

March 13, 2026

Anthony Botello, Supervisor
Flathead National Forest
650 Wolfpack Way
Kalispell, MT 59901

Dear Supervisor Botello;

Thank you and your team for sticking with the trials and tribulations to get this plan to the penultimate finish line and allowing the stakeholders of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River system an opportunity to comment on the 2026 draft Comprehensive River Management Plan.

As a multi-decade resident of the small community of Polebridge, situated along the western edge of the North Fork river, I have been deeply involved in the local conservation efforts of the North Fork Preservation Association whose work also observably parallels my concerns for the area as a small business owner. The protection of the Outstanding Remarkable Values of the Three Forks of the Flathead river system is essential for our business' culture and, in turn, success. It's essential for future generations.

I write today to comment briefly on the draft management plan with specific attention the North Fork of the Flathead. To begin, I appreciate the Land Acknowledgement at the start of the document. This is an crucial step toward future stewardship efforts.

I very much support the proposed management actions on prohibiting motor vehicle camping or parking on gravel bars in NF MU1 and MU2, a problem which is rapidly increasing, especially with the evolution of multi-terrain motorized "toys". Beyond gravel bars, I believe that this should include areas which are designated "open to cross-country travel" on the current Glacier View Motor Vehicle Use Map and specifically FS road #10915. Vehicle camping spreads invasive species and increases the risk of contamination by fuel, human waste, and garbage directly effecting ORV's. To that effect, I fully support the proposed management action requiring solid human waste containment and metal fire pans or blankets for campfires. One solution to ensure these proposed management actions succeed is to place a barrier at the beginning of FS road #10915.

Lastly, with reference to NFPA's request in their comment letter, there is a need for a reduction of the user capacities for NF MU1 and MU2 before the 2026 CMRP is finalized. This is based on unsubstantiated user capacity data as well as the discussion in the EA regarding declining bull trout and west slope cutthroat (WSC) trout populations which directly conflict with the suggested (almost doubling of) user capacity. Concerns extend to MU2 based on fisheries concerns as well. Both user capacities for the NF Scenic sections MU1(310) and MU2(480) are incongruous with the capacity (360) suggested for the NF Recreation MU3, which retains a modest UC on a

section of river that already sees more use than the scenic sections and is being managed to prioritize the recreation Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs).

Again, thank you again for all of your work on this opportunity and I'll look forward to the final product.

Flannery Coats Freund