



**File Code:** 1950/2720

**Date:** May 12, 2023

Dear Interested Party,

The Flathead National Forest is requesting public input on the issuance of 25 temporary special use permits authorizing outfitting and guiding activities and recreation events to individuals, groups, businesses, and nonprofit entities who have applied for permits through the Flathead National Forest [Temporary Outfitting and Guiding and Recreation Event Special Use Permit Process](#), pursuant to the governing directives contained in Forest Service Manuals 2700 and 2300, and in the Forest Service Handbook at 2709.11 and 2709.14. Please review the proposals and **provide us with your comments by May 26, 2023**.

A special use permit authorizes occupancy, use, rights, and privileges for a specific period of time on National Forest System lands beyond those available to individuals visiting the National Forest. Special use may include group activities, recreational events, and use from which fees or income is derived. A special use authorization is not required for noncommercial, personal recreational activities such as camping, picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, hunting, horseback riding, etc. For more information on the Special Use Permit process, please visit the [Flathead National Forest Special Use Permit Webpage](#).

If a proposal is approved, the short-term special use permits would be valid through October 31, 2023 for the approved number of service days, or for the specific timeframes identified in the proposal. A service day is defined as an allocation of use constituting a day or any part of a day on NFS lands for which an outfitter provides a service to a client and is calculated by multiplying each service day by the number of clients on the trip. All proposed motorized activities would only occur in areas open to motorized use. Three previously permitted recreation events that received a one-year permit are now being considered for five-year recreation event permits (Ride WF-Last Best Ride, Mountain Archery Fest, and USA Cycling).

Based on resource information to date and initial evaluation, it appears these actions fit within either category 36 CFR 220.6(d)(8): *Approval, modification, or continuation of minor, short-term (1 year or less) special uses of National Forest System lands* or 36 CFR 220.6(d)(12): *Issuance of a new authorization or amendment of an existing authorization for recreation special uses that occur on existing roads or trails, in existing facilities, in existing recreation sites, or in areas where such activities are allowed*. Each proposal being considered for a one-year permit involves approval, on an annual basis, of new or continued minor short-term special use of National Forest System lands, and proposals being considered for a five-year permit involve recreation special use occurring on existing roads or trails where such activities are allowed. Scoping comments and resource analyses will determine if there are extraordinary circumstances present that would warrant the need for an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement or whether actions could fall under the categories listed above (36 CFR 220.6(d)(8) and 36 CFR 220.6(d)(12)).



## **Previously permitted special use permit requests**

18 proposals were resubmitted for a new permit, having been granted a permit previously. All previously permitted recreation events and outfitting and guiding activities have undergone NEPA analysis. Prior to permit issuance, these requests are evaluated for modifications and changes to the existing condition under which each action was previously analyzed. Project information from previous years can be found on the [Flathead project webpage](#) under “Analysis Completed” or in the [Project Archive](#).

### **Previously permitted recreation events being considered one-year permit under 36 CFR**

**220.6(d)(8):** Adventure Cycling Association, Logan Health Cedar Creek Marathon, Kiwanis Rec Event, Whitefish Legacy Ultra (formally called Whitefish Trails Ultra-Marathon).

### **Previously permitted recreation events being considered for a five-year permit under 36 CFR**

**220.6(d)(12):** Ride WF-Last Best Ride, Mountain Archery Fest, and USA Cycling.

### **Previously permitted outfitting and guiding being considered for a one-year permit under 36**

**CFR 220.6(d)(8):** Action Rentals, Alpine Running Guides, Whitefish Shuttle, 406 Docks, Flathead Outdoors, Montana Outdoor Science Academy, Montana Adventure Shuttle, Great Northern Wilderness Guides, Northwest Montana Adventure, Big Sky Bible Camp, and Whitefish Bike Retreat.

## **New or modified special use proposals:**

The Flathead received seven proposals for special use permits that have not been previously permitted or are being modified from what was previously submitted. These include Glacier Institute Le Grizz ultra-marathon, Northwest Montana Field Journal, Ravenwood, Caprakhan, Highlander, Rooted Heart, and BikEternity. These proposals are being considered for one-year permits.

### **Proposals led by Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District**

Glacier Institute is requesting to host the **Le Grizz ultra-marathon**, 10k, 5k, and one-mile fun run from their facility located at the Big Creek Environmental Education Center. All races are to begin and end at the Big Creek Environmental Education Center. The 50-mile ultra-marathon route will begin at the Big Creek Environmental Education Center, travel west along Forest Service Road 316 (Big Creek Canyon Creek Road) for approximately 16 miles. The route then continues back east along Forest Service Road 316 back to the junction with Forest Service Road 315 (Hallowat Creek North Road) and then continues north along Forest Service Road 315 to Moose Lake. At Moose Lake the competitors will then run back east along 315 to road 316 and run east back to the Big Creek Environmental Education Center. The 10k, 5k, and one-mile fun run will utilize road 316 for out-and-back travel to achieve the mileage for the race. The event is estimated to include up to 400 participants and 200 spectators and would occur in mid-October. All aspects of the race are to be conducted along open yearlong or seasonally open to motor vehicle roads. No parts of the race will occur along closed to motor vehicle roads or trails. Aid stations will be located along the route and any food or drink is to be attended at all times.

**Northwest Montana Field Journal** is requesting authorization for a guided 4-day hike and camp from Moose Creek Trail #9 to Trail #26 (Whitefish Divide) to Trail #74 (Blue Sky) ending on Forest Service Road 114, Lewis Creek Road on the Kootenai National Forest. The guiding trips would occur in September and include backpacking and backcountry camping instruction, meals, Leave No Trace education, nature journaling supplies and classes, plant and animal identification, and bear safety education.

**Ravenwood** is requesting a trip to begin on July 9th, with up a group size of 20 (three chaperone adult instructors and up to 17 teenage clients). They will set up a temporary overnight camp at the Red Meadow Lake developed site and teach Leave No Trace, bear-safe food storage, and other backpacking techniques and etiquette for the afternoon of July 9th. On the morning of the 10th, the group will break camp and drive to the Link Lake Trail #372 trailhead. Up to two 14-passenger vans will be left parked at the trailhead. The group will then hike along trail #372 to Link Lake and make a dispersed camp in an area near Link Lake. From the night of July 10th to the morning of July 15th, the group will be in this location making short day trips out and back on the surrounding trails teaching backcountry and survival skills to the teenage participants.

### Proposals led by Swan Lake Ranger District

**Caprakhan** is requesting to provide two guided 6-day goat-packing trips to Trinkus Lake using the Bond Creek Trailhead and Trails #21 and #7. The first trip is proposed July 30 through August 4th and the second trip is proposed August 30 through September 4th. Camping is proposed at or near the Bond Cr. Trailhead for the first night and at the Trinkus Lake for the next five nights. Due to the large group size, the group will camp at the cabin area to minimize impacts to other users. They are proposing day hikes from Trinkus Lake on nearby trails. Proposed total group size including staff is nine people for the first trip and 15 for the second trip. The proposal includes one goat per two people. Supplemental food for the goats would be packed in. The proponent would be required to educate clients on responsible recreation/etiquette and wildlife safety.

**Highlander** is proposing a multiday backpacking/hiking event Sept 19-23 with a maximum of 100 participants and support staff event on the Swan Lake Ranger District. The proposed 60 mile 5-day/4-night event would start and end at the Blacktail Mountain Ski Area. The event incorporates a daily rolling start (10-20 participants every 5 min.) to disperse hikers. The event would use the Foys-to-Blacktail Trail 185, Lakeside-to-Blacktail Trail 104; National Forest System Roads 2830, 9549, 917, 2957, 2898/Lakeside Glide Nordic Trail, Z-Descent Nordic Trail, 10138/Lakeside Glide Nordic Trail, 5232/Alpine Loop Nordic Trail, 5231, 2990, Telemark Descent Nordic Trail, 917A/917 Blacktail OHV Trail, 916, and the Blacktail Mountain Ski Area. The event would use campsites on private or state lands. The event organizers would be required to educate participants on responsible recreation, Leave-No-Trace etiquette, and wildlife safety. Event participants will collect trash along routes and event organizers will sweep route to ensure trash is cleaned up. Event organizers will provide garbage service and additional sanitation facilities.

### Proposals led by Tally Lake Ranger District

**Rooted Heart LLC** is requesting to provide guided trips with the purpose of forest therapy/bathing and interpretation, 2-3 hour sessions within one mile of the Round Meadow Trails/Trailhead on the Tally Lake Ranger District. The company anticipates offering five trips with up to ten people per trip through October 31, 2023.

### Proposals led by Flathead National Forest

**BikEternity** is requesting a guided bike tour that starts in Canada and follows the Great Divide mountain bike route going south. Use is requested on the Kootenai, Flathead, and Lolo National Forests. The route would include Grave Creek with camping at Grave Cr Campground, Polebridge with camping at Red Meadow Campground, Whitefish, Swan Lake, Holland Lake with camping at Holland Lake Campground, Seeley Lake with camping at Big Larch Campground, Coopers Lake with camping at Big Nelson Campground, and Marysville. No more than eight people would participate in the trip.

## Additional Information

Please direct questions to the Ranger District contacts that correspond with the proposed activity location. Maps of the project areas can be found by locating the project "2023 Flathead National Forest Summer Special Uses" on the [Flathead National Forest website](#).

RANGER DISTRICT	CONTACT	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL
Swan Lake	Anthony Butterfield	406-837-7507	<a href="mailto:anthony.butterfield@usda.gov">anthony.butterfield@usda.gov</a>
Flathead National Forest	Chris Prew	406-758-3538	<a href="mailto:christopher.prew@usda.gov">christopher.prew@usda.gov</a>
Hungry Horse-Glacier View	Sean Cranmer	406-387-3814	<a href="mailto:sean.m.cranmer@usda.gov">sean.m.cranmer@usda.gov</a>
Tally Lake	Derrick Mercer	406-758-3546	<a href="mailto:derrick.mercer@usda.gov">derrick.mercer@usda.gov</a>

Thank you for your review of the proposals. Comments will be accepted through May 26, 2023 and should be submitted to [comments-northern-flathead@usda.gov](mailto:comments-northern-flathead@usda.gov) with "2023 Summer Rec Special Use" in the subject line. Input received in response to this solicitation, including names, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record, and will be available for public inspection.

Sincerely,

TAMARA MACKENZIE  
Deputy Forest Supervisor