



Letter: Pryors travel plan should protect resources

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It is a pleasure to be back in the U.S. after spending six months in Armenia, a country where, sadly, the government is comprised of oligarchs complicit in selling off the last 7 percent of forest lands that remain there and where environmental laws exist without pretense of enforcement. But I was very concerned to read in Brett French's article about the U.S. Forest Service Beartooth District Travel Plan that the Forest Service personnel pledge to satisfy all users of the Pryor Mountains. It is critical that the Forest Service decision-makers prepare a travel plan that fulfills their mandate to be stewards of the natural resources, protecting and sustaining them.

Protection of the wonderful "island" landscape of the Pryor Mountains means that there must be an approach to the new travel plan that ensures quiet habitats for wildlife as well as for hikers and others seeking the solitude and beauty of this special place. The travel planners must imagine the Pryor Mountains a decade or so into the future and ensure that the ecosystems will still be functioning in a healthy and integral fashion, keeping in mind the years of drought conditions that have rendered many plant species weak and vulnerable. Their plan must avoid excessive fragmentation of habitats and minimize the potential for erosion, incursions by invasive weeds or simply too much noise.

Of the list of alternatives, alternative C provides the best hope of conserving the natural resources and still allowing a variety of recreational uses.

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