

Members of the FWP Commission. My name is Dave McKernan, I live in Anaconda Montana. I'm here today to urge you to adopt a recreation management plan for the upper Madison River that caps commercial use and implements a non-commercial zone daily.

While I fish and float Montana's rivers several times a week for nearly five months, I rarely visit the Madison River due to the intense crowding, congestion and competitive atmosphere. Compared to the Big Hole and Beaverhead Rivers, commercial use on the upper Madison River is simply out of control.

For the last two decades, I have enjoyed both the Big Hole and Beaverhead River recreation management plans that capped commercial use in 1999 and implemented a rotating non-commercial stretch of river. These non-commercial zones provide me and the non-guided public an opportunity to enjoy the rivers without the intense outfitting pressure. In these non-commercial zones we find relative solitude, where families teach their kids to fish and row, something you don't often see in the commercial sections of the river.

When the Big Hole recreation rules were first adopted in 1999, the Big Hole and upper-Madison Rivers were on a similar trajectory. Since the Big Hole recreation rules were adopted, the two rivers have diverged. Angler days on the upper Madison have nearly tripled and now exceeds 200,000 angler days annually, while use on the Big Hole has grown gradually to approximately 75,000 angler days last year.

The rules on the Big Hole and Beaverhead river have been in place for over 20-years; they are popular and effective. Outfitting still thrives on both rivers, but it is controlled and much of the past conflict has been resolved. The outfitters on these rivers have long ago adjusted to the rotating non-commercial zones. The Big Hole and Beaverhead rules didn't crash the economies of Butte, Dillon or the Big Hole valley. Likewise, fears for the economy of Ennis are unfounded and not supported by the Big Hole and Beaverhead River experience.

The upper Madison River desperately needs a similar set of regulations so the general Montana public recreating public can return and enjoy arguably Montana's gem of the Blue Ribbon trout stream system. Please adopt the rules proposed by FWP Region-3 in their 2018 Draft Madison River Recreation Management Plans with the addition of a citizen's day system.

I live in Anaconda, and I'd really rather be out on the river today, but instead I took the time to drive to Missoula to urge you to take action. I'd rather be on the river, but instead I am here, because this issue is that important and it is time for the FWP Commission to take action on the upper Madison River.

Thank you.



