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Comments:

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.

-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.

All wild places should be protected at all costs, not only because these are natural wonders that have inspired thousands, if not millions of people throughout this country's history. But because humanity and these ecological and biodiverse regions are inextricably linked and we need each other in order to survive. What many people fail to realize or understand is that people need nature in order to survive. We all rely on each other and when the ecological balance of this earth is hampered with, destruction ensues. We need wilderness just as much as it needs us for protection.

The Custer Gallatin National Forest in Montana encompasses over three million acres and is a stronghold for iconic wildlife species like grizzly bears, gray wolves, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and moose. All these species are extremely vulnerable to human disturbance and development. Many of these species are endangered and need to be protected so this biodiverse region can thrive and thus help humanity continue in the face of climate change.

Please consider adding these three points I mentioned earlier in my comment when approving or denying the Forest Plan.