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Comments:

We are dismayed that the 2020 Land Management Plan (Final Plan) produced by the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) will designate for non-wilderness-use a large fraction of existing Wilderness Study areas. We object to allowing high-impact mechanized and motorized recreation in over four hundred thousand acres of potential wilderness.

We submitted comments to the CGNF multiple times during the planning process. We recommended far more wilderness than is included in this 2020 Final Plan and we opposed replacing wilderness with "backcountry recreation," which is a recent concept heavily promoted by the mechanized recreation industry, to its own financial benefit. Mountain bikers in Montana already have thousands of miles of roads and trails suited to their recreation. They need not invade Montana's rare, pristine wilderness.

The recreation industry advertises mountain biking as a thrill sport (watch TV sometime). My personal experience in Bozeman is that, when a younger friend is all beat up with scrapes, bruises, and sometimes a sling or cast, the cause often is a mountain bike accident. The risks associated with backpacking and horse packing into wilderness are minor compared to mountain biking. Mountain bikers tend to go fast and far. If something goes wrong, safe return can be problematic.

Gallatin County recently decided to levy \$733,000 in new taxes for the search and rescue department. Under the CGNF plan, Gallatin's search and rescue will be busier. Promoting mountain biking in our remotest areas will cost us all.

We now focus on two areas of great concern to us - the Porcupine/Buffalo Horn area in the Gallatin Range and Cowboy's Heaven in the Madison Range. The CGNF plans to donate those prime wilderness areas to mountain bikers and the mechanized recreation industry. Such plans ignore the negative impacts of mechanized recreation, the unique contributions of wilderness, and the fact that an area converted into a mechanized recreation playground will never, ever be wilderness again.

The Buffalo Horn drainage is the most important wildlife habitat in the entire Gallatin Range. It is a critical component of the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. It is the closest unprotected wilderness north of Yellowstone Park. If the CGNF is going to designate any wilderness, it should include this drainage.

Cowboy's Heaven in the Madison Range should be added to the existing Spanish Peak unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness. It contains some of the best lower elevation big game habitat and is used by several thousand elk.

Both these areas provide an inspiring, tranquil experience for hikers and equestrians. The presence of mechanized vehicles will diminish their experience. The use of those wilderness areas by rare or important animal species will be diminished similarly.

Please change the plan and provide wilderness designation to the Porcupine/Buffalo Horn and Cowboy's Heaven.