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First name: Naomi

Last name: Zurcher

Organization:

Title:

Official Representative/Member Indicator:

Address1: 161 Columbia Hts

Address2:

City: Brooklyn

State: NY

Province/Region: NY

Zip/Postal Code: 11201-2154

Country: United States

Email: treerap@sprintmail.com

Phone: 718 834-9231

Comments:

As a forestry professional and an avid outdoors person, I feel it is critical that, in our management planning, we balance the needs of the users with the needs of the habitat. While the user is important, there wouldn't be anything to use of we did not protect these ecosystems.

While I favor the wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan, I feel they must be improved by adding the entire 230,000 wild, roadless acreage 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 access and use, as well as any other activities which are inconsistent with wilderness protection within the Recommended Wilderness areas so as to preserve their essential wilderness qualities until such time as Congress acts on the wilderness recommendations.

* The draft plan has not provided adequate consideration for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The current wilderness management plans allow large destructive numbers 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 in keeping with these findings. This would serve to protect all forest Wildernesses from this destructive use. Further, the forest plan should put an end to ecologically destructive fish stocking in naturally fishless wilderness lakes, which significantly alters the areas' natural habitat.

* 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 as it would reduce this impact considerably, but additional measures must be included if needed.

Thank you for considering my opinion in your revisions.