



## *The North Fork*

The headwaters of the North Fork of the Flathead River originate in Canada. As the river flows south into Montana, Flathead National Forest, Montana State, and private lands lie to the west and Glacier National Park lies to the east.

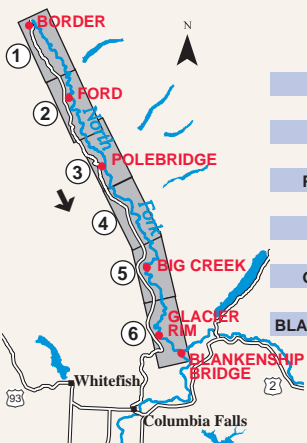
River users find the views breathtaking and the water clear and cold. Peak water season is in early June, with low water by mid-August. The North Fork valley is wide which causes the river to meander between the main channel and its many braids. By mid summer, the lower flows accommodate kayaks, personal pontoons, and smaller rafts. No matter how you enjoy the North Fork, remember to treat it as a responsible user and practice Leave No Trace ethics.





## Please Remember:

- Store all attractants in a bear resistant manner, in an approved container, in your vehicle or hang.
- Do not burn trash, put cans, or bottles in your campfire.
- Drive only on designated roads and areas within the Wild and Scenic River corridor.
- Permits are required for all overnight backcountry camping in Glacier National Park. Permits are available at the Backcountry Permit Center in Apgar.



## AVERAGE JULY FLOAT

Access	Dist(Mi)	Time(H)	Class
<b>BORDER</b>			
TO	14	4	II
<b>FORD</b>			
TO	11	3	II
<b>POLEBRIDGE</b>			
TO	18	5	II
<b>BIG CREEK</b>			
TO	12	2.5	II
<b>GLACIER RIM</b>			
TO	4	1.5	II
<b>BLANKENSHIP BRIDGE</b>			

① - RIVER MAP NUMBER

← - DIRECTION OF FLOAT

# Regulations

Pursuant to 36 CFR 261

<b>North Fork</b>	<b>(1) Waste Re- quirement</b>	<b>(2) Campfire Allowed</b>	<b>(3) Camping Allowed</b>	<b>(4) Stay Limit</b>	<b>(5) Motor Boats 10 h.p.</b>
Border River Access	N	**	Y	3	N
Abbott Flats	Y	Y	Y	16	N
Wurtz (Rd #10843)	Y	Y	Y	16	N
Sondreson ( Rd #10372)	Y	Y	Y	16	N
Ford River Access	N	**	Y	16	N
Ford Dispersed Site	N	Y	Y	16	-
Polebridge River Access	N	**	Y	3	N
Coal Creek	Y	Y	Y	16	N
Camas Dispersed Site	Y	Y	Y	16	N
Big Creek River Access	N	R	In Campground Only	Day Use Only * Fee *	Y
Great Northern Flats	N	R	Y	3	Y
Glacier Rim River Access	N	**	Y	3	Y

\*Fee\* - Use Fee is charged at Big Creek River Access and Campground

**Other dispersed sites along the river not listed above are available for overnight use. Campers in overnight dispersed sites must pack out solid human waste, a fire pan/blanket is recommended, and the camping stay limit is 16 days.**

## **Boundaries Between Federal Agencies**

Glacier National Park is on river left and Flathead National Forest is on river right with the boundary being the middle of the active deepest channel. Rules and regulations are different between the Park and the Forest. If you plan to go ashore in Glacier National Park contact them about specific regulations.

**These regulations apply within the Wild and Scenic River corridor which is approximately 1/4 mile each side of the river.**

### **(1) WASTE DISPOSAL - (53(e))**

**Y** - Solid human waste must be **self-contained** and packed out to an approved disposal site during **overnight** stays at locations without toilet facilities.

This applies whether you are part of a traditional float party or vehicle supported party. Self-contained means, (1) using a washable, leak-proof, reusable toilet system - the contents must be disposed of at a proper waste facility such as an RV dump station, OR (2) a disposable biodegradable bag toilet system that is approved for landfill disposal. Bags must be self-contained within a leak or spill proof container until they are properly disposed of. The system must be adequate for the size of the group and length of trip. Dumping solid human waste on National Forest System lands or into a vault toilet is prohibited.

**N** - Sites with public toilet facilities.

### **(2) CAMPFIRE ALLOWED**

**R**- Required metal fire pan, blanket or provided metal ring.

**Y** - Recommended fire pan or blanket.

Ash may be disposed of on site within the river corridor.

**N** - Campfires prohibited.

**\*\*** - Campfires are prohibited in the parking lots within the developed river access sites.

### **(3) CAMPING ALLOWED - (58(a))**

**Y** - Camping allowed.

**N** - Camping prohibited.

If vehicle supported, contact the Hungry Horse/Glacier View Ranger District for information about motorized use in the river corridor.

### **(4) STAY LIMIT - (58(a))**

**Stay Limit** in number of days.

**Day use hours** are from sunrise to sunset.

### **(5) MOTOR BOATS - (58(n))**

**Y** - Motor boats allowed, 10 horse power or less.

**N** - Motor boats prohibited.

**DISPERSED SITE** - A site without developed facilities such as toilets or fire rings.

**Firewood gathering is prohibited in the Wild and Scenic corridor, (6(a)).**

**RM 50: Trail Creek** – The “Buffalo (Cow) Trail” was a favored trail for mounted Kootenai Indian parties to cross the Continental Divide.



**RM 53.5: Kishenehn Ranger Station -**

In 1919 a fire destroyed the original ranger station built in 1913. Because of its strategic location near the Canadian border, the station was rebuilt within two years.



*You may see several different wildlife species within the North Fork river corridor, including grizzly bears. Vegetation along the riverbanks is the first to green up in the spring, drawing bears and other wildlife to eat along the shore and gravel bars. For your safety, keep a safe distance from all wildlife. Use your binoculars and camera to get a closer look.*

**RM 58: Border River Access** - A slide is available for launching at this access site. The international border crossing at this location is closed.

114°22'30"W

114°24'0"W

114°25'30"W

48°55'30"N

48°54'0"N

48°57'0"N

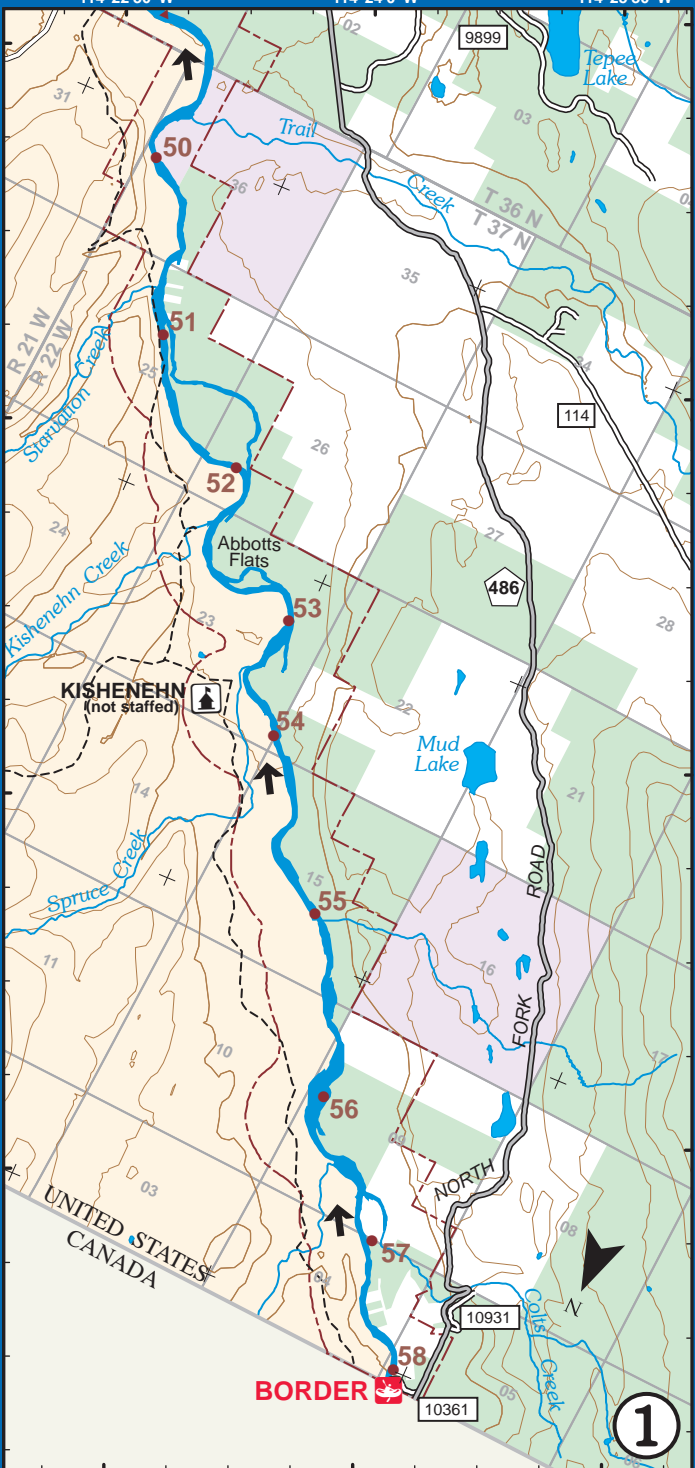
48°55'30"N

48°58'30"N

48°57'0"N

49°0'0"N

48°58'30"N



114°27'0"W

114°28'30"W

114°30'0"W

**BORDER**

**1**

*To help maintain and protect the special character of the North Fork, the Forest Service has purchased private parcels and development rights within the river corridor.*

**RM 42.3: Round Prairie River Campsite -**

Located in Glacier National Park, a camping permit is required at this campsite. There are three camp locations for four people each along with a food hanging pole, cooking area and compost toilet. The campsite opens after seasonal high water. No wood fires are allowed. To access Round Prairie eddy out river left at large gravel bar.

**RM 44: Ford River Access -** A slide is available at the Ford River Access site for launching rafts and small boats.

*The Forest Service established the Ford Work Center in 1924 to house crews working to open the upper stretch of the North Fork Road. Today as part of the Forest Service cabin rental program, visitors can rent the one remaining building, the former “mess hall.”*

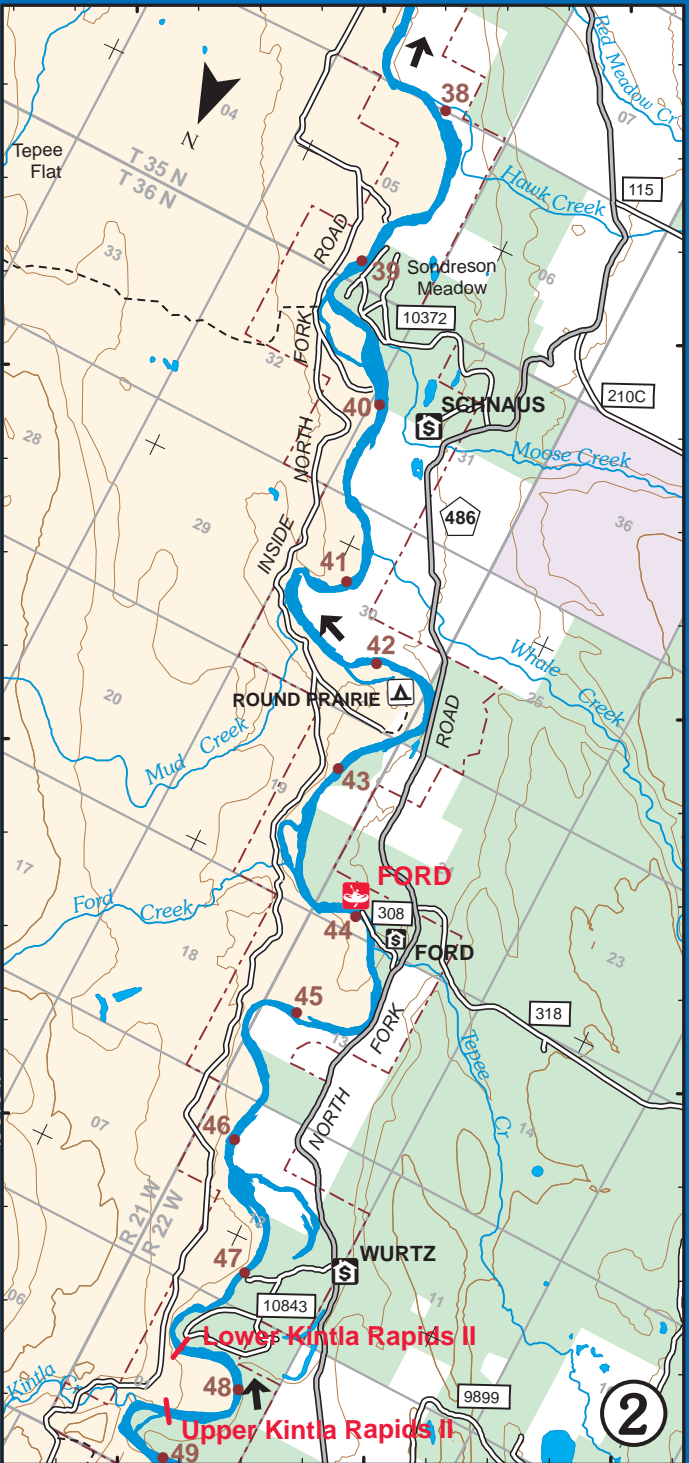


**RM 48.5 Kintla Peak -** Just visible from the river, is one of only six ten thousand foot peaks in Glacier National Park. Kintla Lake is a glacial carved lake typical of many lakes in the area. To the north of the lake is Longknife Peak, the highest peak along the U.S. Canadian border.

114°18'0"W

114°19'30"W

114°21'0"W



48°51'0"N

48°52'30"N

48°54'0"N

48°49'30"N

48°51'0"N

48°52'30"N

114°22'30"W

114°24'0"W

114°25'30"W

2



*In 1914, local storekeeper Bill Adair moved his store from Sullivan Meadow on the east side of the river to the west side. Today Adair's store, the Polebridge Mercantile, and log cabin, the Northern Lights Saloon, still serve the local community. The store got its current name from the local postmaster in 1920, naming the store after the nearby 'pole bridge'.*

*Polebridge Ranger Station, established in 1922, serves as the northern entrance to Glacier National Park, along the Inside North Fork Road.*

*In 1988 the Red Bench Fire swept across the river and destroyed many of the ranger station outbuildings and bridge.*

**RM 34: Polebridge River Access** - Located just west of the ranger station.

*The river's pristine water quality was one value that earned the river's Wild and Scenic designation and a reputation for a quality fishery. Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout need cold, pure water and clean gravel to spawn and survive. Help keep a healthy fishery. Know and follow current fishing regulations.*

*Early Native Americans used the North Fork river valley for thousands of years as hunting and fishing grounds. The area contains a significant source of quarry chert that Indians used to make spear points and tools. Bowman chert is found throughout Glacier National Park and the Pacific Northwest. If you explore away from the river you may notice scarred ponderosa pine trees. Indians stripped the tree bark to harvest the sweet cambium layer to eat.*

114°13'30"W

114°15'0"W

114°16'30"W

48°46'30"N

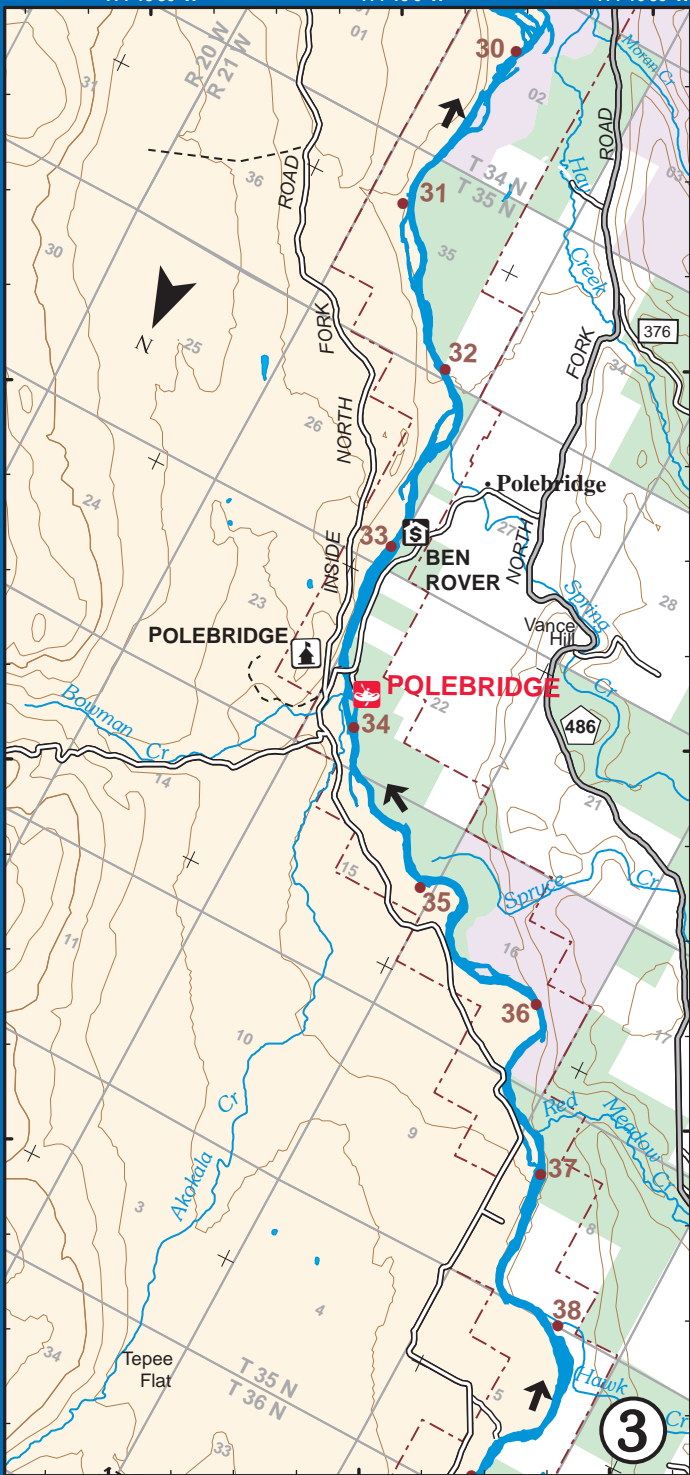
48°45'0"N

48°48'0"N

48°46'30"N

48°49'30"N

48°48'0"N



114°18'0"W

114°19'30"W

114°21'0"W

3



*As you float the next several miles you'll notice evidence of the 2001 Moose Fire and 2003 Robert Fire. Signs of both fires are apparent on the west along Demers Ridge and on the east along the Apgar Mountain Range.*

**RM 24.5: Coal Banks -**

In 1883, coal beds were discovered on the west side of the river. Area developers and prospectors mined the coal until 1942. The coal was sold as heating fuel to Flathead Valley residents and businesses.

One coal developer built a steamboat, the "Oakes" to haul coal out on the river. The Oakes wrecked on its maiden voyage near the mouth of Canyon Creek.

**RM 25: Logging Creek Ranger Station -**

Built in 1907 before Glacier National Park was created, the station is the oldest, continually operating administrative site within the park.

**RM 26-19: Coal Creek to Camas Bridge -**

The topography and past flood events have created braided channels. Because of the river's wild & scenic designation, logjams are not cleared and you may find blocked river channels.

114°9'0"W

114°10'30"W

114°12'0"W

48°40'30"N

48°39'0"N

48°42'0"N

48°40'30"N

48°43'30"N

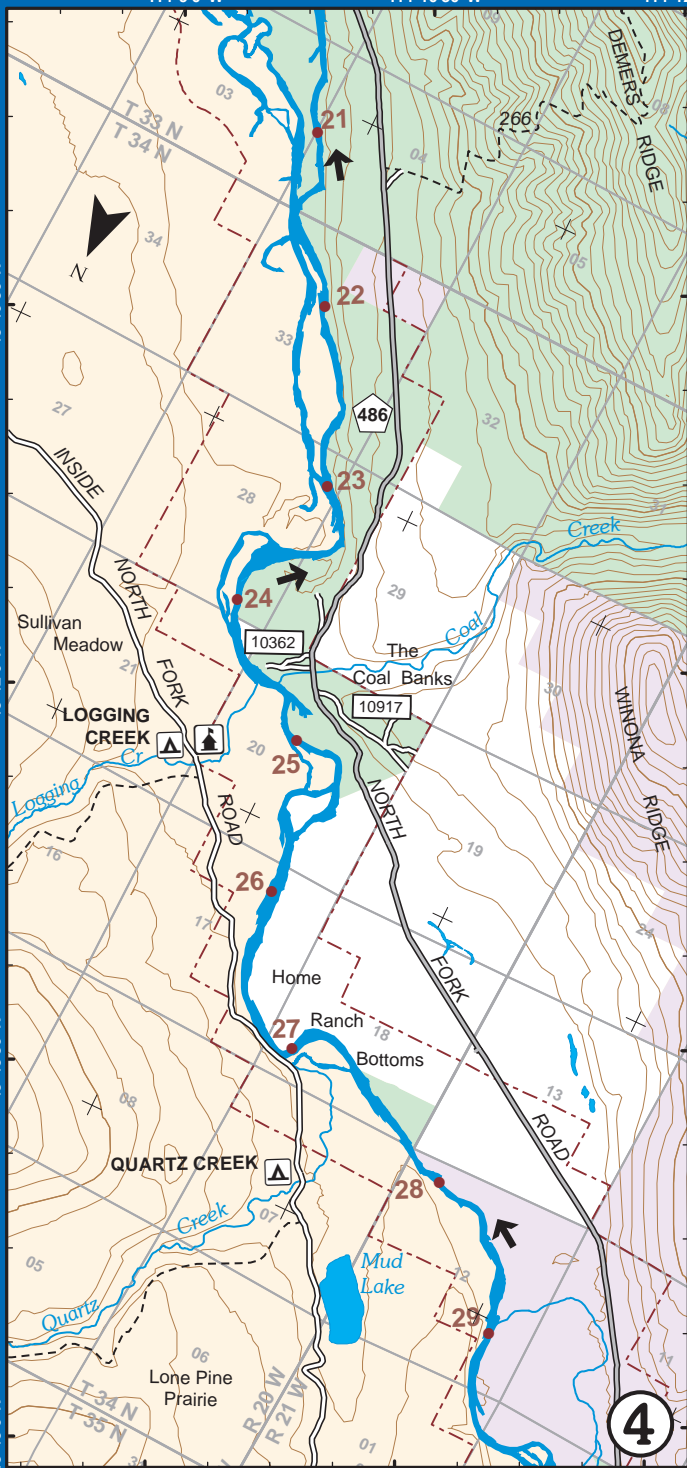
48°42'0"N

48°45'0"N

114°13'30"W

114°15'0"W

114°16'30"W



**RM 11: Great Northern Flats River Access -** burned in the 2003 Robert Fire. The large rocks and tree planting are an effort to restore the site. You have to carry your craft from the river.

**RM 14: Huckleberry Lookout -**



MOOSE FIRE 2001



COVERED WITH STRUCTURE  
PROTECTION WRAP

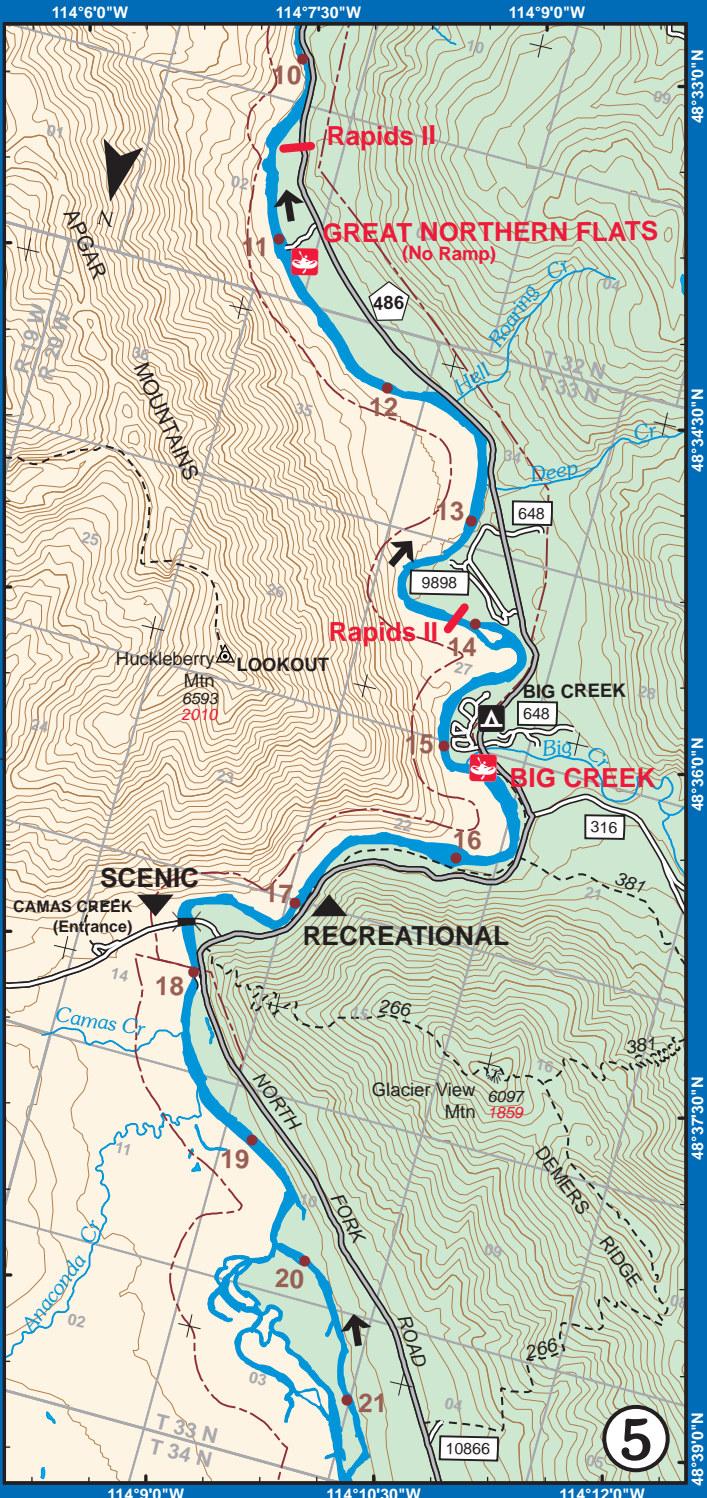


**RM 15: Big Creek Campground -**

The Forest Service Big Creek Campground and River Access site offers places right along the river for floaters to eddy out and set up camp. There is a camping and day use fee for these sites.

The mouth of Big Creek is closed to fishing to protect spawning areas of the threatened bull trout.

*Around the time of the Hungry Horse Dam construction (1948-1953) on the South Fork of the Flathead River, several other hydroelectric dams were proposed for the Middle Fork and North Fork. A proposed Glacier View Dam would have been located just north of the Big Creek Ranger Station near the Camas Bridge. The controversial project received national attention and led to the eventual protection of the Three Forks of the Flathead River.*



### **RM 0: Blankenship Bridge River Access -**

Flathead County manages the access on river left where the North Fork joins the Middle Fork. River right below the bridge is Flathead National Forest.



CONFLUENCE OF THE NORTH FORK AND MIDDLE FORK

*The North Fork Ranger Station in Glacier National Park was originally built in the 1920s on the bluff above the confluence of the North Fork and the Middle Fork rivers. In 1929 the station and outbuildings were burned in the Half Moon fire. Rebuilt in 1930, the station was active until World War II. In the late 1960s the station was in disrepair and was destroyed. The fire cache building remained until 2003 when it was destroyed by the Robert Fire.*

### **RM 3.5: Glacier Rim River Access -**

To protect the sandy shoreline, do not block the launch or drive downriver from the ramp.

**RM 8: Fool Hen Hill** - Named after the spruce grouse, an upland game bird that lives in dense forest areas. Bald eagles, osprey, American dipper, eared grebe and the harlequin duck are other bird species you may see along the river corridor.

