

Non-Commercial Bear Trap Canyon Float Permit Recommendation to the BLM

DRAFT 5-26-2022

SUMMARY:

The number of parties floating through the Bear Trap Wilderness regularly exceeds the 6 parties per day defined by the BLM in their Limits of Acceptable Change. The limited launch area can also result in congestion and social conflict when multiple float parties arrive simultaneously. A Bear Trap Canyon Floater Permit is recommended for non-commercial users to gather better data on use and to help space out the launch times of different floating parties.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Gather better data on floating recreation in the Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness Area
2. Encourage floating parties to spread out launches throughout the day to ease congestion
3. Protect resources, both physical and biological, from the threats of unregulated growth of floating recreation in the Wilderness Area.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. A Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness Float Permit should be required year-round for all non-commercial groups that float the Wilderness reach of the Madison River beginning in 2023.
2. Launch times will be established to avoid congestion at the boat launch:
 - a. Each float party will be assigned a 1 hour launch window
 - b. 1 launch window will begin every 30 minutes starting at 6am and ending at 4pm (example 6am-7am; 6:30am-7:30am, etc). Any float party with a permit may choose to launch before 6am or after 4pm as an alternative to their assigned launch window. 4 of the 21 launch time windows will be blacked out for the Commercial River Service Providers.
 - c. Float parties shall be limited to a maximum of 16 people
3. One person must be named as trip leader. The trip leader may designate one alternate trip leader. The trip leader or alternate leader as named on the Permit must be present for the entire duration of the float and each day issued on the Permit.
4. After 2 years of implementation of the Bear Trap Wilderness Float Permit system, review launch data to determine if further management actions including a limit on the number of float parties per day should be implemented.
5. Cooperation between Montana FWP and the BLM is encouraged to determine if a cooperative management agreement that includes the Wilderness area should be established as part of comprehensive Madison River Recreation Plan.