

The Wilderness Voice

Newsletter of the Madison Gallatin Chapter



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

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A Historic Agreement for the Wild Kootenai

Kootenai Coalition agrees to 180,000 acres of wilderness for northwest Montana

by John Todd, Conservation Director, Montana Wilderness Association

The 2.2 million acre Kootenai National Forest is a special place: strikingly beautiful, biologically rich and naturally productive. It's also a little bit mysterious. And hidden behind that mystery, in the high peaks and dark woods, is a level of solitude that sets it apart from most other places in the Big Sky State.

Well off the beaten path, most folks in Montana know as much about Idaho or Alberta as they know about the northwest corner of their own state. It's Kootenai Country, home to clear rivers, big trees and wild weather that drops up to 100 inches of rain every year.

Communities like Libby, Noxon and Trout Creek have long-relied on the mining industry operating on surrounding public lands. And traditionally, the Kootenai was known as the timber basket of Montana, until the mills closed down and jobs evaporated.

Now, both the land and the communities need new solutions.

Montanans know that by working together, we can manage our forests, provide jobs for struggling rural communities and conserve and restore key wildlife habitat and blue ribbon headwaters. Seven years ago, that's exactly what the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition set out to do. Business owners, local elected offi-

cial and community members rolled up their sleeves and found community-based common ground that will provide jobs in the front country while protecting the solitude of the backcountry.

Just this month, the Kootenai Stakeholders agreed to a forest-wide proposal that establishes guidelines for timber management, creates areas for motorized and non-motorized recreation and designates 180,000 acres of new wilderness areas.

The historic agreement means wild, roadless lands in the Yaak, like Grizzly Peak and Gold Hill, additions to the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness and the majestic Scotchman Peaks would be protected for future generations, while areas like Mount Henry and Northwest Peak would be managed for quiet, human powered recreation. More importantly, this agreement means that the communities of Lincoln County, Montana are moving beyond past conflicts and working together to protect clean water, restore big game habitat and

maintain a sense of solitude – and mystery – that makes the Kootenai so special.

The Montana Wilderness Association is doing what it does best – working everyday with Montanans from all walks of life on a realistic, practical strategy for communities like Libby and Troy, while forever protecting pristine backcountry like the foothills of places like the Cabinets, Roderick Mountain and the Scotchman Peaks. It's time to put the past behind us and work together for a better future for the Kootenai National Forest.



Cabinet Mountains, photo by Amy Robinson

My Parting Shot by Roger Jenkins

In the fall of 2009, a bunch of us interested in re-invigorating the Madison-Gallatin Chapter of MWA met in our dining room, and decided to push forward. I was elected to be the start-up President of what would become our Board. My immediate goal was to re-invigorate a Chapter that had been moribund for a while. I felt like living in the iconic landscape of SW Montana, it was imperative that MWA have a strong volunteer presence in the communities. But it turns out that the home base of our Chapter is a tricky one in which to re-start a grassroots conservation group. "If you build it, they will come?" Well, not necessarily. Why?

I see a couple of important reasons:

1. There is what some might call an "over-abundance" of recreational opportunities at our very doorsteps. There is a LOT of temptation to enjoy such, and easy to forget that its existence might be seriously threatened.
2. There are over 80 conservation groups that have offices in the Bozeman area, with something like 250 full time equivalents of people working in them. Understandably, while passionate about conservation, the last thing that these folks might want to do in their spare time is to be involved in grass roots conservation efforts. Everyone needs a life. That takes a lot of folks out of the pool of potential activists in a relatively small community.

Nevertheless, we persisted, and we have come a long way in the last six years. We have an active Board that is really DOING things. We now have 2.5 paid MWA staff living and working in Gallatin County. We have regular outings (Wilderness Walks) and semi-regular program meetings. You are

reading this on an electronically distributed quarterly newsletter that is starting its fourth year. In addition to great participation in things like the Gallatin Community Collaborative, we have several projects underway to increase the visibility and reach of our Chapter.

Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go. One stark example is the Gallatin Range. Its Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area was approved by Congress and signed into law nearly 4 decades ago. But it is STILL not designated "big W" Wilderness. Getting new designated Wilderness has become increasingly challenging. For example, prior to December 2014, it had been 31 years since ANY new Wilderness had been designated in Montana, a state rife with wild places. It takes a lot of work and a lot of like-minded people standing up for wild places and alerting our elected officials that protecting them is critical. It is not only critical to us humans (because many of us rely on such for cleaner air and clean water), it is critical to those creatures who call these wild places their homes. Whether it is moose, wolverines, pikas, or many other, less iconic creatures, these critters are being squeezed by the double whammy of loss of habitat and climate change.

The Gallatin Range is right in our own backyard. It is the last remaining unprotected range adjacent to Yellowstone National Park. And let's face it: The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is an island of refuge, in an increasingly turbulent world. If we let too much of it be chopped up by roads and motorized trails..... what kind of legacy would we be leaving for future generations? Are extractive resource devel-

opment and mechanized recreation the highest and best use for this land? Do we rinse the paint off the Mona Lisa because we need some canvas for the back of a director's chair?



It is easy to get wrapped up in the nuts and bolts of day to day living and forget the threats that exist to our wild places. If we lose our wild places to these threats, it is likely that they will be gone forever. Or, at least until Yellowstone blows. That is why it is so critical that we have an active, grassroots conservation effort in SW Montana. Grass roots activism was essential to the passage of the Wilderness Act over 50 years ago, and it will be critical for the protection of our remaining wild places in the future.

So, if grassroots activism is so important, why am I stepping out of the President's role now? Well, it is always good to get some fresh perspective and grey matter in any sort of leadership role. Also, I thought it would be fun to focus on some of the nuts and bolts activities of the Chapter, rather than always having to keep "the big picture" first and foremost. And, as they say, a "break in the action" is never a bad thing. I became active in grass roots conservation in Tennessee in 1977. It is sort of "what I do." So I am not going away. Just wearing a different hat. But I still want to encourage as many of you to step up, give back to the community, and help out where you can. We're not done yet.

And thanks for reading.

Upcoming Events!

Join us!

When: January 13th, 6:00 PM

Where: Baxter Hotel, Second Floor, Suite B (MWA office)

Why: See what the chapter is up to and join us for a **social hour!** We will have a one hour meeting in the MWA office, and move downstairs to the Bacchus Pub to grab a drink and socialize. Sally Cathey, the Southwest Montana Field Director, will also give a brief update on opportunities to plug into forest planning. We promise this will be **exciting!**

Keep it Public: Join us for a discussion at MSU

Montana Wilderness Association will host a panel Wednesday, January 27th at 7:00 PM to elevate the importance of Montana's public lands. Policy-makers and outdoor recreationists alike will gather to speak about how public lands influence lives and livelihoods. It is an opportunity to learn about why these lands are so important, convey the importance of the threat facing public lands, and offer opportunities to take action.

Panelists will include Montana Conservation Voters Executive Director, Clayton Elliot, State Senator JP Pomnichowski, and Representative Zach Brown.

Location: The Procrastinator Theater on the MSU Campus.

Questions? Contact Kate Sheridan, Wilderness Fellow, at ksheridan@wildmontana.org

Act now to #keepitpublic

Governor Bullock wants to hear why public lands are important to YOU!

Leave a message for the Governor by visiting wildmontana.org/keepitpublic. The 30 seconds it takes to leave the Governor a message goes a long way in defeating the dangerous idea of transferring ownership of our federal lands. Your comments will help the Governor act to protect our public places.



Wilderness And... Honey Bees and Pollination

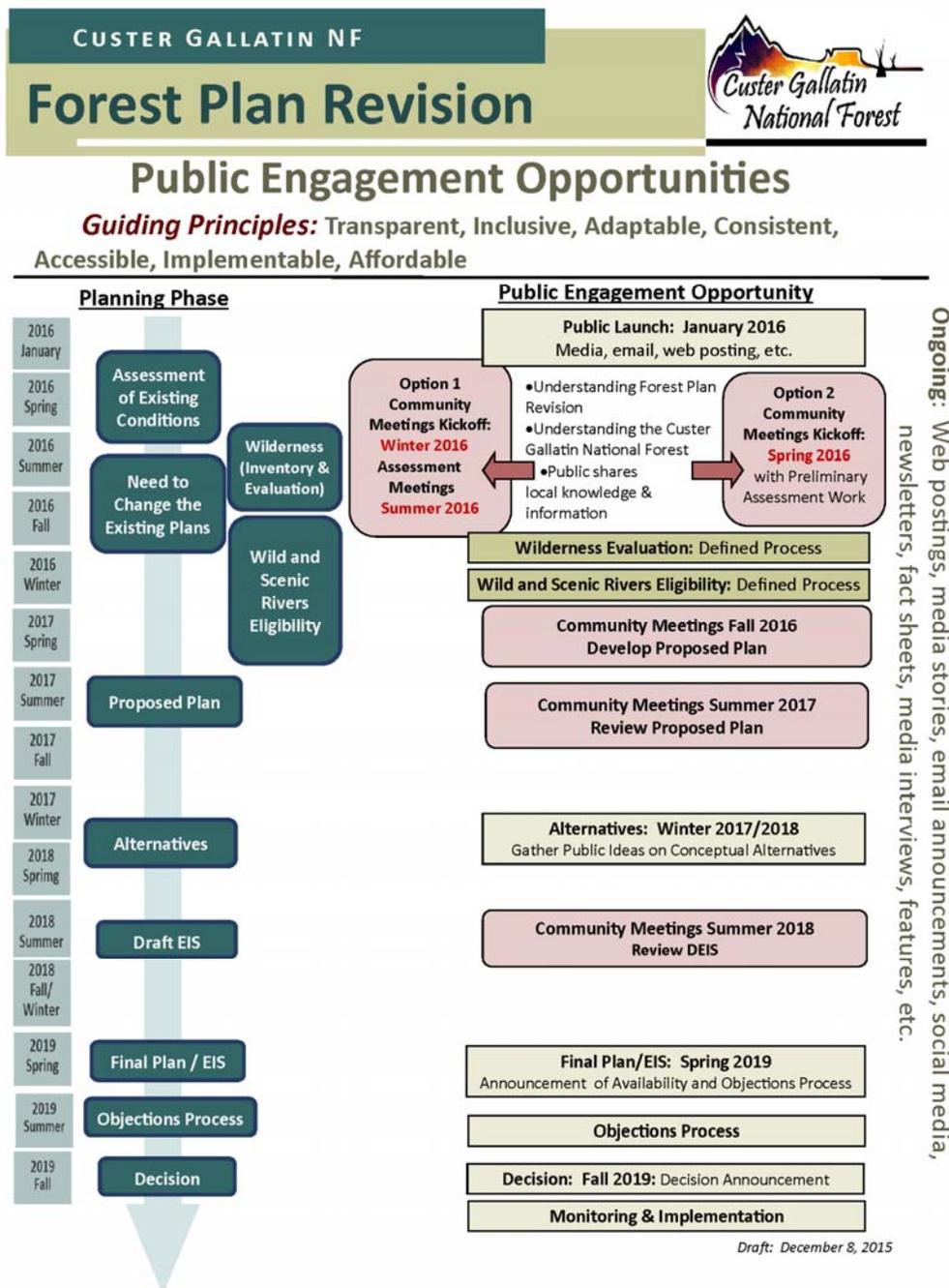
Wednesday, February 17, 7:00 p.m., Large Community Room, Bozeman Public Library

Dr. Laura Burkle, Assistant Professor of Ecology at Montana State University will speak to us about honey bees and pollinations, a subject of especial importance in Montana. Laura's lab conducts basic and applied research in ecology, evolution, and conservation biology. Research interests of the lab include understanding the consequences of environmental factors, such as climate change, invasive species, land-use change and nutrient availability, on the biodiversity on native plants and their interactions with animal mutualists and antagonists. In particular, her research uses a combination of observational, experimental, and theoretical approaches to examine the structure and function of plant-pollinator interactions at the community level.

Speak up for Our Wild Places by Sally Cathey, MWA Southwest Montana Field Director

There is a once in a lifetime opportunity to speak up for our wild lands and ensure they remain wild for generations to come. Beginning January 2016, the forest service is beginning the revision of the Custer-Gallatin National Forest's management plan. This plan guides management on the entire forest, and it is the forest service's opportunity to recommend wilderness. This will be a long process, but it is exciting. There are many opportunities for MWA members and supporters to plug in and speak up. Below is the road map for the public engagement process.

For more information, please contact Sally at scathey@wildmontana.org



Announcing the 2016 Winter Walks

You should have recently received an email from the MWA office in Helena announcing the 2016 Winter Walks. This year there are 43 guided walks across some of Montana's best wild country. Below are the ones in the Madison-Gallatin Chapter area. There's a lot of variety, like moonlight walks, a geology lesson, wildlife study or exploring a seldom-visited creek in Yellowstone. All dates are on Saturday. You will need to pre-register online at wildmontana.org. And MWA will provide snowshoes if you need them.



Having fun on a Winter Walk

January 23 Moonlight	Roxanna McLaughlin	Mount Ellis by
January 30	Kate Sheridan	Tepee Creek
February 6	Bob Bayley	Cowboys Heaven
February 13	Jason Matthews	Tom Miner Basin - Wolverine Walk
February 20	Roxanna McLaughlin	History Rock by Moonlight
February 27 Park	Roger Jenkins	Snowy Creek, Yellowstone National
March 5	Sally Cathey	CDT near Homestake Pass
March 12 Valley	Karen Williams	Geology from the Hogback, Paradise



Snowy Creek in Yellowstone National Park



In March the Hogback may not have much snow

Timberline Creek Nature Community by Roxanna McLaughlin

Editor's note: Roxanna McLaughlin, one of our MGC board members, is enrolled in a "Master Naturalist" program and to fulfill one of the requirements, has begun journaling her observations around the area where she lives. She offered to share some of her journal for the newsletter and I have chosen her description of the Snowberry plant.

*Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) from the Honeysuckle Family (*Caprifoliaceae*)*

This attractive shrub hangs on to its showy white berries right through the winter. You would think that this means those berries are good for nothing. But I have learned otherwise.

In October, the snowberry leaves were still green, only grudgingly letting go with frosts and snows, but the berries cling to the upright twigs. The shrubs grow to a humble height of 2 to 4 feet, the stems are hairless and slender.



The leaves are opposite, elliptical to oval, and have smooth to wavy leaf edges. What I see on the creek slope appears to be a colony

of upright stems, which is possible as the plant sometimes reproduces with a network of underground rhizomes. I see it along the trail by the creek, companioning wild rose and chokecherry, and in the fall they make such a pretty group, the white snowberries standing out against the green leaves.

Some Native Americans called the plant "corpse berry" or snake berries, and due to their white color the berries were believed to be ghosts of Saskatoon berries not to be eaten by the living.² The Flathead Indians, however, applied the crushed leaves, fruits, and bark as a poultice for sores, cuts, chapped or injured skin or used it to cover scabs and burns to promote rapid healing with no scarring. Sioux and Flathead used the snowberry for eye soreness or injury. Nez Perce' boiled the twigs for a brown tea to cure fevers. Kootenai women cut up the branches to make a tea for "general female troubles." The Crow used a solution of boiled crushed snowberry roots, and gave it to horses failing to void. And the Sioux gave a similar solution made from the boiled berries as a diuretic.

As for wildlife that might like our Timberline Creek snowberries, the Forest Service states that white-

tailed deer utilize it regularly during summer and fall. "Reports of elk utilization vary. In western Montana, 1 source reports Rocky Mountain elk use common snowberry frequently and heavily during early summer while another states that elk rarely or never use it, even when available. Yet another source reports its forage value to elk as fair. Moose are reported as utilizing common snowberry extensively during winter in the Gallatin River drainage in Mon-



tana. However another source states common snowberry is unpalatable to moose. Grizzly bears use common snowberry as food." Common snowberry is important as both cover and food for bird and small mammal populations. These include sharp-tailed, ruffed, and blue grouse, wild turkey and, several non-game species of bird including the kingbird, western flycatcher, and western bluebird.

