



## Flathead River Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan: Scoping 2019

**Comment Sheet:** Please use the space below to record any additional comments you would like to submit to the agencies related to the Three Forks of the Flathead River Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP).

You may drop this sheet off at the meeting tonight, or mail or bring it to the Flathead National Forest Supervisor’s Office: 650 Wolfpack Way, Kalispell, MT 59901.

**More details on submitting comments are included on the back of this sheet.**

Name: \_\_Luke Osborne\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I just returned from a 4 day packraft trip (Aug 16-19, 2019) on the MF Flathead River from Granite Creek down to Bear Creek. It was my first experience on the MF. Additionally I have done two packraft trips down the length of the South Fork Flathead to Meadow Creek (July 2016 and July 2017). Here are a few observations from my trip:

1. I did not notice any signage at the Granite trailhead or on the access road to let me know I was entering a Wild and Scenic river corridor, nor did I notice any signage to let me know the rules of the river.
2. I had the Three Forks of the Flathead guidebook with me, so I was familiar with the W&S rules of the river, however the guidebook could be more intuitive. It took me a few times rereading it to realize how the matrix of the rules of different sections on the MF applied.
3. We encountered one guided trip (3 rafts) and a group of packrafters (2 people in group).
4. In comparison to SF Flathead and other rivers I have been on in the Bob Marshal complex clarity of the rock color was noticeable diminished (river scum coated on rocks). This improved the further we traveled downstream and in very short reaches of the river with swifter current. Maybe the presence of river scum on the rocks in the upper MF was due to the low flows and maybe that is not typical? Water temperature seemed warmer than I expected for bull trout habitat.
5. Fishing was OK. We caught a lot, but was surprised at the number of small trout we were catching (compared to the SF). The lack of size of the trout caught is similar to the experience of the other river users we talked to.

**For more information, please call Flathead National Forest Recreation Program Manager, Chris Prew at 406-758-3538 or [chris.prew@usda.gov](mailto:chris.prew@usda.gov)**



## Flathead River Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan: Scoping 2019

6. Flows were low. Looking at the gage near West Glacier flows were about 980 cfs when we launched which less than the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of flows. Where we put on in the river the flow was likely a quarter of that flow at West Glacier. I was very surprised to see a guided raft trip at those levels. The guides admitted that the flows were very low and made oaring very challenging/technical. They were having to line boats through a number of the rapids.
7. We spoke with one of the guides on two separate occasions of the trip. (The guide was a very personable and nice guy by the way). In both of those locations we found some trash on the river gravel without having to look very hard. I found a cigarette butt and also a plastic (empty) fly container.
8. We found campfire rings in each of the 3 locations we camped on the MF.
9. We saw a good number of raptors/bald eagles which was pretty cool. We did not see any other sign of wildlife. Did not see any sign of bear. This is similar to my experience on the SF.
10. In general in my trips down was the SF and the MF the wilderness experience seemed to lack due to the number people, developed camps, and lack of wildlife. The number of guided boat trips a huge detractor in all my trips. The guides come in with gear boats and big tents and seem to have a corner market on the best campsites on the river. On the SF we seemed to encounter them around almost every corner. There was that feeling of having to compete for a good campsite.
11. These are beautiful places and worth protecting!



## Flathead River Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan: Scoping 2019

### Submitting Comments:

The public is asked to pay particular attention to how the desired condition statements as well as the proposed monitoring indicators, thresholds, and triggers protect and preserve Outstanding Remarkable Values for the three forks of the Flathead River system presently and into the future. This is the foundation of the CRMP and will inform management actions and inform determination of user capacity for the Flathead WSR.

The proposed action can also be accessed at the Flathead National Forest NEPA page (Flathead Comprehensive River Management Plan): [www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project56536](http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project56536). Hard copies of the proposed action document are also available for review at the Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger Station (10 Hungry Horse Drive, Hungry Horse, MT, 59919) or at the Forest Supervisor's Office (650 Wolfpack Way, Kalispell, MT 59901).

Public open houses to provide further information about this project will occur on **August 13 and 20, 2019, from 6 pm to 8 pm** at the lower level of the Arts and Technology Building at Flathead Valley Community College.

Your comments on the proposed action are important because we will use them to refine our proposed activities and inform our environmental analysis. Please provide comments on the proposed action by **Friday, September 13, 2019**. If you do not have any site-specific comments at this time, but would like to receive information about the project, please let us know via email, mail, or phone so we can add you to the contact list.

You can provide us comments by doing the following:

- Email comments to: [comments-northern-flathead@usda.gov](mailto:comments-northern-flathead@usda.gov). Acceptable formats include MS Word, RTF, or PDF.
- Fill in an electronic form by going to the same Flathead National Forest NEPA page (see above) and selecting "Comment/Object on Project" on the right hand side of the screen.
- Hand-deliver or mail comments to the Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger Station in Hungry Horse or the Forest Supervisor's Office in Kalispell (see above for addresses).

This comment period provides those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Official, Forest Supervisor Chip Weber. Only those who provide timely and substantive comments will be eligible to object to the decision pursuant to the 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names, addresses, email addresses and phone numbers of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action.

Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents. At this time, I anticipate the project analysis will be documented in an environmental assessment (EA). The EA will evaluate issues, consider alternatives, and analyze effects of the proposed action and any alternatives. An EA and draft CRMP are expected in January/February 2020. At that time there will be an additional 30-day public comment period. Following this comment period, we will be publishing a draft decision notice which will include a pre-decisional objection process. Only those people who provided timely and substantive comments during the scoping or EA comment periods will be able to participate in the objection process. A final decision is expected sometime in the fall of 2020.

**For more information, please call Flathead National Forest Recreation Program Manager, Chris Prew at 406-758-3538 or [chris.prew@usda.gov](mailto:chris.prew@usda.gov)**