Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/16/2024 7:16:39 PM
First name: Jeffrey
Last name: Smith
Organization:
Title:
Comments: Thank you for allowing me to comment on this issue.

You are proposing to renew existing outfitter permits in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex without disclosing which permits, their locations, or any associated information. This is wrong. You shouldn't be trying to make it difficult to provide meaningful public input.

I've spent many days in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Memories of fishing the South Fork of the Flathead River, riding 30 miles a day on a horse that hated me, and climbing magnificent mountains are seared into my brain. I have a hard time remembering my anniversary, but I have detailed moment-by-moment memories of my time in the Bob. I wrote an article about the Charlotte Peak fire published in SMITHSONIAN after one trip.

Many outfitters led by Smoke Elser have been great supporters of Wilderness. But, other outfitters have not been quite as ethical. Wilderness trails often resemble roads or mud rivers, and outfitters often leave tent frames, corrals, and hitching posts. Sometimes party sizes are too big.

Now, without disclosing the impacts from these commercial operations, the Forest Service proposes to renew 62 special use outfitter permits, which will be in place for at least a decade.

The agency is once again abusing the Categorical Exclusion (CE). Your scoping letter lacks information about annual inspections and public complaints. You need to go through a more rigorous environmental review.

Protect wilderness character in my beloved Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex by:

o Preserving the wilderness character of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, not to promoting special interests such as outfitting/guiding.

o Trusting the public! Your re-authorizations need to include site-specific information.

o Making complete information available for public review on your website.

o extending the public comment period for another 45 days after information is published on the website.

o Listing permitted service days for each permit

o Publishing annual inspections, performance evaluations, or public complaints related to each campsite or operator.

o Publishing NEPA documents and related decisions dealing with outfitting service levels or allocation in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

o Publishing the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex Character Narrative, the 2017 needs assessment, and Campsite Management Plans for each outfitter camp.

o Screw the Categorical Exclusion (CE) to renew outfitter permits and do a goddam Environmental Impact Statement with accompanying public input.