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Comments:

I am a resident of New Mexico and active user of wilderness areas in NM, CO, AZ and WY, and specifically have visited the Yellowstone area, including nearby wilderness areas. As such, I support the wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan. But I would recommend going still further and improving the recommendations already included, by adding the entire 230,000 wild, roadless acres of the Gallatin Range as Recommend Wilderness in the final forest plan. In addition, the plan should prohibit all motorized and mechanized uses (as required in wilderness areas), 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.

It should also be noted that the draft plan has little direction for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The current wilderness management plans allow for destructively large groups of up to 25 head of stock (horses and mules) and 15 people in most areas. This is contrary to most wilderness areas and even some forest areas, which limit group sizes to 10 people. 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.

And lastly, vacant grazing allotments in the Wildernesses should be closed so these areas can return to a wild condition, and the Forest Service should not allow trail construction or reconstruction in the currently trailless areas of the Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses.

All of the above, would provide much needed remote areas for wildlife as well as premier areas for solitude.

Thank you.