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Comments: As boaters living in the Flathead Valley, I feel it is part of our responsibility to share our thoughts on the proposed permitting of the Flathead River system. The accessibility to floating the Flathead was one of my main draws to moving to the area. The Flathead is an amazingly diverse river system that is possibly getting to the point of overuse. I believe there are other steps than can be taken to ease the use, encourage users to follow Leave no Trace ethics and protect the river for years to come.

I lived in the Bend area for 3 years and was a BLM river ranger on the Deschutes for one of the summers. The Deschutes uses a boater pass system, the funds of which go towards the upkeep of the river itself. Every boater needs to have a pass for any day they are on river. As peak season approaches, some sections of the river have a limited number of passes due to popularity.

With requiring boater passes comes the need to have boat ramps be manned; which would be the case with a permit system. This could be an issue on the Flathead due to the number of accessible boat ramps on each fork of the river. The busier boat ramps (Blankenship, West Glacier, Moccasin, Teakettle) could be staffed by employees, while the less frequently used could be manned by volunteers. It's amazing how many volunteers will show up to support a river they love. This system would obviously take years to put in place but there is always a new generation of boaters ready to get on the river.

I'm attaching a few links with more information on the boater pass system for anyone that wants to learn more.

<https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/permits-orwa-deschutes-bprelease-sched.pdf>

<https://www.recreation.gov/permits/251980/additional-information>

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