

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/30/2025 5:07:30 PM

First name: Marilyn

Last name: Costamagna

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The Forest Service's proposal for new regulations and increased monitoring of recreation use on the Flathead River, including the 87 miles that run through Wilderness, is a start. However, the agency's proposed actions fall short in its ways to acknowledge current recreation impacts or address the significant threats to Wilderness already occurring in one of America's preeminent wild places.

Instances of those proposal shortcomings may be seen in the following list:

Habitat protection on the Flathead River is not something that can wait, and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex deserves immediate action in order to preserve the wild.

The Forest Service needs more scientific data informing user capacity numbers.

Immediate action is critical to address wildlife displacement in Wilderness caused by current recreation numbers.

Immediate action is needed to reduce impacts to the Middle Fork of the Flathead caused by flights in and out of Schafer airstrip in the Great Bear Wilderness.

The vast majority of use on the wild rivers should be allocated to public use, and commercial outfitting and guiding should be limited to only the level that is "necessary and "proper" as required by the Wilderness Act.

Data collection and analysis needs to include the entirety of the Flathead River corridor, one-quarter mile to either side of the river.

Immediate action is needed to bring the impacts along the South Fork of the Flathead into compliance with the area's Wilderness Management Plan.

While the Forest Service is to be justly commended for taking steps toward limiting impacts and gathering data regarding recreation overuse, if it is truly interested in preserving the health of the Flathead River system, the agency should take this opportunity to research the impacts recreation is already having on Wilderness and wildlife, and act as quickly as possible to address the problems. Whether it is boats, planes, pack stock, or hikers, excessive recreation use will inevitably harm habitat and displace animals that rely on Wilderness in a world growing increasingly claustrophobic.

Now more than ever the safeguarding of wilderness areas depends on people like us and not on politicians and/or self serving profit interests to preserve nature and its gifts to us all even to those that have plans in motion that will harm the delicate balance of nature..... so let's stand up for protecting that which we can safeguard with some further study and the best protective actions for nature and its world regarding The Forest Service's proposal for new regulations and increased monitoring of recreation use on the Flathead River.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Costamagna