

A Priceless River

To the Editor,

Rivers are an asset to all Montanans. Some of the simplest and most affordable acts of relaxation and recreation take place along Montana's amazing rivers. Our rivers are also huge income generators for the state, providing jobs for gas station attendants, hotel employees, outdoor gear shop employees and owners, and fly fishing guides; the list goes on. Many people in Montana receive all or part of their income from the draw of the rivers.

Senator Walsh's East Rosebud Wild and Scenic Bill, recently co-sponsored by Senator Tester, brings long overdue attention to protecting Montana's rivers. If this bill passes it will be the first time since 1976 that Montana has put a new river into Wild and Scenic designation - celebrating and protecting the free-flowing nature and remarkable values of this creek in perpetuity. Ironically, in a state heralded as the last best place, only 368 miles of Montana's 169,829 miles of river, or 0.2% of our rivers, hold this protection.

As a former professional river guide on the storied Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, I have had the pleasure of spending time within and beside a myriad of rivers. While I can name various rivers in Montana that I frequent because of their proximity to my home that deserve Wild and Scenic designation - the West Boulder, the Upper Yellowstone, the Gallatin, to name a few - the East Rosebud is most definitely deserving.

A few weekends ago my three-year-old son and I spent a couple nights camping up the East Rosebud. As we walked up to Elk Lake and beyond, my son would look at the high gradient, turbulent river and say "the water is wild", and as we stopped at the calm lake "Momma, water is soft". The beauty of this river that flows through mountains carved by glaciers is worth protecting for my child and for many generations to come.

Cheers,
Gretchen Druliner
Bozeman