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Comments: I am submitting comments based upon observations that both our friends and family have made over the past 25+ years of recreating on various sections of the Flathead River system. As has been known and discussed for some time there has been an increase in the number of visitors recreating on the Flathead river. This increase has obviously paralleled increases in the local population along with record numbers of visitors that have come to our area to enjoy the vast recreational opportunities we so highly value.

With that said I would like to comment specifically on sections of the Flathead River System familiar to our family and friends based on years of observations rafting, kayaking and paddle-boarding. In a typical year between family and friends we have enjoyed various sections of the Flathead river system 20-25 times a season. Usually this is a mix of rafting or kayaking Moccasin Creek to West Glacier (10 days), West Glacier to Blankenship (4 days), Great Northern Flats to Glacier Rim (12 days), Glacier Rim to Blankenship(3 days), Cedar Flats to Spotted Bear Campground (2 days)and Camas bridge to Glacier Rim (2 days). Please note some of these trips are combined as part of a longer day on the river (i.e. Moccasin to Blankenship section). Typically when we have recreated on various sections of the river we have between 4-8 people in our party on any given day. We have outside of a few days during the peak season mid-June end-July been able to enjoy our experiences even with the noticeable increases in visitor use on various sections of the river.

Based on observations, areas where increased visitor use has had the most impact and could be improved would be the river access sites at Moccasin Creek, West Glacier, Blankenship and Glacier Rim. These sites could benefit from improved parking to handle overflow during peak periods, along with improved restroom facilities and hardened and improved kiosks that provide useful educational information for protecting river values to the public. FYI, most of the individuals we have interacted with while recreating on the river value their experiences and the flexibility they have to enjoy those experiences.

It is our opinion from enjoying many years on the river sections mentioned above, that outside of few days during the peak period of mid-June end-July (primarily weekends & the July 4th holiday) we still have very enjoyable experiences on the river without interference from other parties and groups. This is especially true of the time of day, mid-mornings or late afternoons where we have the river for the most part to ourselves. For this reason we believe that improvements can be made as mentioned above to accommodate the increased river use on the Flathead. Furthermore we do not believe at this time it would be in the best interest of those of us who enjoy the river the most to initiate a permit system without looking first to improvements with access, on-site facilities and public education.

In closing we highly value the opportunities us locals have to recreate the various sections of the Flathead River system. We live here to take advantage of those opportunities and the flexibility to do so when time allows. We value the opportunity for you to take public comment in hopes that a river management plan can be implemented that reflects all the concerns of all stakeholders. If you have any questions please do not hesitate in contacting me. Thank you for your time.