

## SOUTH FORK OF THE FLATHEAD DROP FLOATS MULE PACKING SERVICE FOR YOUR BOAT AND GEAR

The Wild and Scenic South Fork Flathead River offers spectacular scenery and some of the best Cutthroat and Bull Trout fishing that can be found anywhere. Young's Creek and Danaher Creek come together to form the "confluence" and headwaters of the South Fork. This entire float is within the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. It's wildness that makes this area so special. You need to understand that floating in this remote area is different and you need to be prepared from a mental, equipment and planning perspective.

The approximate float distance from the confluence to Mid Creek takeout is 45 miles. 5 float days on the South Fork generally gives you time to relax, fish and enjoy the trip.

We offer three (3) drop float options. The first option is to stay at our camp on Young's Creek which is 15 miles by horseback or you can hike in. You can launch from this location in the early to mid-part of the float season (late June to late July), depending on water levels. Generally after August 1, dropping at the Confluence on the South Fork is best. It is about 7.2 miles to the Confluence, so add 1 day to your float time. You can expect to portage around some obstacles such as trees, log jams and rocks.

Option 2 is to ride about 17.5 miles on the first day to another location on Young's Creek where you will camp near the launch point. It is a little over 5 miles to the confluence from this location. The water is a bit deeper from this point down, but still plan to portage around some obstacles.

Option 3, the Confluence/Headwaters of the South Fork of the Flathead is an option during the entire float season, but after August 1, is generally the best option due to lower water conditions. This is a 2 day ride to the South Fork. Day 1 you travel the 15 miles to our camp on Young's Cr. and spend the night. Day 2 we load up and travel the 7.2 miles to the confluence. Even on the South Fork, be vigilant for strainers, log jams etc.

Plan to meet our packer/wrangler at our trailhead north of Ovando, MT by 4:30pm the evening before you ride or hike in. You will drop off your boats & gear at this time so they can have it mantied up and ready to go the next morning. (*Manty is a canvas tarp that is wrapped around your gear into a rectangular load that can be placed on each side of a mule.*) You can camp at the trailhead or stay at the Ovando Inn (406-793-5555). Plan to be at the trailhead and ready to go by 8am.

Rafts that are 10, 12 and some 14 foot models work on Young's Creek depending on water levels. Pack rafts work throughout the season. 16 foot rafts are the maximum size we will pack and must weigh less than 150 lbs. 16 foot rafts are not recommended for floating Young's Creek. All rafts are packed 1 boat per animal. If you have two 12 foot rafts, that's 2 pack mules. Pack frames, oars & blades must break down to less than 50 inches in length so they can be mantied.

**All loads on the mules must be 75 pounds or less.** Our recommendation for Cooler(s) is the 65 quart Yeti style. The Yeti is certified as Bear Resistant with proper lid locks. Remember, total weight of not more than 75 pounds (cooler & food). Your food is required by the U.S. Forest Service to be stored in a bear resistant manor. See the USFS Bob Marshall Wilderness website for storage options.

All gear including: camp gear, sleeping bags, pads, tents should be weighed before you arrive at the trailhead. We rely on you to estimate how many pack animals you will need and that is what we will have for you at the trailhead. We will help you with these estimates ahead of time but it is your responsibility to give us the number of pack animals you will need.

**All rafts/boats used on our rivers must be inspected by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for aquatic invasive species prior to entering the waters.** MFWP Regional Offices or one of the several check stations located around the state will inspect your raft and give you proper documentation that you will take with you.

Life jackets are also required by the state. Be sure you have an appropriate size and in good condition for each person in your boat.

Fishing license is required and must be purchased before you arrive at the trailhead. Special Bull trout Regulations are in effect for the South Fork. A “free” catch and release card must be in your possession when fishing for Bull Trout. Fishing season dates for Bull Trout are the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in May until July 31. Get the card before your trip! <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/license/>

If you want your gear packed out of Mid Creek, we can recommend outfitters for you to contact. You give them your arrival date and they will meet you at the Mid Creek takeout.

Manty loads being put on a mule

