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Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Today I am writing to reflect concerns about the future management of existing Wilderness in the Custer Gallatin: the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness. As I understand it (not well I admit), when this plan revision takes effect, the existing plans for management of the LM and AB Wildernesses will become invalid. The current draft revision should be improved with more direct language pertaining specifically to the five qualities of Wilderness. The new plan must provide guidance and standards to protect wilderness character. Management strategies to maintain wilderness character, and thresholds/triggers that identify when unacceptable changes are occurring on the landscape need to be specified. The wilderness plans for the LM and AB need to be revised in the Forest Plan to provide clear unambiguous measurable standards for monitoring wilderness character. I suggest that within two years of the Forest Plan decision, new Management Plans for the LM and AB Wildernesses be completed and implemented. As threats to wilderness character increase, the Forest Supervisor may need to address damage in a timely way, but amending the Forest Plan would not be expeditious. I encourage that the advice of retired USFS Kimberly Schlenker be followed to complete wilderness plans for those areas soon, or concurrently with the Plan Revision. I appreciate her understanding of the Plan process and support her specific suggestion that Zone 1 wilderness areas, the most pristine, have a standard that clearly states 'there shall be non system trails within Zone 1.' No trails shall be constructed in Zone 1.

That bicycles are not appropriate to use in Wilderness needs to be reflected in a standard so that continuing pressure by mountain bike advocates can be firmly rejected.

In each Zone narrative, there should be more clear constraints on potential agency actions that would degrade wilderness character, especially in Zone 1. Management actions should be ensured to preserve the wildness of the arts and maintain or improve natural integrity and ecosystem function.

Recreational fishery management needs to be limited by wilderness plans to highlight restoration of native fish,. No expansion of stocking should be allowed unless it can be shown to be the only viable way to ensure the longevity of threatened or endangered species.