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Comments:

The draft plan has almost no direction for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wilderness areas. The current wilderness management plans allow destructively large groups of up to 25 head of stock (horses and mules) and 15 people in most areas. Research shows that damage increases significantly when group sizes exceed eight head of stock and 12 people. The Forest Service should reduce group size limits accordingly in order to protect all Wilderness areas in the forest from harm. Further the forest plan should put an end to ecologically destructive fish stocking in naturally fishless wilderness lakes, a practice 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 solve this problem, but additional measures must be included if needed.

Vacant grazing allotments 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 should be permitted. 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.

In addition, 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.