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Comments:

If strengthened by adding the entire 230,000 wild, roadless acres of the Gallatin Range as Recommended Wilderness into the final forest plan, I would support the wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan. The following three points also expand on the importance for the wild Gallatin Range.

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.

The draft plan has scant guidance for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The current wilderness management plans allow 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 fish stocking in naturally fishless wilderness lakes, which significantly alters the areas' natural ecological conditions.

The plan must also address the issue of contamination by human and pack animal feces to 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 to address this impact must be included if needed.