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Comments: Comment regarding the Flathead Wild and Scenic River System

Proposed Action for the Comprehensive River Management Plan

Botany should be included as an ORV in all sections of the River Plan.

The Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORV) table should include Botany in all instances where it was left out. There may be no rare native plants in recreational areas at the river's edge, but some of that is most likely the result of recreational use. If botany is not listed as an ORV, it may suffer from less funding than other priorities. There are two states in which plant life occurs along the river.

One state of plant life is its native form. Native plants contribute to the health of the river in various ways including supporting feeding wildlife, feeding fish, sheltering the insects that feed fish, and controlling sedimentation and erosion. Inattention to the botany of an area, especially areas of camping, picnicking, fishing, and boat launching and takeout, can lead to degradation of the health of the river.

The other state of plant life is its nonnative form. A portion of the nonnative plant population is invasive. While both Glacier National Park and Flathead National Forest work hard to combat invasive plants, recreation can lead to the introduction of new invasive plants or the spread of invasive plants to new areas. Additionally the river itself is a conduit for the spread of invasives. Given that invasive plants crowd out native plants and native plants are important to the health of the river, Botany is an ORV. Sometimes, the removal of invasive plants allows the return of natives, some of which could be rare, unique, or exemplary.

In conclusion, the designation of Botany as an ORV in the North Fork Recreational section, the Middle Fork Recreational section, the South Fork non-wilderness wild section, and the South Fork Recreational section is important to the health of the river system. The ORV designation of Botany has the potential to ensure Botany equitable funding given limited dollars.

Thank you for considering this important aspect of the plan.