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Comments: Hello! I am a frequent user of this river system and a local in Columbia Falls - I also have experience managing [and seeing the mismanagement] of river systems in other populated areas like the Upper Colorado River. I am eager to see the proposed establishment of a mandatory permit system for all floaters implemented - this has low impact on responsible users and high impact on vital data collection that will benefit the health of our rivers!

I also very much support the proposed extended no-stopping order and prohibition on dogs around the Goat Lick. Our use of the river should always prioritize minimizing impact and goat conservation! This is the only area mountain goats consistently access and cross the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. There is NO need to stop here or allow dogs in this area.

However, I do think that additional monitoring provisions for wildlife trends and recreational impacts to wildlife are needed. This is such an incredible opportunity to really learn more about these VITAL corridors for the wildlife that we claim to prioritize. The current plan must be expanded to include monitoring where wildlife commonly cross the the Middle Fork between the Bear Creek River Access site and West Glacier. This would help inform the siting of future wildlife crossing structures on the highway and / or railway as well as other actions to improve wildlife connectivity - and whether recreational river use is harming or displacing certain species like bears or moose.

Finally, an equitable portion of priority use service days should be allocated to non-commercial outfitters who provide affordable, education-focused trips or who serve underrepresented demographics, like Indigenous communities, veterans, youth, or people with disabilities. The proposed allocation at present would allow massive growth for the four existing commercial outfitters, all of whom offer the same basic service - single or multi-day whitewater rafting or fly fishing trips - primarily to tourists. There is NO reason for this exponential growth - the best part about these river stems is that they are not over populated, they are wild. I am not even sure that the river access can handle this expansion. In Colorado we had to manage river access points with rangers because they could not be effective with self management. In contrast, one temporary permit for only 50 user days would be reserved for an educational program or provider for underserved communities. This inequitable allocation ratio is a totally unacceptable commercialization of the public's river and honestly embarrassing. It needs to be better balanced. I support a much more reasonable increase in commercial permits [with maybe a plan to increase slowly over 5 / 10 years] and a percentage match of educational permitting.

Once we increase these permits, its WAY harder to go back than it is to increase further. We don't know enough about these rivers yet to warrant such a drastic change in commercial usage.

Thank you for your consideration and reconsideration.