Forest Service hears objections to plans for managing bison, other wildlife

All objectors who spoke about bison Thursday shared an interest in adding the species to the list. The Forest Service spent the second half of the meeting hearing objections about the plan.

Phil Knight, a member of the Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance, said the Forest Service should add bighorn sheep to the list of species of conservation concern because of restrictions on hunting these animals. He said his group was opposing the plan to protect bighorn sheep.

Geist said he was concerned that the Forest Service would add species to the list for political reasons rather than because of a scientific determination that the species was of conservation concern. He said the agency might make the decision not to add bison to its list of species of conservation concern. However, he added, "Species of conservation concern as a policy matter was established for a specific reason."

The majority of Thursday’s discussion revolved around objections to the Forest Service’s wildlife management plans for the Custer Gallatin National Forest land management plan, which hasn’t been updated in more than two decades.

Objectors are concerned the Forest Service doesn’t have enough resources to properly manage its wildlife, but they said the agency was making decisions based on political goals instead. They said the Forest Service needs to consider how to protect the species without sacrificing water quality or grazing lands.

Over 20 new plants, birds, fish, and wildlife are listed in the draft plan. Opponents of aspects of the Forest Service’s wildlife management plans for the Custer Gallatin National Forest land management plan, which hasn’t been updated in more than two decades.

"The Public on Our Heels" to Convincethe Agency Otherwise

"We live in a state where wildlife is the public’s number one concern. People have a right to expect the Forest Service to manage its resources in a way that’s consistent with the land management plans," said Park County resident Phyllis Cole, who spoke in support of the Forest Service’s plans.

Marten is the reviewing officer for final decisions on the majority of submissions. While Marten is the reviewing officer for final decisions on the majority of submissions, the Forest Service forester for the Rocky Mountain Region, asked questions and listened to people who spoke in support of the Forest Service’s plans.

"We need to keep the public on our heels to convince the agency otherwise," said Cole, who is a member of the Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance.

In addition to adding species to the list, the Forest Service will be making changes to the land management plan for the Custer Gallatin National Forest. The public has until Feb. 1 to submit written comments to the Forest Service to the last of three organized for objectors and people who filed as opponents of the Forest Service’s wildlife management plans for the Custer Gallatin National Forest land management plan. The public has until Feb. 1 to submit written comments to the Forest Service.

"The Forest Service plans to make changes to the land management plan for the Custer Gallatin National Forest," said Cole. "The Forest Service needs to consider how to protect the species without sacrificing water quality or grazing lands."