

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/3/2025 7:34:33 PM

First name: Denise

Last name: Flanagan

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I am from Missoula, MT, and my father worked for the Forest Service, but is now retired. I know the Bob Marshall wilderness and Flathead River Corridor personally, so this discussion is not an abstraction to me.

It is my feeling that your proposed actions for this area fall far short, in that they fail to acknowledge current recreation impacts or address the significant threats to Wilderness already occurring.

Your Flathead Comprehensive River Management Plan does propose a number of good actions. 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 are all great and necessary steps to help protect the area.

However, while you list user capacity numbers, you provide no info. 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 other visitors to the wilderness.

The document also fails to provide information on impacts to Wilderness due to current recreation use, such as the displacement of wildlife and waterfowl caused by rampant overuse, from impacts like the endless stream of outfitting and guide services profiting from tours through the river corridor, and low-flying aircraft overhead. There are already multiple daily flights over the Middle Fork of the Flathead in the Great Bear Wilderness, and that busy flight pattern is already having an impact on wildlife in the Great Bear Wilderness.

I grew up with the wildlife of the Bob Marshall, and I want that wildlife to be around for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. 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, for a quarter-mile on both sides of the river.

Limiting impacts and gathering data regarding recreation overuse is great, but you must also research the impacts recreation is ALREADY having on Wilderness and wildlife, and act quickly to address those problems. From boats, planes, pack stock, and hikers, excessive recreation use is undoubtedly already harming habitat and displacing animals that rely on Wilderness in a world growing increasingly claustrophobic.

Please act NOW to protect habitat on the Flathead River and within the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, in order to preserve the wilderness and the animals that rely on it; they are already being impacted. You need more scientific data informing your user capacity numbers, and you must make this data public. Collection and analysis need to cover the entire Flathead River corridor, for a quarter mile on each side of the river. And flights in and out of Schafer airstrip, in particular, should be scrutinized, as they are impacting the Great Bear Wilderness.

When it comes to the use of our wild rivers, that use should be restricted to primarily public use, with commercial outfitting and guiding being limited, as required by the Wilderness Act. My Dad floated the Bob Marshall on several occasions, along with a few friends, and this is the sort of public use that was originally intended for these lands, and which should be preserved for future generations.

Finally, the impacts along the South Fork of the Flathead are already out of compliance with the area's Wilderness Management Plan, and immediate action should be taken to bring them back into compliance.

Thank you for your diligence in the above matters. This is such a special place.