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Comments:

Although I do live on the east coast (or perhaps because I do), our American wildernesses are extremely important to me and my family. The thought of losing them is heart-breaking. We are avid hikers and nature lovers, one of us is a hydrogeologist, one an economist, one a farmer. We know the value of wilderness.

In my opinion, the wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest plan are the best. But they do not include the entire 230,000 wild, roadless acres of the Gallatin Range as Recommend Wilderness in the final forest plan.

I believe there are some important changes that are necessary. All motorized and mechanized uses must be prohibited. This is a wilderness and should stay pristine. Any other activities not consistent with wilderness protection should also be banned. We need to preserve the wilderness qualities of this magnificent region.

The plan should also address the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. Shockingly, the current management plan allows destructively large groups of up to 25 head of stock (horses and mules) and 15 people in most areas. I've read that 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.