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Comments: The protection of habitat along the Flathead River and within the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex cannot be delayed any further. Immediate and decisive action is required to preserve the ecological integrity of these wild landscapes before further irreversible damage is done. Habitat degradation and wildlife displacement resulting from increasing recreational activities are serious issues that demand urgent attention.

One of the most pressing concerns is the need for the Forest Service to gather more comprehensive scientific data on user capacity within these sensitive wilderness areas. Current capacity numbers are insufficient and fail to account for the full impact of recreation on the environment. Without better-informed data, it is impossible to manage visitor use in a way that ensures the protection of these ecosystems for future generations. Effective management cannot occur in the absence of up-to-date scientific understanding.

Additionally, wildlife displacement in the Bob Marshall Wilderness is escalating due to the growing number of recreational users. As the volume of human activity increases, native species are being pushed further from their natural habitats. Immediate intervention is needed to restore a balanced coexistence between humans and wildlife, which includes re-evaluating recreational use levels and implementing stricter limits on human activity where necessary.

One specific area of concern is the flight traffic in and out of the Schafer airstrip in the Great Bear Wilderness. The constant air traffic along the Middle Fork of the Flathead is disrupting wildlife and polluting the pristine wilderness experience for all visitors. A reduction in flights and stricter controls on air access are essential to mitigate these impacts. The noise, disturbance, and potential habitat fragmentation caused by these flights must be addressed to maintain the wild character of the wilderness areas.

Moreover, the allocation of use on the wild rivers within these areas must be reexamined. The majority of use along these rivers should be reserved for public recreation, with commercial outfitting and guiding limited to what is "necessary and proper," as outlined in the Wilderness Act. Commercial use, if allowed at all, should be capped to levels that do not compromise the wilderness experience or the ecological health of the rivers.

Data collection and analysis of the Flathead River corridor must encompass the full expanse of the river and its surrounding habitat, extending at least a quarter-mile on either side. Without a comprehensive understanding of the entire river corridor, it is impossible to address localized impacts or to make informed decisions about user capacity and habitat restoration efforts.

Lastly, immediate action is required to bring the South Fork of the Flathead River area into compliance with its Wilderness Management Plan. The existing impacts along this stretch are not consistent with the protections outlined in the plan, and corrective measures must be implemented swiftly to prevent further degradation.

In summary, the preservation of the Flathead River corridor and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex demands immediate and comprehensive action. Without prompt intervention, we risk losing the wild, pristine character that makes these areas so unique and irreplaceable. The Forest Service must prioritize the collection of detailed scientific data, implement user capacity limits, and reduce the negative impacts of recreational and commercial activities to ensure that these wilderness areas continue to thrive for generations to come.