

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/3/2019 8:26:13 PM

First name: Kathryn

Last name: Bankston

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I was fortunate enough to visit, camp in Custer Gallatin Forest and the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness as a young woman. I have been all over the contiguous States and abroad, but nothing I have seen compares to the spectacle and solitude of this vast wilderness. I would love to hope that future generations of America can find it the marvel that I did! Having seen how we have dwarfed the originally 70 mile-wide Shark River of the Everglades, though, having seen that its annual allotment of water will never survive the onslaught of cities in southern Florida, I worry for all our wild places. Having seen federal agencies operated by people who oppose the existence of the very agencies they would eliminate, I fear for us all!

To maintain the wilderness, I think the size of groups entering the area should be reduced. Groups should be limited to 12 people and 8 pack animals. Grazing of livestock should be eliminated. Pack it in, pack it out rules should include human and animal waste unless it is buried 2 feet deep. Anyone who is willing to dig 2 feet in that rocky place would demonstrate their appreciation and intent to leave it as they found it. Old folks like me who can't make the trek on foot just have to live it vicariously. The old timer's did say, "Don't send no babes!" They could have added, "Or toothless grannies."

Fish-less lakes should be left fish-less. They evolved that way for a reason. If they are stocked to bring people, that is contrary to the idea of creating a wilderness. Waters that were found with fish should be only stocked with the species and numbers that the system can provide for. Trail construction/reconstruction should cease. I suspect that hunters, fishermen and hikers will keep trails passable for a long time with no taxpayer moneys for a very long time. I've ridden horses on the trails created by the '49'ers and they're still well-worn.

For crying out loud, No Drilling, Fracking, or Digging(that little 2' latrine hole not counting). Alternative D of the revised forest plan will suffice, if the 230K acres of the Gallatin Range that are wild and roadless should be added to the protected wilderness. We saw with the last Yellowstone fire how small these huge tracts are against the ever-expanding forest fire threat. To allow for enough genetic diversity to safeguard against that kind of danger it takes a lot of space, even by Montana standards. We need to keep the crowds out until Congress acts, less the area prove like the old-growth forests of the Northwest, gone by the time the Snowy Owl enthusiasts got their day in court. I went to Olympic National Park in the mid-'90's and asked where the forest was. The ranger told me it surrounded me, 99,000 acres. It had been clear-cut with the exception of the 1/2 mile wide, 10 mile deep tree museum that is the camping area. NOT ACCEPTABLE!