

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

SMITH RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN

JULY 22, 1988

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SMITH RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN

CAMP BAKER ACCESS SITE TO EDEN BRIDGE

BACKGROUND

The Smith River originates in the Castle and Little Belt Mountains of west central Montana. The various tributaries of the Smith come together near the community of White Sulphur Springs from which the river flows northwesterly through a broad valley between the Big and Little Belt Mountains. The Smith turns to the north at Fort Logan and at Camp Baker, approximately 25 miles northwest of White Sulphur Springs, it enters a deep narrow canyon over 50 miles in length. Camp Baker is the last public access to the river for 61 miles, or until Eden (Huntsburger) Bridge located on Secondary Road 330. From Eden Bridge the Smith meanders through rolling hills to its juncture with the Missouri River at the town of Ulm, near Great Falls.

The Smith River Canyon is a tremendous natural resource with unique qualities, drawing visitors from all over Montana and across the nation. Because of these values, river use has been on the increase in recent years. Since 1981, the Department has attempted to reduce impacts on private landowners and provide benefits to users with a river guide and a seasonal river ranger program.

The Department, U. S. Forest Service, landowners, and river floaters (both outfitters and private) joined together in 1984 to

form an ad-hoc advisory committee. This committee also helped identify issues and advise the Department on river management. The Ad-Hoc Committee concluded it was time to develop a long range comprehensive plan. The work of the committee and river ranger program provided the foundation for beginning the planning process. In 1985 the Department contracted Joel Shouse, Planning Consultant, to prepare additional studies and make recommendations for a management plan.

This plan's development included involvement of the Department and U. S. Forest Service staff, the Ad-Hoc Committee, and the public. The final draft was again offered for public review through written comments accepted at the Great Falls Department office and Public Meetings held in Great Falls and Helena on May 9th and 10th.

PLAN GOAL STATEMENT

The goal of the Smith River Management Plan is to identify ways of providing continued public recreational use and enjoyment of the Smith River waterway, consistent with the river's capacity to maintain this use; to seek ways to minimize conflicts between river users and private landowners; and to protect the integrity of the river's water and canyon resources for future generations to enjoy.

THE PLAN

The Management Plan is presented in the following major sections: Public Use Management, River Corridor Management, Water Quality and Quantity Management and Management Team.

PUBLIC USE MANAGEMENT

Work to date has shown that public use of the Smith River during portions of the float season exceeds the recommended capacity of the existing public overnight camping facilities. In addition, the semi-wilderness experience of a Smith River float trip has been lost for some floaters. Public use is projected to increase in the future which further underscores the need for management of the floating use.

The Department's public use management objective is to provide continued public recreational use and enjoyment of the Smith river waterway consistent with the capability of the river resource and at an acceptable level of user satisfaction which minimizes conflicts and provides for a level of solitude.

Authority to Manage

The Fish and Game Commission has been given the authority to limit public use by Sections 23-2-302(5) and 87-1-303, MCA. This authority gives the Commission wide latitude in setting regulations and limitations on the recreational use of waterways.

in the interest of public health, public safety, and the protection of public and private property. However, the Commission's authority is limited or unclear in certain specific areas. The Department feels that in order to accomplish its public use management objectives for the Smith River that its authority needs to be broadened. Specifically, the Department needs the authority to control use based on the capacity of the river, to regulate and allocate use to both commercial and private entities, and to assess user fees to offset the costs of special river management. Therefore, the Department will seek additional authority from the Legislature for management of the Smith River.

River Capacity

The present river capacity has been designated as 100 floaters launching per day. This has been determined principally on the ability to house floaters overnight in public boat camps so as to avoid trespass on to private property. However, capacity is a variable and will change with time and circumstances thereby necessitating periodic re-evaluation by the Department. The Department is currently conducting studies to further refine the designated river capacity based upon both physical and social carrying capacity. Elements that must be considered in these re-evaluations include floater opinion, landowner attitudes, and an overall assessment of physical

impacts on the river environment. Considering these elements, the designation of 100 floaters will likely change. The Department will periodically conduct a re-evaluation of the river's capacity at least every three years.

Present public use of the Smith River has been measured and evaluated in terms of floaters per day. There are some benefits in measuring use in terms of float parties per day in future management. The rationale for this thinking is that capacity of the boat camps has been found to be a major determinate in suggesting capacity of the river. A party of eight requires very little more space in a boat camp than does a party of four and the same amount of separation from an adjoining party in the same camp. At such time as management progresses to a permit system to float the river, the Department will change from limiting floaters per day to float parties per day. At the present time this number would be 100 floaters per day divided by six to seven persons per party or approximately 15 float parties per day. Also at this time, the maximum size of float parties will be established by the Department. Based on the size of present campgrounds, party size will initially be limited to fifteen floaters.

The length of time required to make the Smith River float has been recognized as a limitation to greater public use. As the river is already at capacity during peak periods, no intermediate public access will be sought or provided by the Department in the future and will in fact be discouraged.

Monitoring Public Use

As use of the river during peak periods already exceeds what has been initially determined to be the capacity of the river, it is essential that continuing management include an accurate means of monitoring public use. The major reason for this is to evaluate the on-going success of the management program and to determine when it is time to initiate future stages of management. The present system of volunteers or Department personnel at the takeout is satisfactory as long as it can be staffed 100 percent of the time and the interviewers have the proper training in completion of survey forms. At such time that the present system cannot be continued it will be replaced with a mandatory registration at the Camp Baker launch site. As much of the needed information from users can only be obtained after the float, this will necessitate the use of a float log and survey form which parties will be required to complete and leave at Eden Bridge.

Outfitter Use

The Department and the Forest Service have determined that it is desirable to have some commercial outfitting on the Smith River. This is due to the recognition that not all people have the specialized equipment necessary to make this type of float

and not all people have the skills and experience to make a trip of this duration.

The Department does not presently foresee that it will require special permits for outfitters to float the Smith River. However, the additional authority the Department will be seeking from the Legislature includes regulation of specific user groups. The Department anticipates that this authority will be used to establish an outfitter percentage allocation in the future.

Although the Department will not regulate outfitter use initially, it will begin the process of determining an outfitter percentage allocation. Outfitter reports and the Department's Smith River float records will be reviewed for the five year period 1983-1987. The yearly outfitted percentage of trips will be averaged for these five years and this will be used as the outfitter percentage allocation. The Department recognizes that periodically the allocation percentage will have to be reviewed and perhaps adjustments made.

The Forest Service presently has an agency policy which calls for permitting and fees from outfitters who use public lands under their jurisdiction. The Lewis and Clark National Forest adjoins the river for approximately 30 percent of the float section and a significant number of the boat camps are on these Forest lands. The Forest Service will issue outfitter permits on the Smith River beginning in the 1989 use season in conformance with their national policy. This policy provides for fees based on service days. For example, a trip of four days

with 10 guests would be 40 service days. The fee is adjusted based on the time that the average float trip would spend on National Forest land. If less than 5% of the use is on National Forest land, the fee is reduced by 80%. If 5-60% of the use is on National Forest land, the fee is reduced by 40%. If more than 60% of the use is on National Forest land, the full fee is charged.

To conform with the allocation procedure outlined in the Department's Management Plan, the Forest Service has agreed that the issuance of their permits will be dependent on meeting the following requirements:

1. Permits will only be issued to outfitters who have operated on the river in at least two years during the period 1983-87. This is anticipated to provide sufficient outfitters to meet present and future demand for outfitter services. Therefore, no additional permits will be issued in future years.
2. The total use assigned to outfitted recreationists will be based on historical use.
3. Allocation of use between outfitters will be based on their average use for the period 1983-1987.
4. Group size will not exceed 15 guests.
5. Permits will be issued only for activities directly associated with river floating (floating, fishing, etc.). No additional permits will be issued for big game hunting, for example.

6. The National Forest outfitter permit will apply only to the use of National Forest lands and will not preclude the Department from requiring permits, charging fees, and establishing regulations for outfitting use on the river. However, to the extent possible, the permit requirements will be coordinated to be compatible with each other.

At such time as the management Plan indicates use must be limited and appropriate authority is in place the Department will apply the (Stage 3) allocation. The allocation percentage will initially be applied only to the peak floating period, approximately Memorial Day to the 4th of July. In subsequent management (Stage 4), the allocation percentage will apply to the entire floating season. Appropriate agencies will work with the outfitters who use the Smith River to develop a method of allocating outfitted trips in accordance with legislative mandates.

User Fees

The management actions necessary to implement this Plan will ultimately represent a significant cost to the Department. User surveys have shown that floaters are willing to pay for this special management and for protection of the river corridor. The additional authority the Department will be seeking from the Legislature will broaden the Department's authority to levy appropriate user fees for management of the Smith River.

At such time as management progresses to where permits are required to float the river the Department intends to charge a user fee which will relate to the cost of special river management. This fee will be required of all floaters regardless of whether it is a private or outfitted float and shall be paid at the time that the float permits are issued by the Department.

Staged Management Regulations

The growth in public use of the Smith River over the last ten years suggests that this trend will continue into the future and the time may come when floating will have to be limited through a competitive permit system. However, there are a number of stages that the Department will use before reaching this point.

The floating use for each previous season will be evaluated by October 1 each year. If the management stage then in effect is no longer achieving its objective, the Department will propose moving to the next stage for the following float season. Public meetings will be held in the fall for final Commission action by March 1 of the year the new management stage is to be in effect.

Stage 1 - This will continue the management program initiated in 1986 which featured the voluntary reservation system. The various elements of the program are described in the following:

- 1) Voluntary Reservation System - A reservation book is maintained in the Department's Region 4 headquarters in Great Falls. Floaters are requested to phone this office and book their planned trips on the river. The reservation system provides a service to floaters as it allows them to know how many other people will be on the river at a particular time and therefore schedule themselves to avoid the peak periods. It also provides the Department the opportunity to communicate with potential floaters and provide them with advisories on river flow, hazards, etc., and to discourage trips when reservations reach the current river capacity rating.
- 2) Seasonal River Ranger - A full time river ranger is stationed on the river for the entire float season. Responsibilities include policing of the floating use, assisting floaters, liaison and assistance to landowners, maintenance of boat camps, access sites and latrines, installation of signs, etc.
- 3) Floater Survey and Information - The Good Sams Club in Great Falls has assisted with this element of the management program in the past. Their major effort has been a 24 hour-day, seven day-a-week presence at the takeout at Eden Bridge and the interviewing and completion of the floater survey forms. At times during the season they have had members camped at the launching site at Camp Baker to assist

floaters in registering and passing out information. This effort has also been augmented by Department personnel during times when the Good Sams were not present or at peak times. If a program of this nature is not continued then management should move to Stage 2.

- 4) Boat Camp Declaration at Camp Baker - Floaters indicate on a posted map at the time they launch the location where they intend to spend their first night on the river. This enables floaters launching later the same day to plan accordingly. The map has to be wiped clean at the start of each day for the system to work effectively.
- 5) Sign Program - Missing signs are replaced and new signs added where they are needed to assist floaters and landowners.
- 6) River Guide - The Department with assistance of the ad hoc committee developed a new River Guide in 1986 for use by floaters. It contains maps, helpful advisories, and do's and don'ts for floaters. It is available at no cost at Camp Baker and some offices of the Department and Forest Service.
- 7) Creel Survey - In order to better manage the fishery, a voluntary survey is requested of fishermen. Survey cards are available at Camp Baker and can be left at Eden Bridge or mailed to the Department.
- 8) Low Water Advisory - The Department will issue advisories as a service to floaters and to reduce inconvenience to landowners.

- 9) Ad Hoc Committee - The committee continues its advisory role to the Department.

(Items 5 through 9 will continue in all future stages.)

Stage 2 - This stage will be used when full-time interviewers are not available at Eden Bridge and/or to ease floaters into a registration/permit system. It continues the voluntary reservation system but adds at Camp Baker a mandatory registration by means of a self-issued float permit which incorporates a floater's log that is to be left at Eden Bridge. This takes the place of the present user survey. This system may also incorporate a floater identification tag that can be attached to the craft. When use of the river exceeds its rated capacity for more than 15 days per season, the Department will initiate the rule making process to implement stage three management.

Stage 3 - Features mandatory reservations for a set number of permits for the peak period of approximately Memorial Day to the 4th of July. Based upon Department evaluations of the maximum size of parties will be established. Given the size of most boat camps party size would be limited to 15 persons, but would be re-evaluated upon implementing Stage 3 management. User fees will be initiated as well as outfitter allocation. (The Forest Service outfitter allocation and permitting will be implemented in 1989.) Permits, float logs, and craft identification will be mailed to the floater or outfitter after the reservation is booked and permit fees paid. For non-peak

periods the program will revert to Stage 2 management with voluntary reservations and self-issued float permits, floater log, and craft identification obtained at Camp Baker.

Stage 4 - This stage will simply broaden the Stage 3 mandatory reservation system to the entire floating season. All float permits, float logs, and craft identification will be mailed to the floater or outfitter after making the reservation and paying the permit fees.

Stage 5 - This stage will be initiated if and when the total user demand exceeds the total annual user permits and the reservation system is judged to no longer be fair and effective. It will involve a process for allocating float permits for the season or individual time slots.

RIVER CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT

The Department's objective in River Corridor Management is to protect the natural scenic integrity of the Smith River Canyon.

Work to date has defined the Smith River Corridor and identified the Corridor Objectives of the Department as follows:

River Mile 0 to River Mile 6.5 and River Mile 52 to River Mile 61 (the lead into and out of the canyon reaches of the river)

Corridor Width - 500 feet on either side of the river.

Corridor Objectives - Preserve and protect the viewshed

within the corridor by seeing that new structures, roads and other physical alterations of the landscape are setback out of the corridor. Logging and other major vegetative changes should not occur within the corridor. Haying and grazing are not objectionable, but fences and corrals should be located to minimize visual impacts.

River Mile 6.5 to River Mile 52 (the canyon reach of the river)

Corridor Width- One mile on either side of the river.

Corridor Objective - 1) Secure development right control on vacant river bottom land, in no case for less than 500 feet from the river, to insure that no development, construction, or vegetative or landscape alterations that would diminish the scenic integrity of the river. 2) Preserve and protect the viewshed of the floater for the balance of the corridor (out to one mile on each side of the river). Existing structures and other cultural development will be allowed to remain in this area.

The majority of the lands contained within the defined corridor are privately owned and have the potential for future changes in use and ownership. The Department will continue to work cooperatively with private landowners to attain corridor objectives stated above and will utilize when appropriate the Corridor Management Tools identified in the next section.

Corridor Management Tools

Previous work has identified a number of management tools available to the Department. They are discussed in the following and the role that each will play in this Management Plan is detailed.

Conservation Easements - Conservation easements have the potential of accomplishing all of the corridor objectives. The specific constraints or controls needed can be obtained without the purchase of the land and the land can still continue to be used for agricultural purposes. Key landowners will be individually contacted by the Department and be made aware of conservation easements and dialogue initiated and maintained concerning the use of easements on their lands. Some landowners may be in a financial position to where the tax benefits of donating conservation easements will be adequate compensation. In other cases the easements will have to be purchased. The Department does not anticipate that it will have significant funds that can be utilized for conservation easements within the immediate future. However, the Department will maintain a priority list for acquisition of easements and will look for ways to obtain easement funding. Individuals and private conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and Montana Land Reliance that can assist will be contacted and regularly updated on the status of the corridor protection.

Land Exchanges - Exchanges are a viable means of achieving management of specific areas of the corridor. The first priority is for exchanges which would secure boat camps in the areas where it has been identified that they are needed. It is preferable that exchanges be made for private lands on the river with public lands away from the river. In some cases it may serve the public use of the river to merely exchange riverfront lands.

The Lewis and Clark National Forest presently has as a management objective of acquiring additional lands in the Smith River Corridor. The principal means of acquisition is through exchanges. The Forest has not only lands in the vicinity of the river that have the potential for exchange, but lands in other locations within the Forest.

The Bureau of Land Management has one parcel within the corridor and a number of small scattered parcels in proximity to the corridor. The Bureau's Land Adjustment Map for Montana has identified these parcels for retention and the Bureau has indicated that they would consider exchanges if they are equitable.

There are three parcels of State School Trust Lands which have river frontage and several others which are in the vicinity of the river. The Department of State Lands is charged with the responsibility of managing these lands to secure the maximum revenue to the School Trust Fund. These lands are all presently leased to area landowners. Leasing all or portions of these parcels should be investigated with State Lands. These lands

also can be considered as possible trading stock for use in exchanges if the exchange would be favorable for the Trust.

The Department manages a number of parcels that were transferred from BLM to the State a few years ago. One or two of these parcels and portions of several others are not needed for the public's use of the Smith and could be considered for trade with the reservation of a conservation easement that would limit their uses to agriculture.

All of the above mentioned public lands can play a role in exchanges to manage the river corridor. The Department will develop a priority list of areas to consolidate public ownership and coordinate activities with these other public agencies to accomplish exchanges wherever possible.

Land Purchase - Purchase of lands by the Department or other public agencies is a limited tool to be used in managing the corridor due to the present unavailability of funds. What funds the Department does have will be directed toward purchasing specific sites for use as boat camps. Private donations may also be used for purchases by the Department.

Leases - Several boat camps are presently leased and the Department will look at leasing additional camps in the areas where it has been identified that they are needed. However, leases are a short term management tool and more permanent solutions will be sought for these camps and management of the corridor.

Donations - The donation of land to the Department, the public, or a conservation organization is not judged to be a major management tool, but it is possible that a few landowners might see how it would work toward overall protection and preservation of the Smith as well as have financial benefits for them. At the time that the Department contacts landowners about conservation easements it will also discuss donations where it appears appropriate.

The Department will also cooperate with independent efforts to establish a Smith River Preservation Fund which would seek donations from individuals and organizations for the preservation and protection of the Smith River Corridor.

Zoning - Zoning has been discussed with the County Commissions in both Cascade and Meagher Counties and with the landowners. The Counties are in support of corridor protection and are willing to establish Zoning Districts if the landowners so request. The landowners support corridor protection but the current agricultural economy makes it difficult for them to forego what they view as potential future land values. The Department will continue to explore with the Concerned Citizens of the Smith River Canyon (Ad-Hoc Committee) the possibilities of zoning with some limited development provisions for the landowners as an alternate means of achieving some measure of corridor protection.

Special Designation - The Department will investigate the feasibility of having the Legislature create a special designation for the Smith River that may provide special funding with it or may enhance the possibilities of receiving cash or land donations. This may include tax or other credits to landowners.

Special Parcel Objectives

The Department will develop and maintain a listing of specific objectives for each parcel located in the canyon portion of the river (River Mile 6.5 to River Mile 52). As this Management Plan is implemented it is recognized that these objectives may change and the Department will endeavor to annually update this listing based upon work and knowledge gained in working toward corridor management.

WEED CONTROL

The Department shares a concern for the noxious weed problem in the corridor. To address this issue, the Department is complying with the Montana County Noxious Weed Management Act of 1985. The Department will continue cooperative agreements with the respective counties in the corridor, and is responsible for compliance with the noxious weed management and control

requirements of Title 7, Chapter 22, Part 21, MCA on all Fish, Wildlife, and Parks lands.

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY MANAGEMENT

Water Quality

Work to date has identified the most significant current and projected water quality problem to be sedimentation caused by erosion from agricultural and forest lands.

The Department's objective is to maintain water quality at or above 1975 to 1985 average levels as monitored at USGS stations.

Water Quality Management

The Department will continue to work closely with the Conservation Districts in the '310' process. It will also review and comment to the Water Quality Bureau on waste discharge permit applications and renewals. The Department will further assist the Water Quality Bureau through the reporting of pollution determined through biological monitoring.

Water Quantity

The most significant current and projected water quantity problem is low summer flows which endanger the excellent trout fishery of the Smith and in some years reduces the length of the float season.

The Department's objective is to ensure within hydrologic constraints that flows in streams supporting trout populations do not fall below 1976 to 1986 averages.

Water Quantity Management

The Department will monitor the state water adjudication process and defend its instream flow rights (Murphy's Rights). The distribution and priority date of water rights along the river will be analyzed flowing the adjudication process in order to develop other appropriate strategies. The Department will also review and comment on water use applications.

The Department will continue to work with the Newlan Creek Water Users Association to purchase water in poor water years for protection of the canyon fishery. Problems of delivery of this water through the old stream channel will be analyzed and appropriate solutions sought to enhance Smith River flows.

MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Department's Management Team objective is to involve sufficient, knowledgeable, and interested people both within and outside the agency to assure relevant management and public acceptance of planning and implementation.

The Department finds that the management of the Smith River has been very well served through the cooperative relationship with the Lewis and Clark National Forest and the Concerned Citizens of the Smith River Canyon and their Ad Hoc Advisory Committee. The Department will continue these excellent relationships.

The Department currently manages the Smith River through Region 4 with primary responsibility assigned to the Parks Manager. He has significant responsibilities in addition to the Smith. The River Ranger is a seasonal employee (April through September) and deals almost entirely with public use management. Corridor management falls to the Parks Manager with some assistance from the Regional Supervisor. The Department's lands personnel, located in the Helena headquarters, provide additional assistance.

The Department recognizes that this Management Plan calls for a great deal more management than is currently being applied to any stream in the State. For effective corridor management to accomplish the objectives set forth in the Plan, at least one

individual should be assigned with their primary responsibility being the Smith River program. This individual must have the experience and the skills to put together a multi-faceted program which utilizes all of the Corridor Management Tools previously discussed. At a very minimum, another seasonal employee will be added to the Management Team to work on corridor management and additional float season assistance. As corridor preservation opportunities and river management activities increase provisions will be made to add additional river staff support.

The Department will seek adequate funding to provide for implementation of this Management Plan. User fees, at such time as they are imposed, are a source of funds for Smith River management.

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Smith River Management Plan Public Meetings
Monday, 5/9/88 7-9 p.m. - Vo-Tech, Great Falls

Bob Tynes, Landowner requests: "boat identification numbers"

Response: Stage 3 of Management Plan includes provisions for craft identification when permits are given out. This also incorporates user fees which will pay for the additional administration and management of a craft identification system.

Gene Fopp, Cabin Owner reports: "The non-floating season is the worst time for trespass and shooting; his biggest concern is cattle moving up and down the river and ill-equipped floaters."

Response: The Department is approaching trespass, shooting, and the ill-equipped floater problem through information found in the river guide and the voluntary reservation system. When floaters call the Department regarding floating, the personnel tell the floaters the current conditions and equipment needs, etc. The trespass problem has improved in recent years with the addition of strategically located boat camps.

Cattle moving up and down the river will require

management and proper fencing. The Department can only encourage ranchers to appropriately control their livestock.

Neale Streeks, Guide: "How will river capacity be determined?"

Response: The Department is using several factors to determine (measure) the river's floater carrying capacity. As the plan states: elements that must be considered in the re-evaluations include floater opinion, landowner attitudes, and an overall assessment of physical impacts on the river environment.

Tuesday, 5/10/88 7-9 p.m.
Fish & Game Commission Room, Helena

"will outfitters get special privileges?"

Response: If the state legislature grants authority to regulate floater use on the Smith River, the Department will propose an allocation process to regulate both outfitted and private use.

Greg Mill's, Landowner: "Will I or my guests be regulated if I put in the river on my property?"

Response: The management plan does not make special provisions for any user group. Once the necessary legislation is in place the details of allocation will be established.

Lisa Bay: "...do you think there needs to be some clarification about dates and when things can happen?..."

Response: A clarification statement has been added to the plan (Staged Management Regulations). "The floating use for the previous....."

Lisa Bay: "...would there be a permitting procedure by both agencies (Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and U.S. Forest Service) that perhaps could be coordinated so you didn't have to go to two different agencies?"

Response: We will strive to make permitting as simple as possible. The Plan states: "...to the extent possible, the permit requirements will be coordinated to be compatible with each other."

Unidentified: "Is river capacity based on boat camps?"

Response: The Department is currently conducting studies to further refine the designated river capacity based upon both physical and social carrying capacity. Elements that must be considered in these re-evaluations include floater opinion, landowner attitudes, and an overall assessment of physical

impacts on the river environment. Considering these elements, the present designation of 100 floaters per day may change.

Response to Written Comments

".....size of floater groups should be limited....."

Response: When floater use is controlled, the Department expects to set a maximum limit to the size of floater groups. This number is being researched at this time by surveying floaters opinions on both physical and social carrying capacity of the river. The Department will also examine the environmental impacts that large float groups have on the river corridor.

"If a draw type of permit system were implemented, Montana natives should be given "preference" over nonresident visitors."

Response: The details of a drawing will be established by a public process which may begin as the state legislature considers the enabling act.

"Department should schedule campground stays for floaters....."

Response: This has recently been suggested to the Department by others. At this time, the draft Management Plan does not address designating specific public boat camps for certain float groups. This may

prove to be a desirable addition to the plan when it is updated in 3 years.

"use of guns...."

Response: The river guide suggests floaters abstain from using firearms on the river. While this is not prohibited by regulation, it is a concern expressed by the Ad-Hoc Committee. The Department will continue to monitor the problems and if they increase substantially, will consider additional rule making.

"Fire danger...."

Response: The problem of man-caused fires has been a concern of the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee. River users are sensitized to the danger by our river brochure, river ranger, and Good Sam volunteers. We will carefully monitor fire danger conditions and follow fire closure decisions of the county commissioners and governor.

"dogs chasing cattle..."

Response: The problem of dogs chasing cattle is acknowledged as a potential problem which we'll continue to monitor. Future editions of the river guide brochure will emphasize dog control.

"favor season long management of the river..."

Response: The Department does not yet have the authority to regulate floater use. Legislation will be sought

to provide funding and authority. Initially, the Department may only regulate floater use during the "peak float season."

"restricting the size of commercial outfitted groups and exempting special groups or interests from certain management plan regulations...."

Response: If the Department receives legislative authority to regulate the amount of floater use, an allocation process will be established.

"voluntary floater fee which would be earmarked to acquire private land or easements."

Response: The Department has used appropriated funds to lease boat camps and floater access in the past. Legislative authority will be sought to charge user fees. Those fees will be used for Smith River Management. There is a local land protection group called Friends of the Smith River whose purpose is to raise money to be used to protect the river corridor.

"stronger indications of how the noxious weeds will be dealt with..."

Response: We will add to the draft management plan a statement relative to the Montana County Noxious Weed Management Act of 1985.

The previous comments/questions were thought to be the most significant issues or ones that needed further clarification. This summary is not a complete record of comments received. Meeting transcripts, and written comments have been retained for the record. These records are available at the Great Falls Department office.

