I pulled some of the interesting parts out of the ROD (Record of Decision) in the recently released Gallatin Forest Travel Plan.

The following trails have been marked as Closed to stock use:

- ZIMMER CREEK TRAIL #574
- LADY OF THE LAKE TRAIL #31 - Seg 3 From junction with Zimmer Cr. Trail #574 to end of trail at Lower Aero Lake.
- FISHER CREEK ROAD #1778 - Seg 2 Closed to everything
- Ferrell Lake Road #11DAA Closed to everything
- COLLEGE M TRAILS #511 & #512
- BRIDGER RIDGE TRAIL #513 - Seg 1 From "M" trailhead to overlook above the "M" monument.
- GROTTO FALLS TRAIL #432
- US HIGHWAY 191
- Big Sky Snowmobile Trail
- PALISADE FALLS TRAIL #433
- KIRK HILL TRAIL #428
- Rendezvous Ski Trails

The following trails have been marked for seasonal closure to stock use:

- MARIANE LAKE TRAIL #570 Apr 1 - Jul 31
- PINE CREEK TRAIL #47 Dec 2 - Sep 15 No overnight camping with stock at Pine Lake yearlong (refer to map)
- THOMPSON LAKE TRAIL #282 Apr 1 - Jun 15
- FIRST YELLOW MULE TRAIL #162 - Seg 1 Closed Oct 15 - Jun 15
- BRIDGER BOWL ROAD #3200 - Seg 2 From Bridger Bowl parking lot to the Trailhead/Gate. Oct 15 - May 15
- LAVA LAKE TRAIL #77 No overnight camping at Lava Lake with stock, yearlong. Dec 2 - Sep 15
- PINE CREEK TRAIL #47 Outside of Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness. Dec 2 - Sep 15
- BUFFALO HORN TRAIL #1 - Seg 1 From Trailhead to junction with Trail #199. Apr 1 - Jun 15
- PORCUPINE CREEK TRAIL #34 - Seg 1 From trailhead to junction with Trail #199. Apr 1 - Jun 15
- TEEPEE CREEK TRAIL #39 Apr 1 - Jun 15
- N. COTTONWOOD/JOHNSON CONNECT New trail - doesn't currently exist. Not mapped on black and white maps. Dec 2 - May 15
- WEST PINE TRAIL #139 - Seg 1 From trailhead to intersection of old sportsman trail. Apr 1 - Jun 15
• BEAR CANYON LOOP TRAIL #440 - Seg 1 From Bear Canyon Trailhead southeast approximately 2 miles to the "440 return loop" junction in Section 8. Closed Apr 1 – Jul 15

• BEAR CANYON LOOP TRAIL #440 - Seg 2 From the junction with "440 return loop" in Section 8, southeast to junction with Bear Lakes Trail #508. Closed Apr 1 – Jul 15

• BEAR CANYON LOOP TRAIL #440 - Seg 5 Segment from the Goose Creek Road to the junction of the entry of Trail #440, completes the "440 Loop". Closed Apr 1 – Jul 15

• CHESTNUT MTN TRAIL #458 - Seg 1 This would be an extension of the Chestnut Mtn. Trail #458 north to Trail Creek. County Road in Section 20. Closed Apr 1 - Jun 15

• SWAN CREEK TRAIL #186 - Seg 1 Outside of HPBH WSA closed Apr 1 – May 15

• TWO TOP DIVIDE TRAIL #116 – relocation Includes short spurs to the divide, Trails #144 and #142. Cuts through Sections 29, 32, 33, and 4. Closed Dec 2 – Jun 15

  Several of these routes are proposed new construction and would only be closed until the trails had “hardened” after being built.

Below are some of the comments regarding her decision on stock use by Becki Heath.

West Bridger South

My decision prohibits stock on Trails 511, 512 and 513 to the “M.” I view these routes as being Similar to urban park trails and therefore I believe they should be pedestrian only trails. Stock will still be able to use the Bridger Foothills Trail #534 to access the southern end of the Bridger Range.

Trails will be open to stock use with the exception of the Lava Lake Trail (#77) which will be restricted to stock until September 15th of each year. This trail is narrow, making it difficult for hikers to move safely off the trail to allow stock to pass. In other words, similar to the Pine Creek Lake Trail in the Absaroka Beartooth, I chose to preclude horses during the summer due to concerns about congestion, user conflicts and user safety. My decision is different from what I proposed in Alternative 7 of the DEIS in that this trail would be opened to day use stock travel after September 15th. The public safety issue (i.e. conflicts between people and horses) is not as much a concern after Labor Day. Also, part of my rationale for restricting stock use is that the lake basin accessed by this trail does not have the capability to adequately handle stock overnight. The trail is very popular with the public and used by hiking groups. My decision precludes overnight stock camping in the Lava Lake area, but still provides opportunities to use the trail during the hunting season.

Trails will be open to stock use with the exception of the Pine Creek Trail (#47) which will be restricted to stock until September 15th of each year. This trail is narrow, making it difficult for hikers to move safely off the trail to allow stock to pass. In other words, similar to the Lava Lake Trail in the Spanish Peaks area, I chose to preclude horses during the summer due to concerns about congestion, user conflicts and user safety. My decision is different from what I proposed in Alternative 7 of the DEIS in that this trail would be opened to day use stock travel after September 15th. The public safety issue (i.e. conflicts between people and horses) is not as much a concern after Labor Day. Also, part of my rationale for restricting stock use is that the upper basins accessed by this trail do not have the capability to handle stock overnight. The trail is very popular with the public and used by hiking groups. My decision precludes overnight stock camping in the Pine Creek area, but still provides opportunities to use the trail during the hunting season.
Stock use will generally be allowed on and off-trail across the Forest although some seasonal and yearlong restrictions will be applied to specific trails. My decision will not include the blanket spring restrictions proposed in Alternative 7 of the DEIS.

**Time Share**

A number of public comments were received suggesting that we consider the concept of alternating use periods to address social problems (i.e. “user conflict) between motorized and non-motorized users, and between bikers and stock users/hikers on popular trails. For example, a trail could be managed as open to motorcycles on alternating days, alternating weeks, or even by the time of day. I’ve decided to apply this concept to the following trails to help meet my objective of providing more non-motorized opportunities near Bozeman:

- The Bridger Foothills Trail #534 from the “M” parking lot to the junction with Corbly Gulch Trail #544.
- The Sypes Canyon Trail #531.
- The Truman Gulch Trail #535.
- The Middle Cottonwood Trail #586.
- The Corbly Gulch Trail #544.
- The Hyalite #427 and East Fork of Hyalite #434 Trails.
- The Storm Castle Trail #185.

For the Sypes Canyon Trail and the southern end of the Bridger Foothills Trail I will look at a schedule that restricts mountain bikes to certain periods (i.e. provide opportunities for foot and horse travel in absence of bikes). For the other trails I will look at a schedule that restricts motorcycles and mountain bikes to certain periods (i.e. provide opportunities for foot and horse travel in absence of mechanized vehicles). I intend to work with various users over the next year to develop the specific schedules.

**Cherry Creek Travel Planning Area**

In this Travel Planning Area, my decision prohibits motorcycles on the Cherry Creek Trail (#401), where such use would have been allowed under Alternative 7-M during the summer months. For the purposes of understanding the potential consequences of this change, my decision for this area parallels the route management of Alternatives 4, 5, and 6. It wasn’t environmental effects however that led me to make this change. My reasons were social. Most trails in this Travel Planning Area lead into the Spanish Peaks Wilderness and therefore my decision designates them for non-mechanized uses. The Cherry Creek Trail is an exception in that it is a fairly long trail that stays out of designated Wilderness altogether. In my preferred alternative for the DEIS and again in the FEIS (Alternatives 7 and 7-M), I saw this as a motorcycle opportunity. However, after speaking with motorcyclists at open houses and in one-on-one meetings, I heard that this route had limited use. In contrast it had considerably more use with stock users and is a primary access route to additional trails that progress into the Wilderness. The trail system is also served by only one trailhead facility. By precluding motorcycle use of this trail, I create a more complete higher quality non-motorized experience for hikers and stock users in the Travel Planning Area. Managing this trail for non-motorized use is also compatible with the management of trails on the adjacent Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

**Below are excerpts from the comments and responses during the public comment period.**

In Alt 7M, the Lava Lake trail would be closed to stock use due to safety concerns with heavy pedestrian traffic and lack of adequate stock containment areas around the lake. This is a difficult and evolving decision, please see the Record of Decision for the final information on this route.
The upper portion of the Wallace Pass trail #58 holds snow until mid July because of the north facing aspect. This can cause safety issues and result in damage to the trail facility. However, The Forest Service in Alternative 7M has decided to not have a blanket livestock seasonal restriction, but instead leave it to the discretion of the District Ranger to determine if a seasonal closure is need to protect facilities and provide for human safety on a year-by-year basis.

The Sunlight trail would be managed for non motorized uses in the preferred alternative. Alternative 3 considered managing this route for motorcycles to the Sunlight/Sweetgrass Divide. The preferred alternative would manage this route as non-motorized in summer and in winter to provide non-motorized recreation opportunities.

In response to comments from stock users, alternative 7M would institute a seasonal stock restriction (stock would be prohibited prior to August 1) in the trailless portion of the Beartooth Plateau, and would prohibit overnight stock use in the fragile trailless portion of the area instead of a total prohibition as outlined in other alternatives. See the summer non-motorized map of alternative 7M.

Research has well documented the affect that stock has on fragile alpine environments. Please see the analysis in the FEIS in Chapter 3 under Wilderness and Soils. Please note also that proposed stock use restrictions for the Absaroka-Beartooth Plateau were modified in Alternative 7-M of Final EIS from what was included for Alternative 7 of the Draft EIS. Refer to page C-1 of the Final EIS for a summary of this change. Alternative 7M will allow day use stock travel to these areas after July 31 when the area is the driest and most resilient.

Based on comments from stock users, and suggestions for alternative mitigation measures as opposed to outright prohibitions Alternative 7M modifies the closure proposed in the DEIS. Alternative 7M would institute a seasonal stock restriction (stock would be prohibited prior to August 1) in the trailless portion of the Beartooth Plateau, and would prohibit overnight stock use in the fragile trailless portion of the area instead of a total prohibition as outlined in other alternatives. See the summer non-motorized map of alternative 7M. There would be no seasonal restrictions in alternative 7M to stock on the trail system, except on the Marianne Lake Trail. This would allow stock access to the most popular portions of the plateau as soon as weather permits.

Rich Inman etal Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen

Pine Creek Lake Trail - This trail has been used by stock just short of forever; long before it became a popular hiking trail. Who determined it is "not suited to pack and saddle stock use..."? What were their qualifications? Instead of closure to stock, we recommend the multiple use sharing system that we suggested in the Lava Lake scenario.

According to our National Visitor Use Monitoring (2001) and Wilderness Ranger encounter, the trail receives an average of 200 people/day in the summer. Given this amount of use, there is a concern for public safety relative to horse and hiker encounters. In Alternative 7M, the trail would be open to livestock after beginning 9/15 through 12/1. This will accommodate hunting, but also reduce the safety concern relative to livestock and hiker use.

Ron Jarrett Hawley
Mountain Ranch 821 McLeod

The restriction of horses from trails during the spring until June 15 appears to be a broad brush approach that is unneeded and stops traditional and historic use that is useful and provides economic benefit to the road. At Hawley Mountain Ranch we have a small amount of use prior to June 15, but it is needed to prepare for the season. We clear trails ahead of our season opening, which helps train new guides with the trails and helps the horses get prepared for the season.
In response to many comments from stock users, alternative 7M would remove the "blanket" spring restrictions to stock use, and instead identifies a small number of specific routes where spring stock use would be restricted to protect facilities. See chapter II in The Description of Alternatives for a detailed listing of these routes.

Robert Everson

I backpacked the Beartooth Mtns in my earlier years and currently take horses in annually. I love the backcountry and would hate to lose the access b/c I am a senior citizen and I cannot backpack in.

No alternative proposes to entirely prohibit stock use on the Beartooth Plateau. In response to comments on the DEIS, the proposed closure area in the trail-less portion of the plateau would be managed in alternative 7M with a seasonal prohibition to stock (no stock travel prior to August 1) and would prohibit overnight stock use in this same area. See Alt. 7M summer non-motorized map.

Tom Heintz Gallatin Outfitters Assn

AB Plateau: While we recognized that these high environs are fragile and slow to heal we do not believe the appropriate solution to what at this point is relatively minor resource damage is to close the area to all horseback users. Education, monitoring, requiring a permit and penalties for resource damage are options that would be a better choice and have not been considered here.

Based on comments from stock users, and suggestions for alternative mitigation measures as opposed to outright prohibitions Alternative 7M modifies the closure proposed in the DEIS. Alternative 7M would institute a seasonal stock restriction (stock would be prohibited prior to August 1) in the trailless portion of the Beartooth Plateau, and would prohibit overnight stock use in the fragile trailless portion of the area instead of a total prohibition as outlined in other alternatives. See the summer non-motorized map of alternative 7M. There would be no seasonal restrictions in alternative 7M to stock on the trail system, except on the Marianne Lake Trail. This would allow stock access to the most popular portions of the plateau as soon as weather permits.

Ron Nusbaum

The trail from Theil Lake to Martin Basin needs to be realigned or closed to animal travel - it is much to steep and dangerous. It is simply inhuman treatment of an animal to get it into such a place.

In the preferred alternative, this trail would be managed primarily for foot travel, travel by stock would be allowed but not encouraged. Your information will be useful in prioritizing future maintenance and reconstruction projects. The travel plan is designed to address what the appropriate uses of trails and roads are in the future, but does not generally address current maintenance issues.

The travel plan decision will describe the "desired future condition" in terms of what specific uses we intend to manage road and trails for. By clearly defining what uses are appropriate on what routes, our maintenance and reconstruction efforts will now be tailored to provide the best facility for those activities. Most facility management issues will be addressed through site specific plans for maintenance or reconstruction at another time and are not addressed in this decision.

David Schliz Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen
The proposed 34,000 acre area of the Beartooth Plateau - The Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen see this as really a restriction to stock use only, and that this area would be open to all other nonmotorized/ mechanized users. The word closure is misleading and implies closure to all.

The alternative maps and detailed description of the alternatives in the DEIS only state that stock use would be prohibited within this area.

David Schliz

By looking at your rationale and reviewing the alternatives analysis in the DEIS, it is unclear where these point to point trails are located, number of miles of said trails, and what effect stock use specifically has on erosion and vegetation. Nor does the analysis and rationale demonstrate whether stock users only are generating this series of user created trails, justifying closure (restriction) to stock use.

No attempt was made to inventory all the user created trails, or impacted sites on the forest related to stock use. Monitoring over time on the Beartooth Plateau has shown an increase in the number of user created routes and impacted sites but exact mileages or locations are unavailable. The DEIS and FEIS in Chapter 3 – Effects Analysis in both the Wilderness and Soils chapters address the effect that stock have on erosion and vegetation damage. We don’t believe that only stock use is responsible for the damage observed, but research well documents that stock use is more impactful than foot travel (see the effects sections for specific citations).

David Schliz

You reference safety concerns for the user. It is unclear in your analysis and rationale what the safety and concerns to stock users are, justifying closure (restriction). What is your rationale, for using safety in closing stock use in a Wilderness setting?

Safety concerns identified in the DEIS specifically were noted for the Lava Lake and Pine Creek Lakes trails - the issue is the tremendous amount of pedestrian traffic these trails receive. The safety concern is mixing stock traffic with very heavy pedestrian traffic on trails that don’t provide safe options for the two user groups to safely pass on steep narrow congested trails. Alternative 7M and the ROD would address this issue by prohibiting stock use on these trails during the most congested months, and allowing fall traffic (see the detailed description of the decision).

David Schliz

In looking at the alternatives analysis, it does not appear that enough site-specific analysis has been conducted to disclose the effects to this resource to conclude this area is unsuitable for stock use justifying this closure.

Research has well documented the effect that stock has on fragile alpine environments. Please see the analysis in the FEIS in Chapter 3 under Wilderness and Soils. Please note also that proposed stock use restrictions for the Absaroka-Beartooth Plateau were modified in Alternative 7-M of Final EIS from what was included for Alternative 7 of the Draft EIS. Refer to page C-1 of the Final EIS for a summary of this change.

David Schliz

In reference to your proposed trail closures of the Zimmer Creek Trail #574, and the Mariane Lake Trail #570 and the Lower Aero Lake Trail #573, site specific analysis has not been conducted to disclose the effects to the wilderness resource, by eliminating stock use on these trails. Further, it is unclear on the DEIS summer non-motorized map as to the correct trail numbering convention for the above mentioned trails, leading to Zimmer Lake and Lower Aero Lake.
Thank you for the comment about confusion with the summer non-motorized maps. The route labels in Chapter II AB Plateau Map have been corrected in the FEIS. The Zimmer Creek Trail #574 and Lower Aero Lake Trail #573 have had condition inventories competed, and it is the professional judgment of District and Forest Trail managers that these trails are not suitable for stock travel, nor can they be readily reconstructed to be suitable for stock travel without undue effects to the wilderness resource. In Alternative 7M trail to Mariane Lake #570 will be open to day use travel after July 31, but will not be managed as a stock route with that use emphasized.

David Schliz

The Albino and Jasper Lakes, Sommerville Lake, the area north of Elaine Lake, Hidden Lake, Martin Lake, and Sky Top Creek. Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen feel a range of opportunities exist for stock use and access in these areas. Again closure (restriction) of these areas has not been specifically analyzed to determine the effects of stock use.

Research has well documented the affect that stock has on fragile alpine environments. Please see the analysis in the FEIS in Chapter 3 under Wilderness and Soils. Please note also that proposed stock use restrictions for the Absaroka-Beartooth Plateau were modified in Alternative 7-M of Final EIS from what was included for Alternative 7 of the Draft EIS. Refer to page C-1 of the Final EIS for a summary of this change. Alternative 7M will allow day use stock travel to these areas after July 31 when the area is the driest and most resilient.

Ernest C. Strum

Red Lodge Recreational saddle and pack stock use should be accommodated within each portion of the AB wilderness where it historically existed at the time the wilderness was designated and trails should be maintained to the standard that existed at that time.

In response to comments from stock users, alternative 7M would institute a seasonal stock restriction (stock would be prohibited prior to August 1) in the trailless portion of the Beartooth Plateau, and would prohibit overnight stock use in the fragile trailless portion of the area instead of a total prohibition as outlined in other alternatives. See the summer non-motorized map of alternative 7M.

Rich Inman et al Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen

We are opposed to blanket closures and therefore opposed to this closure. We would support site specific closures based on resource damage. An alternative might be access on a permit only system.

In response to comments from stock users, alternative 7M would institute a seasonal stock restriction (stock would be prohibited prior to August 1) in the trailless portion of the Beartooth Plateau, and would prohibit overnight stock use in the fragile trailless portion of the area instead of a total prohibition as outlined in other alternatives. See the summer non-motorized map of alternative 7M.

Russ Pool

The Beartooth Plateau area should be a day ride area - no overnight horse use (picketing, grazing, etc.).

In response to comments from stock users, alternative 7M would institute a seasonal stock restriction (stock would be prohibited prior to August 1) in the trailless portion of the Beartooth Plateau, and would prohibit overnight stock use in the fragile trailless portion of the area instead of a total prohibition as outlined in other alternatives. See the summer non-motorized map of alternative 7M.

David Klatt
Mariane Lake Trail, Zimmer Creek trail: These Trails are rocky and Rough-They do not need to be closed, apply opportunity exists for those who want to get away from people. If off-trail is a problem limit outfitters to the trail. This will not be a problem.

Limiting outfitter use to specific trails is a good suggestion, but outside the scope of this decision. Marianne and Zimmer Ck. Trails would have seasonal prohibitions to stock use (prior to Aug. 1) with overnight stock use prohibited in Alternative 7M.

Tim Shinabarger

I would like to see the Russell Creek trail left open to stock use. Due to the rough terrain this trail passes through, horse users rarely leave the trail. The trail is fairly solid and provides a nice pass through when used in conjunction with East Rosebud.

The Russell Creek Trail #567 would be open to stock in all alternatives.

Eric Albus

I do not feel that any closure to livestock are necessary in the Wilderness Area. Pack stock use is about the only way most folks will ever be able to see the backcountry. It seems that there is an underlying current to eliminate use of our forests, and other remote areas.

Alternative 7M would manage fragile areas of the Plateau for seasonal stock restrictions, and prohibit overnight stock use in some locations (see the Alt. 7M summer non-motorized map). The Wilderness Act gives several mandates: to manage wilderness for the use and enjoyment of the American People, while preserving wilderness character. It goes on to further define in Sec. 2 c wilderness as an area that "generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable..." In cases where recreation use of wilderness is leaving lasting impacts - the Agency is compelled to manage those impacts to preserve wilderness character. This may involve restrictions on certain uses including stock in critical locations. The Gallatin NF has no intent to eliminate valid recreational uses in wilderness, including stock.

Tim Shinabarger

My only other concern would be the closure of the high plateau are to stock use. I believe it is a mistake to believe that the point to point trails are being caused by horse use. From my experience foot traffic is just as hard on this country as horses. When I patrolled this area I found horse use to be actually quite low due to the nature of the terrain once off the built up trails. Most of all the horse use was by the outfitters operating out of Cooke City. Of course they are aware of the problems caused by leaving the trails in the softer ground of the plateau, and should cooperate in preserving the area.

We are aware that all traffic contributes to "user created" routes on the Plateau. We agree that commercial users of the Plateau need to be part of long term solutions to effective stewardship of this wilderness resource.

David Molebash Montana Ranch Company

Wallace Pass Trail (#623). I believe there is a recommendation to keep this trail closed until early July of each year to prevent erosion. While there are years where this trail would be closed due to snow and blow down up until his date, outfitters and the public should be allowed to attempt the trail at an earlier date. Outfitters especially should be allowed earlier access so that the trail can be cut out for use by them and the public. I would suggest an early to mid June date to open the trail.
Rich Inman et al Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen

We recommend a strengthened volunteer trail maintenance program be implemented on the Gallatin Forest with participants from the wealth of various volunteer organizations in our area.

Good suggestion - thank you. The volunteer component of managing recreation on public lands becomes more important every day and we intend to take full advantage of those opportunities.

Rich Inman et al Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen

We are opposed to any blanket type (area or seasonal) closure to stock use. However, we would support other restrictions or actions to the extent that they are clearly necessary for resource protection or safety. We expect this would be done through site specific NEPA analysis with opportunity for public involvement.

In response to many comments from stock users, alternative 7M would remove the "blanket" spring restrictions to stock use, and instead identifies a small number of specific routes where spring stock use would be restricted to protect facilities. See chapter II – the description of alternatives for a detailed listing of these routes.

Rich Inman et al Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen

The Gallatin Valley Backcountry Horsemen are opposed to seasonal closures. The outcome for us seems the same as a blanket closure. We recommend instead, site specific closures where and when trail conditions warrant. In talking with your professionals, we came away unconvinced that the spring freeze/thaw cycle is significantly different from impacts such as intense thunderstorms, wet fall hunting season, or other similar conditions. We know most of these impacts can be mitigated through proper maintenance and/or relocation of certain trail sections. We spend considerable time maintaining trails prior to June and July 15th. Your seasonal closures would preclude us from providing this volunteer service.

In response to many comments from stock users, alternative 7M would remove the "blanket" spring restrictions to stock use, and instead identifies a small number of specific routes where spring stock use would be restricted to protect facilities. See chapter II – the description of alternatives for a detailed listing of these routes.

Rich Inman et al Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen

Upon further study we find, in fact, that seasonal closures are proposed for all trails on the forest. This, in effect, becomes a blanket closure until May 15, June 1, June 15 or July 15. You do not have the resources for implementation, nor will you receive the priority to check conditions to see if trails can be open earlier than the assigned closure dates.

In response to many comments from stock users, alternative 7M would remove the "blanket" spring restrictions to stock use, and instead identifies a small number of specific routes where spring stock use would be restricted to protect facilities. See chapter II – the description of alternatives for a detailed listing of these routes.

Mark Kossler

I am opposed to the closure of wilderness area of the GNF to stock travel. This is a historical use that allows many people to use the back country for recreation.

Thank you for your comment. We do not propose to "close the wilderness" to stock in any alternative. The preferred alternative does propose to seasonally prohibit stock use in certain areas to mitigate user conflicts, address safety concerns, and mitigate damage from stock on the fragile high elevation trail-less portion of the Beartooth Plateau. Please see the Alternative 7M summer non-motorized map.
Donald Lovely

Spring breakup is cited for limiting trail access via horseback until June 15. I'm particularly interested in the restriction as it applies to Cabin Creek and the Taylor Fork units. This closure essentially eliminates backcountry access for Montana's spring bear season which is usually April 15 - June 15.

In response to many comments from stock users, alternative 7M would remove the "blanket" spring restrictions to stock use, and instead identifies a small number of specific routes where spring stock use would be restricted to protect facilities. See chapter II – the description of alternatives for a detailed listing of these hunters have the physical ability to take a 300 pound animal and pack it out 5 or 10 miles on their back. If this closure is enforced, then one can assume that only those bears easily accessible from roads or open to vehicles will be taken. Not only will this restriction concentrate activities into a lesser area, but over time it will impact the harvest age as fewer mature animals will be accessible to hunters...and shortly harvest restrictions will have to be imposed.

Tutti Skaar

As a horseback rider, I would also like to see a balance of horse trails that have good access to water, that aren't shared with motorcycles and four wheelers. Horses and motorized vehicles don't mix too well.

Nearly all the Gallatin NF trails would be open to horses. In alternative 7M - many miles of trail are emphasized for stock with good access to water. In the preferred alternative the we would manage over 2100 miles of trail, and nearly 1700 miles would be emphasized for horses (stock) with motorized use restricted or prohibited.
The following information was taken from the FEIS Chapter 3 and map details.

Recreational Livestock (Pack and Saddle Stock) Few changes are proposed in any alternative that would drastically change the current outstanding opportunities for riding horses or other pack stock. In Alternatives 2 through 7-M, a few miles of trail would be closed to stock, primarily to address user safety concerns, either because of heavy mixed traffic, or trails that are poorly suited to stock traffic and cannot be fixed. In Alternatives 3-6, the trail-less portion of the Beartooth Plateau in the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness would be closed to stock (see the summer non-motorized alternative maps). Little stock traffic occurs there now, and sensitive soils and tundra habitats make the area particularly vulnerable to resource damage from cross-country travel by stock (see Issue 19: Soils and Vegetation and Issue 21: Wilderness). Alternative 7-M would employ a seasonal restriction to stock in the restricted area on the Beartooth Plateau, with stock prohibited from December 2 – August 1, as opposed to an outright prohibition yearlong as in Alternatives 3-6. No over-night stock use would be allowed within the restricted area during the open season. See Issue 21: Wilderness, for a more detailed description of Alternative 7-M and its projected effects. The recreation opportunity table (Table 3.16. 17 ) that precedes this section displays the number of day hiking opportunities. These are analogous to stock opportunities in most cases, both exclusively non-motorized, and those shared with motorized trail vehicles. The following tables (Table 3.16. 23 and Table 3.16.24) summarize the number of miles of trails emphasized for stock, and the number of miles where stock would be prohibited.

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<th>Mountain Range</th>
<th>Approximate Miles of Trail with Emphasis on Recreational Livestock Use</th>
<th>Alt. 1</th>
<th>Alt. 2</th>
<th>Alt. 3</th>
<th>Alt. 4</th>
<th>Alt. 5</th>
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<th>Alt. 1</th>
<th>Alt. 2</th>
<th>Alt. 3</th>
<th>Alt. 4</th>
<th>Alt. 5</th>
<th>Alt. 6</th>
<th>Alt. 7-M</th>
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An analysis of the quality of different recreational livestock opportunities was not completed, but rather compared to the analysis done for hiking opportunities. Short, relatively easyrecreational livestock opportunities are somewhat analogous to short day hikes (see Table 3.16. 17 and Figure 3.16. 2 through Figure 3.16. 3 for that summary). More arduous longer ridesare somewhat analogous to long hike opportunities (see Table 3.16. 17 and Figure 3.16.4 for that
summary). All areas where stock use would be prohibited are on the Beartooth Plateau. (See the summer non-motorized alternative maps.) The trails proposed to be closed to stock in Alternative 7-M include the Rendezvous ski trail system near West Yellowstone, the Lava Lake trail in the Spanish Peaks, Pine Creek Falls and Lake trails south of Livingston, and two short segments of trail on the Beartooth Plateau that access Lower Aero and Zimmer Lakes. In Alternative 7-M, stock use on the Pine Creek Trail #47 would be prohibited seasonally: from December 2 – September 15, with no over night stock use yearlong in the Pine Creek Lake Basin. After September 15 the trail would be open for day use stock traffic. Alternatives 3-6 propose various seasonal restrictions for stock use on trails during the spring breakup/freeze-thaw period of April 1 to either May 15, June 1, June 15 or July 15. Trails that are particularly susceptible to early spring damage from stock (and motorized or mountain bike travel) would be closed during this brief period to protect the trail resource and minimize soil and vegetation damage. Most trails under this scenario would be open by mid-June. In years when there are warm, dry springs and closures are not warranted, they would be opened early. Likewise, in extraordinarily wet, long springs, closures could be extended to protect trails until they dry out. Forest roads would not be closed to stock at any time, and particularly those closed to motorized use in the spring would provide early riding opportunities. See the individual TPA trail matrices in the "Detailed Description of the Alternatives" section for proposed closure dates.

Not all trails would be closed seasonally to stock in Alternative 7-M, just those particularly susceptible to spring damage, or where snow conditions force stock users off the routes, causing repeated unacceptable resource damage off trails. Specific trails proposed for spring closure to stock in Alternative 7-M include: Buffalo Horn #1, North Cottonwood #545, Swan Creek #186, Porcupine Creek #34, Two Top Divide #39, Bear Canyon Loop #440, Rock Creek South # 178, First Yellowmule #162, West Pine #139, Thompson Lake # 282, and Chestnut Mountain #458. Most of these routes would be closed to stock between April 1 and June 15. Several of these routes are proposed new construction and would only be closed until the trails had "hardened" after being built.

The following images were taken from the non-motorized final map showing stock restrictions.
N of immigrant