

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 1/31/2025 2:54:29 AM

First name: K

Last name: Danowski

Organization:

Title:

Comments: To the US Forest Service:

Your agency is proposing new regulations and increased monitoring of recreation use on the Flathead River, including the 87 miles that run through Wilderness. However, the agency's proposed actions fall far short, failing to acknowledge current recreation impacts or address the significant threats to Wilderness already occurring in one of America's preeminent wild places.

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex stands as one of the flagship Wilderness areas in the National Wilderness Preservation System - the 3% of land in the Lower 48 where native wildlife can still find refuge from the pressures of ever-expanding human civilization. For the sake of the Wilderness and its wildlife, USFS must consider limitations on current uses, and your analysis of impacts must expand beyond the river to include the entire corridor a quarter-mile on both sides of the river.

While we commend USFS for beginning to limit impacts and gather data regarding recreation overuse, if USFS is truly interested in preserving the health of the Flathead River system, the agency should take this opportunity to research the impacts that recreation is already having on Wilderness and wildlife and act quickly to address the problems. Whether it is boats, planes, pack stock, or hikers, excessive recreation use will inevitably damage habitats and displace animals that rely on Wilderness in a world growing increasingly claustrophobic.

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. Specifically:

- USFS needs more scientific data informing user capacity numbers.
- USFS must act immediately address wildlife displacement in Wilderness caused by current recreation numbers.
- USFS must immediately to reduce impacts to the Middle Fork of the Flathead caused by flights in and out of Schafer airstrip in the Great Bear Wilderness.
- USFS must allocate the vast majority of use on the wild rivers to public use, and limit commercial outfitting and guiding to only the level that is "necessary and "proper" as required by the Wilderness Act.
- USFS must include in its data collection and analysis the entirety of the Flathead River corridor one-quarter mile to either side of the river.
- USFS must immediately bring the impacts along the South Fork of the Flathead into compliance with the area's Wilderness Management Plan.

Thank you for meaningfully considering my comments.