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Comments: The recommendations in Alternative D of the draft forest plan, with improvements listed herein, would offer the best protection for the Gallatin Range and critical wildlife habitat across the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

Unfortunately, the draft plan has little direction for administering the Absaroka-Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. The current wilderness management plans allows destructively large groups of up to 25 head of stock (horses and mules) and 15 people in most areas. This is too much traffic! Research shows that impacts increase significantly when group-sizes exceed eight head of stock and 12 people. The Forest Service needs to reduce the size of groups accordingly to protect all Wildernesses on the forest from harm.

The plan needs to end 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.

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

No trail construction or reconstruction in the currently trailless areas of the Absaroka Beartooth and Lee Metcalf Wildernesses. This provides remote areas for wildlife as well.

I support the wilderness recommendations in Alternative D of the Revised Draft Forest Plan; however, they must be improved by adding the entire 230,000 wild, roadless acres of the Gallatin Range as Recommend Wilderness in the final forest plan.

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.