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First name: Kathleen

Last name: Corby

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 58 Poplar Ave.

Address2:

City: Pine Plains

State:

Province/Region: NY

Zip/Postal Code: 12567

Country: United States

Email: corbydesign@fairpoint.net

Phone: 5183980866

Comments:

I was just traveling through the Custer Gallatin National Forest in Montana this past fall. The wilderness needs to be left wild. These breathtaking, open, wild spaces are a part of our nations history. We simply can not, must not risk the Gallatin Range-stretching from Bozeman to Yellowstone National Park-including the HPBH WSA to be sacrificed as a motorized and mechanized recreational playground for the exploding populations of Big Sky and Bozeman!

I am writing to inform you that I support the wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan; however, they must be improved by adding the entire 230,000 wild, roadless acres of the Gallatin Range as Recommend Wilderness in the final 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 little direction for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The current wilderness management plans allows destructively 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 ecologically destructive fish stocking in naturally fishless wilderness lakes, which significantly alters the areas' natural conditions.

* The plan must 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 must be included if needed. It is critical that you offer the best protection for the Gallatin Range and other critical wildlife habitat across the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

It is critical that you offer the best protection for the Gallatin Range and other critical wildlife habitat across the Custer Gallatin National Forest. Thank you.