

March 19, 2019 Testimony

1. Dave Campbell- I'm here for the Board of the Bitterroot chapter of trout unlimited. We support the amendments as written. We thank you for the opportunity to comment.
2. Chris Stroup- I'm an outfitter out of Missoula. I run Montana Cutthroat guide service. I support the amendment and want to thank you for this. It's the first time in my career that I've seen us be considered and our input heard. Hopefully this goes forward as planned. Thank you.
3. Marshall Bloom- I'm speaking as a private citizen who was a member of the BRRAC. I would like to thank FWP and F&W Commission for their strong supporting this citizens initiative. I support the rule amendment and thank you for the opportunity to comment.
4. Mark Smithers- My comment is that I am concerned that the activity on the river will increase with this rule. Based on the old rule if you went from painted rock to Applebury and you put in twice it would count 2 times and now as the new rule it won't count. It's a doubling of the activity on the river and I'd really like the commission to realize that.
5. Jeff Dagen- I'd like to present some data that I've prepared and hopefully it will appeal to all of us who care for the habitat of this river. The use is actually increasing and you can see that in the data presented by Chrissy. It has actually doubled in every location. The west fork is home to bull trout and cut-throat trout. In my opinion I have my data that will show that use is increasing on the upper river. The first message is upper river is 60 feet in width and the lower river is twice of that. The fishing channel is only 20 feet. You have little area to travel through this area. The assertion that use will spread out shows that other locations will be impacted and my data shows the amount of traffic can be as many as 140 boats based on launches per day. Peak parking demand on 40 on upper river. Applebury 40.
6. Sean O'Brien- I'm in full support of this. We tried to do something here. It wasn't easy.
7. Mike Bias- Executive Director of FOAM. I support amendment. I appreciate the adaptive management approach used here. All of the pieces. Commend FWP and Commission for their ability to have foresight.
8. Mike Hansen- I support the earliest review of the plan as possible. I don't support the wording change. Worst case scenario would mean 52, 104, 104 more, 158. I do not support that.
9. Fred Upchurch- I was one of the committee members. They already spoke and I think we worked really hard. Chrissy poured her heart out. She did an incredible follow up. In theory the plan is going to work. We created some problems. I support the change.
10. Bob Driggers- President of Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife. This whole operation as about the public asking for a chance At a good quality day of fishing. I am all for you outfitters need to make a living. We need more tweaking. Hannon to Wally and 53 outfitter and Tuesday through Thursday will take a lot away for a sportsman. Quality and resources. We don't have any data on non-commercial and you add it in though a resource that can't handle it. 30 mile stretch and all this use. I ask that this go in for attention.
11. Eddie Olwell- I am a local outfitter. 20 years. I was also a member of the committee. It was a 16 member volunteer committee. We all worked hard. It was hard but we got it done. It was hard and no one was completely satisfied. There was public comment during all of our meetings. I really wish all of you came to the meetings. People spoke up at them and we made changes. I support the amendment. It will ease congestion and help us spread out and give better service to customers will improve. Zero impact to non-commercial days and will not increase the number of boats.

12. Jay Melzer- I did attend most of the meetings. There seems to be consideration that number of boats that can be launched is greatly exaggerated. Follow through and count the boats. Publish the information until we get to the next review. Easy to say there will be 50 boats somewhere but there aren't enough parking spaces for that. I do support the amendment and I thank you for all your hard work.
13. Alex Hibala- I live in Hamilton and guided since 2006. I strongly support the amendment especially the access to launch. It more accurately captures what the commission wanted. The created problems of crowding was not seen. I think the river will be safer at high water. There won't be as many boats trying to get out. We can only do so much to spread out. This helps.
14. Pat Rogers- Every year I use guide on trips but I am primarily a wade fishermen and I haven't heard a word about waders this whole meeting. I don't think you have any information on those not in a boat. Now I fish towards the end of the fall. Standing in the West Fork and have tons of boats go by on a narrow stretch is not fun. I use guides but I'd like to hear more about wade fishermen.
15. Chuck Stranahan- Ok. Bingo. I'd like to agree with people who have thanked FWP for the exhausted amount of work and the people who spent all of those hours on the committee. Our little groups is the West Fork Fishery Conservancy. Great bull trout habitat degraded with the use. Mike Hansen can speak to that as he has lived there all of his life. Proposal was tabled. Offered some creative outlets. I am a former outfitter. I book with outfitters. I find that our shop outfitters are for spreading the floats out especially in 2 and 3. You need to spread out for a quality experience. We heard from a lot of people that overwhelming saying the wade anglers are not represented. They are opposed to this.
16. Jenny West- I am an outfitter for 3 years. I've grown up here. I support this change. It will help spread out and make things safer. Also it will help us be more creative with floats. You are going to be with 10 other boats and hopefully we can spread out now and we are respecting the waders by giving them Friday.
17. Tony Pateronstro- I've been fishing there since 1983. My evidence is only anecdotal but the fishing has gone down. I heard the gentleman who said the fishing is up and they never have surveyed the river. We should get a baseline and find out where the fishery really is so we can say what is definitely go along. I have sat on my property and I see a boat one behind the other all day long. That's too much pressure. I know it's a great thing and you catch a lot of fish and you make money. What I am concerned about is the fishery.
18. Dave Bean- I am a guide and I am for the proposed amendment changes. Thank you.
19. Kevin Shulund- I am in favor of the amendment. I think the committee worked really hard. They didn't have to adopt these regulations. The committee members were told they didn't have to. They did because the public was asking for it. Make a better experience for everyone. They did this for the public and people who live here. I understand what it was like 30-40 years ago. The fishery is still great. People work together. They work hard and help out locals.
20. Pride Jessen- I am 17 native Montanan. I am representing the younger generation of anglers in the Bitterroot. I fully support this amendment. I think it will be better. There will be no negative impact. We are trying to make a living and be guides. Thank you.
21. Pam Smithers- This rule was supposed to reduced pressure but use went up. You need to study this. Go up and count the boats. We should go back to 2016. Clearly this did not work.

22. Sandy Jessen- I support the rule change. I am wondering if the rise in our population has something to do with the increasing pressure.
23. Dell Reynolds- 70 years in valley and fishing since I was 9-10 years old. I drive that West Fork road every summer. We don't float. I appreciate the hard work. You have to start somewhere. I agree when I first came to the meetings I thought this was to see an increase in bank fisherman come back. It ended up being a police action which is good. I would like to see numbers who are bank fishing. I know all of the local spots and I don't see them as much and we are there every day of the week., I have never had a commercial boat be negative. They are polite. They get thorough quickly and resume fishing
24. Brooks Jessen- I am in favor of the amendment and it does not mean more boats. We will adjust. Put on earlier or later.