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Comments:

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 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, and impose use quotas by specific local zones within wildernesses so as to protect all Wildernesses on the forest from harm. Groups should be required to specify travel itineraries and obtain permits for wilderness travel of more than one day.

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 by requiring equestrians to pack certified weed-free feed and to rake down of stock tie-up areas after use. Education of all wilderness users on leave-no-trace practices including required pack-out of used toilet paper should be part of the permit issue process. Additional measures must be included if needed.

Grazing in the Wildernesses should be closed so these areas can return to a wild condition.

No trail construction or reconstruction in the currently trailless areas of the Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. This provides remote areas for wildlife as well as premier areas for solitude.

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 Recommended 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.