Dear Supervisor Botello,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed actions of the Comprehensive River Management Plan. I’m remarking here, in part, as a third-generation resident of West Glacier, an avid private floater, and a former guide with more than fifteen years of commercial experience on the Middle and North Forks. But at my core, I’m writing you as a father of two young boys, a dad who desperately wants for his sons’ generation and those that follow to know the forks of the Flathead and their innumerable, invaluable attributes not as ORVs that we mostly, almost retained, but as awe-inspiring hallmarks, irreplaceable gems atop the continent’s crown.

In this CRMP the Flathead National Forest has the chance to do something truly great, to guide and wholly steward one of America’s great watersheds through its next several decades. The guardrails and standards of this plan, if developed with data-driven logic and asserted with community-backed confidence, can and will make monumental strides toward protecting these rivers while maintaining balance between their necessary natural role and their abundant recreational benefit.

The task before you is neither small nor easy, but elements of the draft plan combined with current and future data, quality communication, and regular enforcement will result in structure that prioritizes the rivers first and within which the public can recreate, work, and abide.

I suggest the plan..

* Provide more clarity/detail around intended Management Actions when Triggers or Thresholds are exceeded.
* Clearly define user capacity estimates and how those use numbers will be gathered.
* Address levels of overcrowding at Blankenship, West Glacier and Moccasin.. issues at the latter will inevitably result in a highway fatality if not remedied.
* Target highest use times.. holidays, July/August weekends, etc. with staff/volunteer presence at Ford, Polebridge, Blankenship and Moccasin Creek.
* Provide better visibility and enforcement around current (and future) restrictions that exist at, near, or downstream of existing access sites. I.e. fishing restrictions at Bear Cr., Big Cr, no stopping between Bear Cr/Essex, etc. Many of the existing restrictions are sound but proper signage and implementation is necessary for them to have any effect.

I applaud the plans intent to…

* Establish a mandatory but unlimited free float permit across the system.
  + This creates a touch point and opportunity for communication/education with all users.
* Prohibition of Camping and Parking on Gravel Bars
  + Will help decrease congestion, conflict, trash, fire rings, etc.
* Solid Human Waste Containment Requirement
* Fire Pan or Blanket Requirement
* Noise Level Restrictions
* Group Size Limitations
* BNSF Agreement for Spill Prevention
* Camping Restrictions: Belton Bridge to Mcdonald Cr
* Drone Restrictions

Thank you for your time and dedication through this planning process.

Ryan Thompson