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Comments: As a commercial river guide for four years on the Flathead River system (North Fork border down, Middle Fork from Schafer down) I have seen the river go through it. Obviously the river has changed since the '80s, but I have seen drastic change in just four years being part of the recreation explosion starting in 2020.

The Flathead River system is incredible and deserving of being preserved. I've had the privilege spending time in the Upper Middle Fork (Schafer to Bear Creek) and after spending time on other rivers, this stretch is the most special and beautiful I've ever experienced. However, guiding commercially I've noticed the changes in campsites and the amount of usage increasing. Fire rings, not only being built, but showing up everywhere. This goes for the lower MF and NF as well. Those scars are difficult to remove and spoil a wilderness experience. Along with fire ring scars, I've seen increased surface defecation and toilet paper along the river corridor as well. Not only that, but spongy surfaces where people have buried defecation everywhere. A specific example is at Castle camp on the Upper MF. It has gotten to a point where if you're trying to bury defecation, you're digging up someone else's. Catholes are no longer sustainable on this river system. Pack it in/pack it out system is the only system we should have. There should be no exception for packrafters. The 200ft rule is rarely followed. Groovers/wagbags MUST be a requirement, along with fire pans/blankets. This not only needs to be required for multi-day trips, but needs to be checked and enforced. Before people fly into Schafer Meadows, they should have to pick up their permit with the Forest Service and have a ranger check that they have the required equipment to be recreating in our special river corridor. Other Wild & Scenic rivers have these requirements and checks, and you are not allowed to proceed without the proper equipment. This is so important to preserving our river system and educating our public. The lack of information and enforcement is shocking and dangerous to our river.