

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 2/6/2025 2:56:09 AM

First name: Anthony

Last name: Robatzek

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I have three points to comment on.

1. Disposal of human waste. Under the proposal people will be allowed to dispose of human waste on site as long as they do so greater than 200 ft from the water. As a regular user of the river corridor and one of the people patrolling both the north and Middlefork I can state from experience that this allowance is overly optimistic of human nature. Many people will follow this rule, but a high enough percentage of the human population will do what is both easy and convenient and not travel outside of the required range. I have spent many years in easily accessible wild places to know that toilet paper will continue to "bloom" wherever people think it is convenient. As someone who also enforces rules (US Park Ranger) this allowance creates a situation where enforcement would almost require catching someone in the act. If we simply required packing out then I could easily check all parties (especially overnight groups) for the appropriate equipment and act accordingly.

I would strongly advocate for a clean requirement that all river users be required to pack out solid human waste.

2. The user limit as described in the plan calls for allowances for increased user capacity. Many days this is not an issue, such as shoulder seasons or less heavily impacted sections of the river. Where this truly becomes a potential problem is in then section from Moccasin to Blankenship. Under current use patterns I have patrolled the river (intentionally contacting and tallying every person encountered) and come up with 300+ people in a single patrol. This has happened many weekends in peak season in the whitewater section while continuously floating and not conducting a stationary monitoring checkpoint. The result of this heavy use is a complete lack of solitude, wildlife viewing, or even the ability to freely float the river without impediment. With this level of heavy peak season use I have encountered lineups to enter rapids, and an experience similar to a crowded amusement park ride.

I am not sure what an appropriate user limit would be, but the number needs to be looked at more closely in the context of patroller field observations.

3. The prohibition of parking on gravel below the high watermark. While I love this idea in theory, I can not think of a viable way of enforcing such a rule with current infrastructure and enforcement staff. If implemented, who would enforce this rule? There are not enough Forest Service LOE's to focus on this problem. From my past experience, the Forest Service FPO's have not been sufficiently motivated to write paper to tackle the issue. While I, as a Park LEO would love to be able to help, I have my own areas demanding my attention. I could potentially keep an eye on West Glacier launch, but not Paola on a regular basis. Doing so would also require a clear request for assistance and guidance from the Forest Service regarding enforcement goals. The other side of this issue is where people would park if the gravel areas were made off limits. The current designated parking areas are grossly insufficient for high use days. Would additional parking be created?

I support the idea, but question the ability to implement. People will find places to park weather or not they are provided. We also need a clear education and enforcement strategy that is reasonable and achievable. I do not believe this long ingrained culture will be changed without visible enforcement requiring resources and support of supervisors to field complaints from the public.