

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/30/2024 7:27:12 PM

First name: Colleen

Last name: McMullen

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex has a long history of outfitting and guiding, and many outfitters there have been great supporters of protecting these Wildernesses. But, outfitting and camps have impacts which are often glossed over or overlooked, including Wilderness trails so heavily used by pack animals that they more resemble roads than foot or horse trails, and outfitter campsites in Wilderness that are allowed to have structures like tent frames, corrals, and hitching posts. All of these outfitter impacts are exacerbated by the extraordinarily large party sizes of people and pack stock allowed in the Wildernesses.

Now the Forest Service proposes to renew 62 special use outfitter permits that will be in place for at least a decade, without disclosing the impacts from these commercial operations. The agency's scoping letter lacks important information, such as annual inspections and public complaints, and on top of that, the agency proposes to approve the renewals with a Categorical Exclusion (CE), rather than go through a more rigorous environmental review.

Accordingly, the Forest Service must make at least the following information available for public review on its website and must also extend the public comment period for another 45 days after information is published on the website:

- permitted service days versus actual use for each permit

- annual inspections, performance evaluations, or public complaints related to each campsite or operator

- any NEPA documents and related decisions dealing with outfitting service levels or allocation in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

- Campsite Management Plans for each outfitter camp

Given the many impacts outfitting has on the Wilderness, the Forest Service must not use a Categorical Exclusion (CE) to renew any outfitter permits. An Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement with accompanying public input is called for to properly protect this fabled Wilderness Complex.