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Comments: Hello, thank you for accepting my comments regarding the Flathead Comprehensive River Management Plan. A large section of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River System runs through the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex including the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Great Bear Wildernesses. A plethora of iconic native species like grizzlies and wolves live here.

On a summer weekend, the Flathead is flooded with anglers and floaters, often accompanied by guides and outfitters, drifting on the water or camping and fishing along the banks.

The proposed new regulations and increased monitoring of recreation use on the Flathead River is needed but fall far short, failing to acknowledge current recreation impacts or address the significant threats to Wilderness already occurring.

The Flathead Comprehensive River Management Plan proposes a number of positive actions, including: prohibiting parking and car camping on gravel bars; requiring containment of human waste within 200 feet of the river's edge; prohibiting drones; requiring a fire pan or blanket for campfires within or above the highwater mark; and noise level and group size limits.

However, the user capacity numbers provide no information on how these numbers were reached or data to show the actual user limit when considering the well-being of fish and wildlife and the experiences of wilderness visitors.

The document also fails to provide information on impacts to Wilderness due to current recreation use, including the displacement of wildlife and waterfowl caused by rampant overuse, such as the endless stream of outfitting and guide services profiting from tours through the river corridor, and low-flying aircraft overhead. In just one example, the airstrip in Schafer Meadows results in multiple daily flights over the Middle Fork of the Flathead in the Great Bear Wilderness. The current flight patterns are having an enormous impact on wildlife and peaceful enjoyment in the Great Bear Wilderness.

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, limitations on current uses should be considered, and an analysis of impacts should expand beyond the river to include the entire corridor a quarter-mile on both sides of the river.

While I commend the Forest Service for taking steps toward limiting impacts and gathering data regarding recreation overuse, in order to preserve the health of the Flathead River system the agency should research the impacts 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 harm habitat and displace animals that rely on Wilderness in a world growing increasingly crowded and industrialized. By taking decisive action now, we can protect these treasured wild places for future generations.