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Comments:

I support the wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan with the following modifications.

1. The wilderness recommendation must include the entire 230,000 acres of wild, roadless areas 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.
2. All motorized and mechanized uses plus any other activities not consistent with wilderness protection must be prohibited in the Recommended Wilderness areas. This will serve to preserve their wilderness qualities until Congress acts on the wilderness recommendations.
3. The draft plan has little direction for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. Specific guidance needs to be included. For example, the current wilderness management plans allow large groups of up to 25 head of stock (horses and mules) and 15 people in most areas. This equates to a party size of 40 but the 25 horses and mules cause considerably more impact and damage than 25 humans. (Cole, 1990). Weaver and Dale (1978) noted that trails produced by 1,000 horse passes were 2-3 times wider, 1.5-7 times deeper, and compaction 1.5-2 times greater than on trails produced by 1,000 hiker passes. However, while hiker passes tend to compact soil, horse passes also loosen soil, making it more susceptible to erosion. Because 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.
4. Stocking fish in naturally fishless wilderness lakes is ecologically destructive and should be terminated and prohibited. These activities significantly alter the areas' natural conditions.
5. The plan 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.

Thank you.

References Cited

Cole, D.N., 1990, Ecological impacts of wilderness recreation and their management, in Hendee, J.C., Stankey, G.H., and Lucas, R.C., Wilderness Management: Golden, Colorado, North American Press, pp. 425-466.

Weaver, T., and Dale, D., 1978, Trampling effects of hikers, motorcycles and horses in meadows and forests: Journal of Applied Ecology, v. 15, pp. 451-457.