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Comments:

A July 5, 2017, article in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences identifies that Earth is in the midst of its sixth mass extinction episode: Biological annihilation via the ongoing sixth mass extinction signaled by vertebrate population losses and declines.

The article concludes: "...Earth's sixth mass extinction episode has proceeded further than most assume. ...

"(T)he proximate causes of population extinctions (are): habitat conversion, climate disruption, overexploitation, toxification, species invasion, disease, and (potentially) large-scale nuclear war ...

"(T)he ultimate drivers of those immediate causes of biotic destruction (are), namely, human overpopulation and continued population growth, and overconsumption, especially by the rich. ...

"(T)he sixth mass extinction is already here and the window for effective action is very short, probably two or three decades at most.

"All signs point to ever more powerful assaults on biodiversity in the next two decades, painting a dismal picture of the future of life, including human life."

<https://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1704949114>

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.