June 18, 2020

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission
c/o Shawna Pieske, Commission Secretary
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, Montana 59620-0701

Dear Commissioners:

As residents of the Shields Valley, we want to bring to the department's attention our concern regarding the use of jet boats on the Shields River and request that the department enact a motorized ban on this small stream.

In the past several years, there has been everything from larger jet boats to jet skis and now smaller boats designed to get around the current horsepower restriction at very low flows. Attached is a photo of one such boat seen on the Shields in late fall of 2019 at streamflows below 200 CFS.

Most of the 49 persons undersigned own land directly adjacent to the river. As landowners, parents, ranchers and irrigators we find this type of use unacceptable on such a small stream as the Shields. Upriver travel here is a threat to safety, equipment and habitat. There is hardly a day that goes by in the summer when our children are not swimming or inner tubing in the river. Many of us have irrigation equipment in the river or livestock drinking from the stream. The bends are often sharp in the river, the channel in some places is just a few feet wide and the chance for a collision or other accident is high.

It is easy to dismiss one or two motorized users as not qualifying to the level of a real problem yet, but it only takes one accident to make a big problem including negligence on the part of the department for not addressing this sooner. Plus, it is only a matter of time before technology continues to improve, populations increase and there is even more motorized traffic on small streams like this one. It's time to nip it in the bud.

There are other rivers that are simply more appropriate for this type of motorized use than the Shields. We encourage the department to act quickly on this issue by restricting all motorized use on the Shields River.

Respectfully,

Melissa Atkinson
Mike Atkinson
Annie Beaver
Dorothy Bradley
Ashley Browning
Shannon Browning

Barbara Claiborn
Steve Claiborn
Taya Cromley
Ira Cuelho
Mike Dailey
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