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Comments: Middle Fork and North Fork of the Flathead River

Support and Suggestions for River Management

Parking and Infrastructure Improvements

No parking should be allowed on gravel bars.

Additional parking, infrastructure, and educational resources should be developed at key access points, including Paola, Cascadia, Moccasin, West Glacier, Blankenship, Glacier Rim, and House of Mystery.

Camping Regulations

Camping should not be allowed from Belton Bridge to Quarter Circle Bridge to minimize environmental impact and overcrowding.

Vehicle Setbacks

A setback of 50-75 feet from the riverbank should be required at Sondreson Meadows and Wurtz Landing Strip to maintain a visual buffer and protect the river corridor.

Upper Section Management Adjustment

The upper section management area should be adjusted from Bear Creek - Cascadilla to Bear Creek - Paola to allow for biweekly overnight trips to be launched from Paola.

Threshold Measurements and Flexibility

Visitor thresholds should be measured by group, not individual boats, to ensure accurate and fair use assessments.

The system should allow for flexibility in use to account for fluctuating river flows (both high and low) and unforeseen events such as wildfires, rockslides, logjams, road closures, and public health emergencies (e.g., COVID-19).

Equal Regulation for All Permit Holders

Nonprofit guest permit recipients should be subject to the same regulations, training, and insurance requirements as commercial permit holders to ensure consistency and safety across all user groups.

Recommendations for Commercial Use Management

If usage thresholds are met, the following adjustments are proposed:

Seasonal Commercial Use Limits

Implement commercial use limits for a specific time frame, such as 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM, Friday - Sunday, from July 15 to August 10 to mitigate overcrowding during peak season. Caps of use, if required should be on a hourly level or daily level. Limit commercial put-in time to 45 minutes at Moccasin and West Glacier to reduce congestion.

Priority Use Pool (PUP) Management

The Priority Use Pool (PUP) should remain accessible to all commercial outfitters with flexibility to allow for competition and growth.

There must be no historical ownership of the PUP by any one permit holder to ensure access and opportunity.

Scheduled Commercial Put-in Days for Scenic Sections

Designate specific commercial put-in days for scenic portions of the river. For example:

Bear Creek and the Border on the North Fork: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.