

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/1/2019 6:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Dear Flathead National Forest,

As a long-time resident of the North Fork of the Flathead valley, I've seen an enormous increase in for-profit river traffic during the summer months. This affects not only the river and its users, but also everyone in the North Fork with the accompanying road traffic that generates enormous amounts of road dust and road wear. The situation is reaching the point where open conflicts among river users is appearing.

Exactly half of the river resides within Glacier National Park. The use of National Park resources are substantially more restricted than those for National Forests, and the management plan needs to reflect this.

Use of the river by floaters and rafters is not an unlimited resource, but there's currently no control over such use. To get some sort of control over the use of this resource, a strict permit system is needed. Crucially, it will be important to avoid permanent permits to commercial river operators that can be subsequently monetized, a situation which has led to inequities and major problems in Grand Canyon National Park and elsewhere.

As the demand for recreational resources begins to exceed supply, it will be important to insure the integrity of the resources themselves. It's an unfortunate situation, but like highly restricted hunting licenses for highly desired species, regulation of recreational access will become a fact of life. It's better to start sooner rather than later, before resource degradation sets in.