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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Subject: Protect the Integrity of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex - Request for Comprehensive Review of Outfitter Permits

To Whom It May Concern,

As an individual deeply concerned about the preservation of our national wildernesses, I am writing to voice my objections to the U.S. Forest Service's current approach towards renewing outfitter permits in the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Great Bear Wildernesses. These areas, forming the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex in Northwestern Montana, are not only vital components of our National Wilderness Preservation System but also a sanctuary for a diverse array of wildlife, including species such as grizzly bears, lynx, and wolverines.

The renewal of 62 special use outfitter permits, poised to impact this pristine landscape for at least a decade, is a decision of great consequence. Therefore, it is alarming that this process is being conducted without proper transparency or consideration of environmental impacts. The lack of disclosure about specific permits, their locations, and associated impacts undermines the ability of the public to provide meaningful input.

In light of these concerns, I urge the Forest Service to:

1. Fulfill its primary responsibility of preserving the wilderness character of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, prioritizing it above commercial uses such as outfitting and guiding.
2. Provide comprehensive information for public review, including details of permitted service days, annual inspections, performance evaluations, public complaints, relevant NEPA documents, the Wilderness Complex Character Narrative, the 2017 needs assessment, and Campsite Management Plans for each outfitter camp.
3. Extend the public comment period by an additional 45 days following the publication of this information, to allow for thorough public engagement and review.
4. Refrain from using a Categorical Exclusion to renew outfitter permits. Given the significant impacts of outfitting on the Wilderness, a more detailed Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary, along with opportunities for public input, to ensure the enduring protection of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, being one of the original Wilderness areas designated 60 years ago, deserves the utmost care and protection. It is our collective duty to ensure that its unique ecological and wilderness values are preserved for future generations. I trust that the U.S. Forest Service will consider these points seriously and act in the best interest of this irreplaceable natural treasure.

Sincerely,

Shreshtha Jain