

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/12/2019 6:00:00 AM

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: The following comments pertain to the North Fork of the Flathead River.

The most important value at risk for me is losing the privilege to float the river when I want to float.

I am a resident of the North Fork valley. When I attended the first open house meeting, I heard loud and clear that many locals (defined as the whole Flathead Valley) use the North Fork River a lot and fear losing that privilege. It is their thing to do in the summer. Personally living so close to the river, I enjoy the freedom to float a section of the river at the last minute, depending on the weather and my schedule.

I am not for a permit system that could potentially exclude local Montanan's who live here and open the river to tourists. I think most floaters are locals. People pay high taxes to live here in Montana because they want to enjoy things like the river. It is my understanding that state parks in Montana are free to people with a Montana license. I would hate to see a fee put in place for people who live here.

I understand the management plan is looking for a maximum number of parties seen per day. I don't mind seeing many more parties than your trigger amounts of only 3 per float.

Often a float for the locals is just a section of the river. Some sections are more populated than others depending on time of year.

If you do permit, limit the season to July 1 through August 15. But I would not permit all days each week. I would allow one weekend day and at least 1 to 2 week days without any restrictions on number of floaters. You could also permit before a certain time daily and open it up to everyone after 2 PM. This way if a person has a permit they would have parking, as they would be getting on the river earlier in the day. This will allow anyone a chance to float later in the day, recognizing they may encounter more parties. People who choose to go later in the day, would have a much higher tolerance for number of parties on the river. For lots of us it's about the feeling of being on the river and there is solitude whether I pass lots of parties or not.

Even now locals choose to go early or late in the day to avoid lots of people. Also early in June when the water is high and late season when the water is low have fewer floaters.

The plan states it will address resource protection, development of land and facilities and user capacity.

1. Under resource protection: something needs to be done about the human waste evident at both Sondreson Meadows and Coal Creek. It is right by the river where people put in and take out. Possibly the same condition exists for Wurtz.

2. Under development of land and facilities: I would suggest putting vaulted toilets in the above areas. The use is only going to increase and the problem will get worse and is contributing to resource damage within the 1/4 mile corridor. One of the management direction statements for existing WSR's provide for Administrative facilities on designated wild and scenic rivers. It states they are to be screened or designed to blend into the natural river environment and development be consistent with the river classification. Since the north fork is designated scenic and not wild, with roads (not trails) already leading to the river's edge, the responsibility thing to do is install vaulted toilets in these areas. They don't have to be seen from the river and they can blend in with the area. In the meantime, consider putting temporary outhouses with cleaning service, at these sites.

3. Under capacity: if a number must be identified I would raise the trigger number to 10 parties a day.

Thank you for taking my comments.