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Comments: Thank you for addressing the need to update the management plan for the Custer Gallatin National Forest. This national forest encompasses important habitat, wilderness and complicated management issues. My preference is strongly for Alternative D, with suggested additions outlined below. No other alternative gives sufficient protection to wilderness, habitat, bison, and natural processes and resources over mineral development and livestock. We must not sacrifice our precious and fewer all the time, wild areas and wildlife. With more and more people demanding recreation opportunities and places to escape increasingly hectic lives, it is essential that more recreation and wilderness is provided, not less. Alternative E should not be considered in any form-its disregard to the environment is unacceptable and inappropriate for a national forest.

The draft plan could use improved direction for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The current wilderness management plans allows high impact 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 must reduce group size limits accordingly to protect all Wildernesses on the forest from this high human impact. 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 should 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 should be included if needed.

Vacant grazing allotments in the Wildernesses should be closed so these areas can return to a wild condition.

I support the wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan but request extra consideration to the following three points that 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. Wilderness has been defined for decades, I do not understand why motorized and mechanized uses should all of sudden be allowed within designated wilderness. Motorized uses must remain excluded from wilderness areas.

Thank you