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Comments:

To the Forest Plan Revision Team:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Revised Forest Plan. Though I have had less time than I would like to consider it, I still feel I would be remiss should I not comment.

In *The Idea of a Garden*, author Michael Pollan essentially advocates a new wilderness ethic in which humanity takes a more active role in managing nature to suit both its and our needs. In the 20th century, man developed a wilderness ethic (represented by Edward Abbey, Aldo Leopold, and others) that defined our relationship with nature as one in which we feel guilty for our impacts upon it. Pollan seeks to redefine the relationship as one in which we do not feel guilty, but instead act as "gardeners" of nature.

I profoundly disagree with Pollan--the idea that we can "garden" nature is human hubris manifest. Historically man has shown little ability to act with restraint when it comes to our natural surroundings. We feel the need to alter nature--to garden it--and then are surprised when we cause harm. The guilt Americans felt after seeing natural landscapes razed for Levittowns or ancient forests cut for timber proved a powerful motivator to establish Wilderness--places where our ability to "garden" was limited.

It is for this reason that I support Alternative D. I was born and raised in Bozeman, and even in my 23 years hiking, backpacking, and climbing here I have seen the impacts that our increasing population and outdoor usage have had on the surrounding National Forest. This is why it is important to take the most conservative approach regarding land usage feasible--as we have learned over and over in the past, opening up lands to diverse use can create impacts that simply cannot be undone.

My thoughts on the Plan are perhaps best reflected in the well-researched and eloquently worded letter submitted by the Gallatin Wilderness Association. Their point regarding the false equivalency between backcountry areas (BCAs) and Wilderness Areas is particularly important, and bears due consideration.

I also feel that the Gallatin Forest Partnership's plan is well-intentioned but misguided. Mountain biking simply isn't compatible with the dense grizzly population in the Madison and Gallatin ranges, and so I again support Alternative D in this regard.

Finally, having spent many days in the Crazy Mountains, I believe that they are as deserving of Wilderness protection as any range in the GCNF. Here, again, Alternative D remains the best option to preserve the natural wonders and cultural importance of this unique range.

Alternative D represents "gardening" surrounding natural forests to the least extent, and is therefore the most ethical option going forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Erin Dockins