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Comments:

I am not interested or able to endorse a specific alternative proposal, but I just wanted to give my input on wilderness designation and thereby limiting the use of areas for mountain bikers. I am an avid hiker and backpacker BUT I also love to mountain bike. I am all for multi use trails. We live part time in North Idaho and we have several trail systems in our little town that are utilized by hikers, runners, bikers, horseback riders (kids and adults) and everybody LOVES that the trails were designed with all these users in mind. The trails around Red Lodge were built for hiking and therefor not great for biking. You could not take a kid on most of the trails as they are extremely narrow and steep. If you now designate some of these (limited) rideable trails to wilderness I am just wondering where we are supposed to ride our bikes? We need to have areas close to town that provide trails that can be used by various users (hikers, bikers and horseback riders) so that people can get outside and enjoy the beautiful area right outside their door. This is the reason why most people live here and I think we need to make sure that there are opportunities for everybody to recreate in this area. We have a beautiful wilderness area (Absaroka-Beartooth) that has limited use and is managed to limit human impact so that it will remain as close to wilderness for all eternity. I LOVE that this area will be kept wild and am all for wilderness and I think we need to keep mountain bikers out of the wilderness and only allow hikers there to limit the human impact (although I will say horseback riders sometimes have a much greater impact on the trails and camp sites than bikers...) We do need to provide the mountain bikers other areas where they are allowed to ride and where there are trails that are designed for biking. These trails will of course also be suitable for hikers and runners, so they will only add to the recreation opportunity and provide locals and visitors more options for outdoor recreation. I am sure there are areas where mountain biking is not suitable (steep trails) that have the potential for wilderness designation BUT please keep the mountain bikers in mind when you designate new areas so that they are not left out... Also, please do NOT lump together mountain bikers with motorized trail users. I most definitely think motorized use should be limited to certain areas as they have the biggest impact (noise, exhaust) of any user. Just some thoughts that pop in my mind after attending the meeting in Red Lodge last night. It's a huge area for the Forest Service to manage and I strongly believe there is enough space for everybody to enjoy this beautiful area!