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Comments:

Your draft plan provides little administrative direction for the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The current wilderness management plan allows, in most areas, destructively large groups of up to 25 head of stock and 15 people, but research shows that negative impacts increase significantly when the group size exceeds 8 head of stock and 12 people. Therefore the Forest Service must reduce group size limits to protect all of these wilderness areas from harm.

Further, the forest plan should not allow ecologically destructive fish stocking in naturally fishless wilderness lakes, since it significantly alters the areas' natural conditions. Since your plan encourages more visitors and more stock, it must also address the issue of human and pack animal feces contamination of 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 need be included if necessary.

Vacant grazing allotments in the Wildernesses should be closed so that these areas can return to a wild condition. No trail construction or reconstruction should be allowed in the currently trailless areas of the Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses in order to provide remote areas for wildlife as well as premier areas for solitude.

I support the wilderness recommendations in Alt. D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan but improved by adding the entire 230,000 wild, roadless acres of the Gallatin Range as Recommend Wilderness in the final forest plan. The plan must 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.