

An Inspirational River: The 3 Forks of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River



- **1940-50's:** Dam building on the lower end of the South Fork of the Flathead (Hungry Horse Dam), proposed dams on the North Fork (Glacier View Dam and Smoky Range Dam), and on the Middle Fork (Spruce Park Dam).
- **1956-57:** John Craighead and Montana Fish and Game employees float the Upper Middle Fork, and believed it to be one of America's last, wildest rivers. Inspired, John writes an opinion piece proposing a classified river system, of wild, semi wild, and semi-exploited rivers, which would protect rivers like the Middle Fork.
- **Early 1960's:** Public support for proposed dams on the North Fork wanes due to concerns of inundation of Glacier National Park and private homesteads, while sportsman groups oppose losses to wildlife habitat. In contrast, increasing support for damming the Upper Middle Fork with the proposed Spruce Park Dam, including a plan to construct a tunnel through the Flathead Range to deliver impounded water to Hungry Horse Reservoir (which would result in dewatering of the Middle Fork).
- **1964:** Catastrophic spring flooding in northwest Montana increases support for dam construction, including Montana Senator Metcalf putting pressure to the Bureau of Reclamation to build the proposed Spruce Park Dam.
- **1965:** Senator Metcalf co-sponsors the original legislative bill to create a protected river system, at the same time assuring local Flathead River constituents that the 3 Forks will never be added to this system.
- **1968:** Wild and Scenic Rivers Act signed into law. Responding to Montana's conservation-minded constituents, Senator Metcalf allows the 3 Forks to be added as a study river.

- **Oct. 12th, 1976:** Following a U.S. Forest Service study, Senator Metcalf sponsors an amendment to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, adding the 3 Forks of the Flathead River system, as well as the Upper Missouri River in Montana.



Construction of Hungry Horse Dam



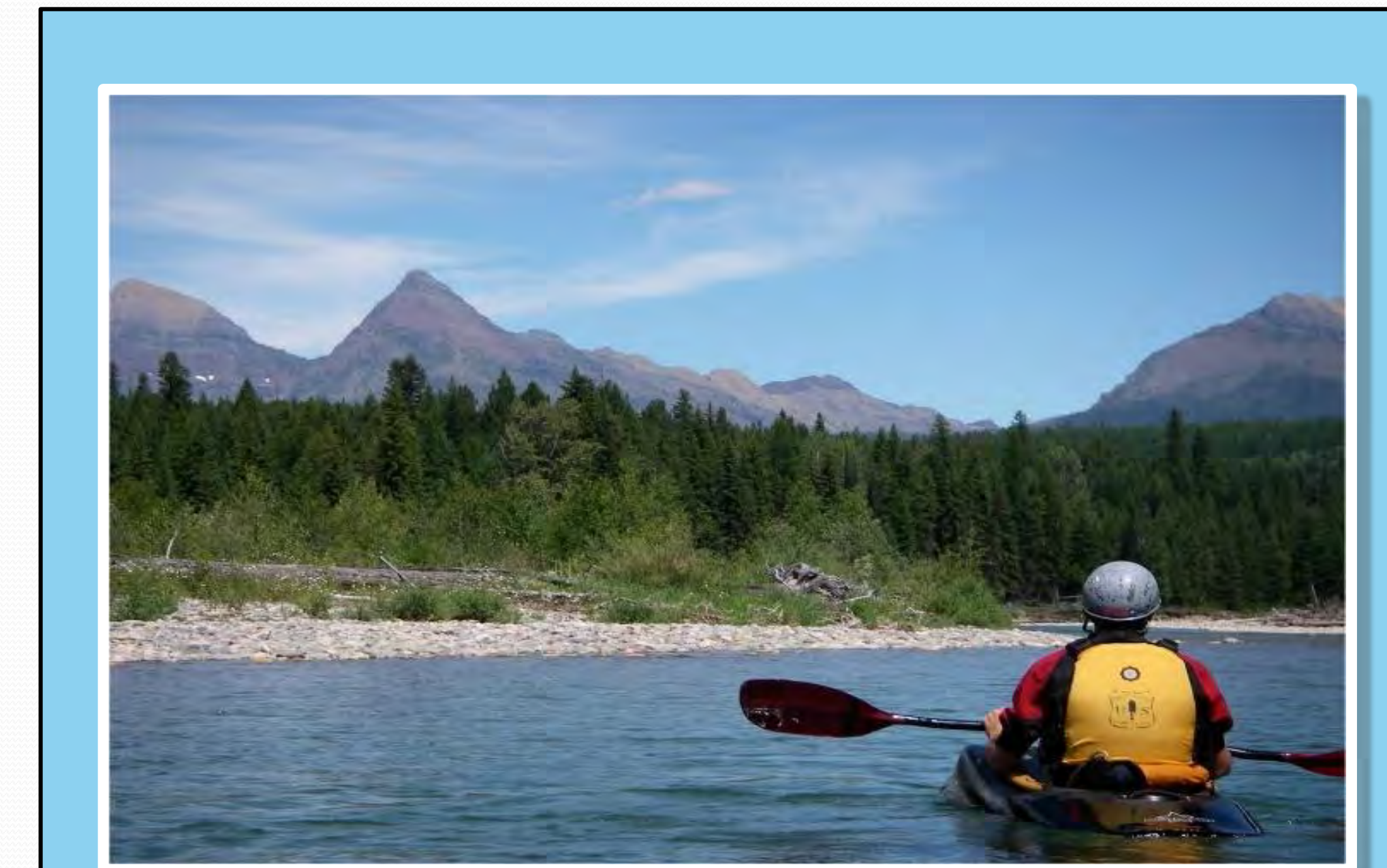
John Craighead's Initial Proposal Article



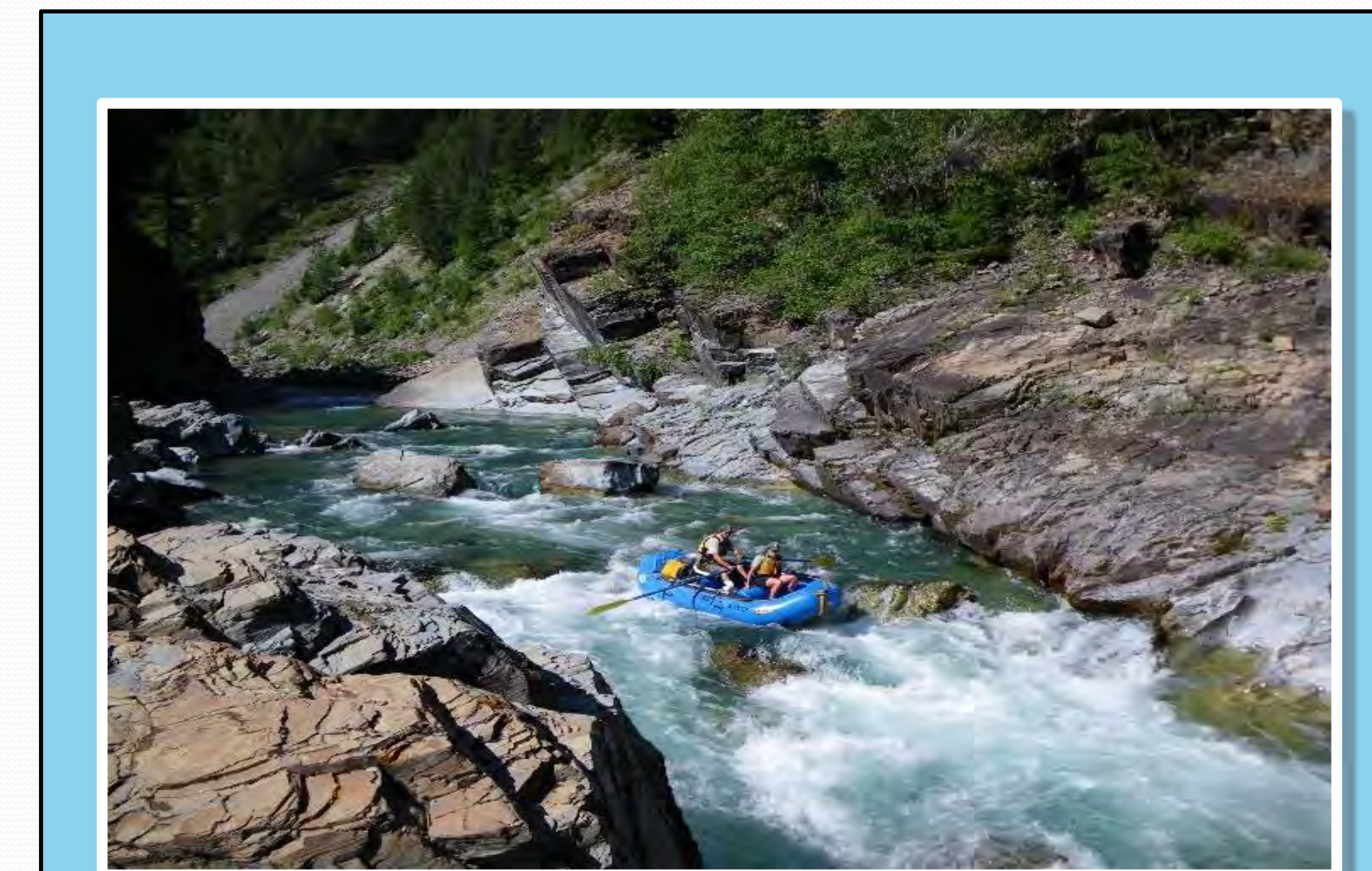
Belton Bridge - 1964 Flood



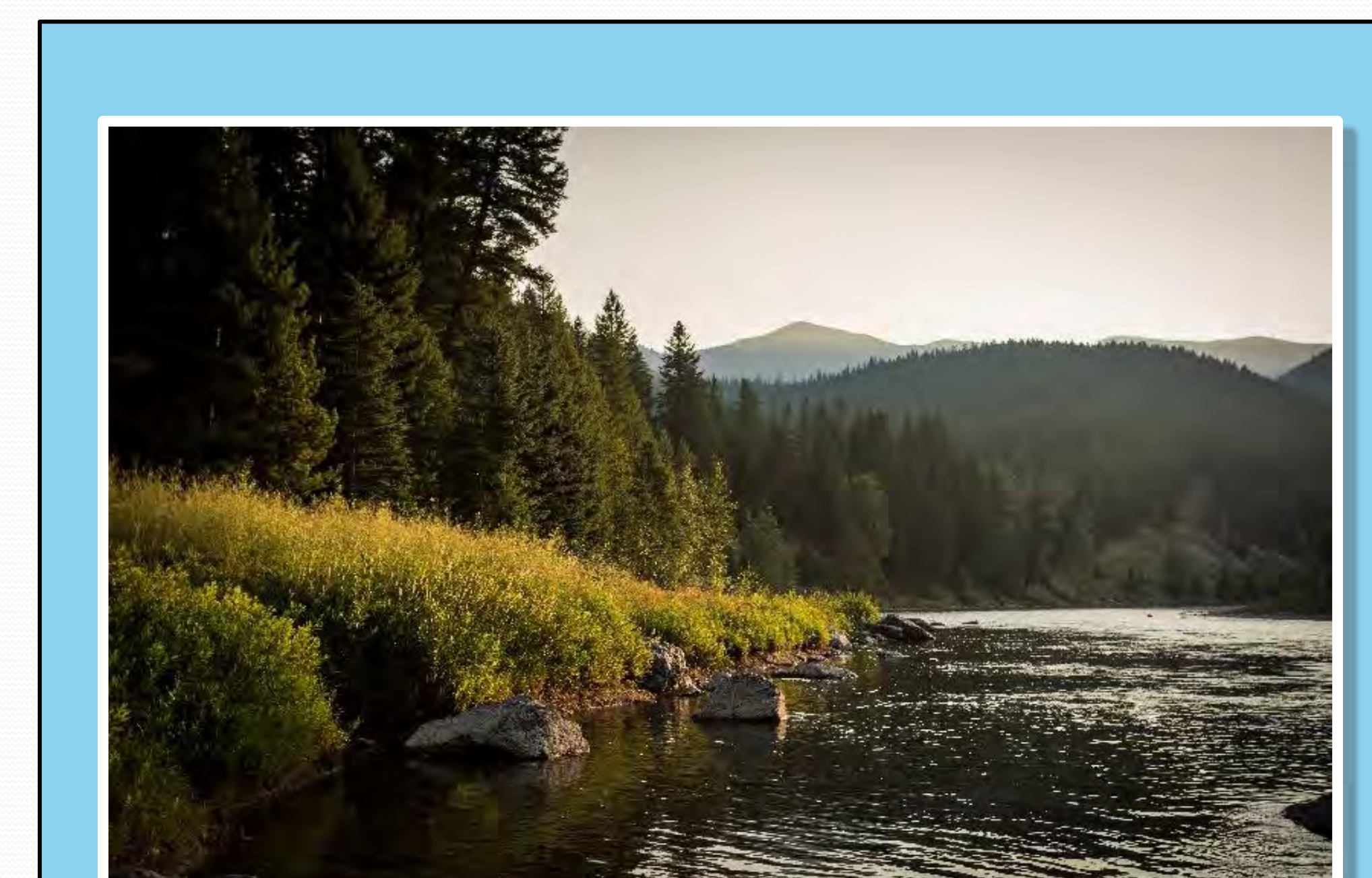
Senator Metcalf and Howard Zanhiser



North Fork of the Flathead River



Middle Fork of the Flathead River



South Fork of the Flathead River

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