas so as to preserve their wilderness qualities until Congress acts on the wilderness recommendations.

IN SUMMARY, FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF ALL CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS, WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT, ALTERNATIVE D of the Forest Plan, with the suggested improvements noted above, IS THE RIGHT, FAIR, JUST, HUMANE AND HEALTHY ACTION TO TAKE!!!!!!!!!!!!

Sincerely yours,

Mary Ann and Frank Graffagnino

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