



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

# WILD MONTANA



SPRING 2015

**STANDING TOGETHER  
FOR PUBLIC LANDS**



# MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

**Montana Wilderness Association works with communities to protect Montana's wilderness heritage, quiet beauty, and outdoor traditions, now and for future generations.**

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PUBLIC LANDS ARE IN OUR HANDS

More than 500 Montanans gathered in our state capitol on February 16 to send a loud-and-clear message to our elected representatives that we will not allow Montana’s public lands to be transferred, traded, or sold. Montana Wilderness Association played a leading role in organizing the rally, which turned out to be the largest in a series of rallies across the West to keep public lands in public hands.

Montana Governor Steve Bullock helped drive home the message when he said, “I have no interest at all in being forced to sell off our heritage in order to manage what’s left over, just like I have no interest in seeing starter castles on the ridgelines of some of our wildest places,” he said.

The message from Montanans and our governor was strong enough to stifle numerous bills aimed at transferring American public lands to the state. Clearly, those who love Montana will not tolerate the transfer and possible sale of our public lands. Thank you for being involved in such an important effort.

Almost 30% of Montana belongs to every American. We are blessed with two national parks, ten national forests, 16 wilderness areas, and 39 wilderness study areas. These are lands that generate clean water and abundant wildlife. They produce timber and recreational opportunities, and provide enjoyment, inspiration, and healthy lifestyles while stimulating our economy and strengthening our quality of life.

There will likely be more battles over outdoor heritage to win, but now is the perfect time to enjoy your success at fighting back the sale of our public lands. Get out and enjoy those lands you’ve worked so hard this past year to protect. Take with you family, friends, and especially those who are not familiar with Montana’s extraordinary wild and quiet places. Enjoy the beauty and amazing wildlife that exist in our backyards.

To help in your decision of where to go hiking, you’ll find some helpful recommendations in the following pages from our field staff. We also encourage you to have a look at MWA’s 2015 Wilderness Walks book, describing more than 160 guided adventures you can join. If you would like to receive one, call our office in Helena at 406-443-7350.

So get out and enjoy your public lands!



Lee Boman,  
MWA President



Brian Sybert, MWA  
Executive Director

WILD  
M O N T A N A

SPRING 2015

STANDING TOGETHER  
FOR PUBLIC LANDS

On the cover: Mountain goats in the Our Lake area of the Rocky Mountain Front, added to the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area with passage of the Heritage Act.



4

OUR PUBLIC LANDS:  
THE GIFT THAT KEEPS  
ON GIVING

MWA is building a pro-public lands agenda to protect our outdoor way of life.

8

SIX GREAT HIKES TO  
TAKE THIS SUMMER

MWA field staff recommend some great hikes you can take this summer, from the Pryors to the Whitefish Range.

10



**These lands are our heritage.  
These lands are our birthright.  
These lands define**

**WHO  
WE**



## Standing Together for Public Lands

On February 16, Gov. Steve Bullock stepped to a microphone under the rotunda of the Montana State Capitol. Hundreds of people—including hikers, backpackers, hunters, anglers, and other outdoor enthusiasts of all political stripes—stretched across the floor in front of him and up the stairs behind him. A few hundred more peered down from the balconies two and three stories above.



“These lands are our heritage. These lands are our birthright. These lands define who we are and what we are,” Bullock thundered.

All in all, more than 500 people from across the state stood rapt as Gov. Bullock delivered a soaring speech. In it he celebrated our American public lands and vowed to fight for them in the face of a fringe legislative agenda that would have them transferred to state ownership and sold off to the highest bidder.

# ARE ”

Capturing front-page headlines across the state, this rally was one of the largest ever held at the Montana capitol. This was also the largest, by far, of several anti-transfer rallies that took place this winter in state capitals around the West—a proud achievement given that Helena is the least populated of the capitals.

*continued*

Shane Mayer-Gawlik

Montana Wilderness Association took the lead role in organizing the rally, working with Montana Wildlife Federation and other conservation and sportsmen groups to make it happen. The rally was just one component of the campaign MWA spearheaded in the fight against lands transfer at the 2015 Montana State Legislature, a campaign that included working the halls of the Montana capitol to make sure that the transfer agenda bore no fruit.

“

# WE ARE NOT FOR SALE”

—Rally emcee  
Randy Newberg

Thanks to your support of MWA, the lands transfer agenda had, as of press time, gained almost no traction during the legislative session. Only one transfer-related bill, to create a state task force to study public land management, passed the House, but only after the words “land transfer” were removed from the bill.

“Because of the rally and the success we’ve achieved galvanizing a powerful pro-public lands movement in Montana, MWA has emerged as a regional leader in the anti-transfer fight and as one of the most effective grassroots advocates for public lands in the U.S.,” said MWA Executive Director Brian Sybert.

Gov. Bullock was one of six speakers at the rally, including Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation President David Allen, former Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Director Mary Sexton, and Addrien Marx, an MWA state council member and the owner of a gas station and hardware store in Seeley Lake.

“Seeley Lake is a pretty diverse place, and we have a lot of different views of the world,” Marx said. “But one view we all hold in common is that of the Swan and Mission Mountains that surround us, lots of amazing country that belongs to you, me, and all Americans.”

Rally emcee Randy Newberg, host of the television program “Fresh Tracks with Randy Newberg,” closed the rally by chiding the American Lands Council, a Utah-based group pushing the transfer agenda, for “shopping the Montana Legislature.”

“We are not for sale,” he declared.





## Montanans rose up and demonstrated just how important public lands are to our way of life and how willing they are to fight for these lands.

In the days and weeks before and after the rally, Montanans demonstrated how right Newberg was. Leading up to the rally, MWA circulated a petition demanding that our elected officials oppose all efforts to transfer the American lands to the state. More than 3,000 people signed it in less than a month.

Before and after the rally, several newspapers editorialized against the transfer-and-sell scheme, including the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, the *Helena Independent Record*, and the *Great Falls Tribune*. As a result of all the press, letters-to-the-editor and a number of op-eds decrying the notion, written by a host of inspired citizens, mushroomed in opinion pages across the state.

“The rally, the petition, the outpouring of media—they all added up to making transfer one of the most hot-button issues at the 2015 legislature,” Sybert says. “Montanans rose up and demonstrated just how important public lands are to our way of life and how willing they are to fight for these lands.

“This momentum energizes MWA. It’s helping us build a pro-public lands movement in Montana that prizes our outdoor heritage and gives our elected officials a platform they can stand proudly on. We couldn’t be more excited.”



# THE GIFT THAT K OUR PUBL

Study after study, poll after poll, confirm what we all know in our bones: Montanans benefit immensely from the rich and varied American public lands that surround our towns and that are part of our communities.

As a recent poll by Colorado College shows, two-thirds of Montanans say that the ability to recreate on public land was a significant factor in choosing where to live, topping the cost of living, economic opportunity, and even schools. And as a recent Headwaters Economics study shows, counties with larger shares of public land attract more jobs and see stronger economic growth than the state as a whole.

Montana Governor Steve Bullock said it best at the public lands rally on February 16. “Our public lands are not part of the problem—they are part of the solution.”

Montana Wilderness Association couldn’t agree more, and we are dedicated to making sure that we continue benefitting from and enjoying these public lands. That involves educating and reminding our elected officials how public lands sustain our outdoor heritage and our way of life. On our website, in our social media, in the halls and offices of our state capitol and our nation’s capitol, we’ve been reminding our elected officials and other decision makers that our public lands are essential to our way of life and sacred to who we are.

But there’s another narrative that’s been running through our state and nation’s capitols: that American public lands are a detriment, best if sold off for oil and gas development or given over for the pleasure of only the rich.

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Sadly, this anti-public lands message has gained traction not just in some fringe quarters of the Montana Legislature, but squarely within the U.S. Congress. In late March, the Senate voted 51-49 in favor of a budget resolution amendment that would create a “reserve fund” to facilitate the sale, transfer, or exchange of lands in wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, national forests, conservation lands, historic sites, and national memorials to state and local governments.

Imagine, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area or the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge sold off.

Astonishingly, Montana Senator Steve Daines voted for this amendment, even though he has repeatedly voiced opposition to transferring and selling public lands.

More so than people in any other western state, Montanans are prepared to fight for public lands, as demonstrated when more than 500 people attended a public lands rally MWA organized in February or when more than 3,000 people signed a petition demanding that our elected officials reject transfer.

Other pieces of transfer legislation are almost certainly in the Congressional pipeline. In conjunction with our partners, MWA is prepared to lead that fight against these bills—in Washington, D.C. as in Helena.

As part of that fight, we’ll be working with elected officials across the state and in D.C. to build a pro-active public lands agenda that protects our outdoor heritage and improves our quality of life.

Nicholas Hopkins





# SIX GREAT HIKES TO TAKE THIS SUMMER

AS RECOMMENDED BY MWA FIELD STAFF

# 1

## SOUTHWESTERN MONTANA **THE GALLATIN CREST**



On a crisp summer morning, I shouldered a heavy pack and set off under a big, blue sky with two close friends. Fresh wolf tracks in the mud blazed a trail up Daly Creek in Yellowstone National Park on our way to Hyalite Peak.

Our next five days on the Gallatin Crest were spent as you would expect, watching goats in the high country, glassing for bears, and leaving the trail to find hidden lakes and quiet haunts. We taped our blisters at night then fell asleep telling half-truths under a dizzying bowl of stars only to be interrupted by a distant storm over the Absarokas.

And we woke every morning to find silence on those high ridges that can only be described as profound.

One day I'll pass along a thick stack of maps, tattered and yellowed, to my two girls. If they can read my writing, they'll find notes of all sorts like the place where you can find a gin-clear spring late into summer or that high talus that pika prefer and falcons patrol.

The hike from Daly Creek trailhead to Hyalite Creek trailhead is approximately 50 miles, rarely dropping below 9,000 feet and peaking at 10,298 feet.

To reach Daly Creek trailhead from Bozeman, drive 57.7 miles south on route 191 until you enter Yellowstone National Park. Daly Creek is the first trailhead on the left. To reach Hyalite Creek trailhead, take 19th Avenue south from Bozeman and turn left on Hyalite Canyon Road. Drive past the reservoir to the end of the road at Hyalite Creek parking lot.

*—John Todd, Southwestern Montana field director*



## 2

SOUTHEASTERN MONTANA  
**CRATER ICE CAVE  
IN THE PRYOR MOUNTAINS**

Just a little more than an hour away from Billings, the Crater Ice Cave Trail provides beauty, seclusion, and a fascinating display of geology. The short hike covers nearly two miles and gains a healthy 1600 feet in elevation. In addition to experiencing the wonders of the Crater Ice Cave, the hike continues to the top of Big Pryor Mountain and offers spectacular views of East Pryor Mountain, the Bighorn Mountains, the Beartooths, the northern plains, and even Wyoming's Wind River Mountains.

The road to the trailhead opens May 22 for the summer. From Billings/I-90, head south on US-212 at Exit 434. Turn left onto US-310 towards Bridger. Turn left again (east) onto Pryor Road just south of Bridger. Turn left (north) at Bowler Junction, where there are several power poles and transformers. Continue on FS Route 2308 (Pryor Mountain Rd), then turn right (south) at FS Route 2104 (Tie Flat Rd). Trailhead is ½ mile down FS Route 2104.

—Cameron Sapp, Eastern Montana field representative

## 3

CENTRAL MONTANA  
**ICE CAVES IN THE  
BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS**

Widely regarded as Montana's most intact island mountain range, the Big Snowy Mountains offer great hiking opportunities for those looking for places less traveled. Most of the range is a Wilderness Study Area (91,000 acres).

One of my favorites is the loop trail hike to the Ice Caves. The expansive views and unusual geology make this hike outstanding. The trailhead to the Ice Cave is located at the Crystal Lake campground, about 25 miles south of Lewistown. From Lewistown, travel south towards Moore and look for a sign to the Crystal Lake Campground. The road is well graveled and paved once on Forest Service land. Look for the trailhead signs.

This 12-mile loop hike is strenuous because of the 1,700-foot climb through the forest to the top of the ridge. Once on the ridge top, you'll traverse several miles along a fairly level trail with 360-degree views. On a clear day, you'll be able to see all the way from Wyoming to Canada. As you hike along, look for a small sign leading to the Ice Cave, a good place to cool down on a hot summer day. You'll find the trip down just as scenic, with good overlooks of Crystal Lake.

—Mark Good, Central Montana field director

## 4

NORTH-CENTRAL MONTANA  
**HALL CREEK IN THE  
BADGER-TWO MEDICINE**

Located at the intersection of Glacier National Park, the Blackfeet Reservation and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, the Badger-Two Medicine area is an off-the-beaten-path gem of spectacular (and unprotected) wild country. It's home to the Blackfeet origin story as well as a robust population of grizzlies.

This rewarding day hike enters the Badger from Highway 2, just west of East Glacier. (Turn at the sign for Rising Wolf Ranch.) From the undeveloped trailhead, travel across the South Fork of the Two Medicine River toward Hall Creek and the proposed site of an oil and gas exploration well. An eight-mile round-trip hike on moderate terrain will bring you to the site where remnants of a sweat lodge remain, marking the long history of the fight to protect the Badger from development.

This landscape features mixed forest, open meadows, and sweeping views of the mountains in nearby Glacier. Lucky visitors will be treated with blooming Bitterroot, fresh animal tracks, and the silence and solitude of non-motorized backcountry.

—Casey Perkins, Rocky Mountain Front field director



Jane Timmerman

# 5

## WESTERN MONTANA

### KID AND MUD LAKES IN THE GREAT BURN PROPOSED WILDERNESS



Looking for a hike that's high on reward and low on effort? Look no further than this gorgeous hike into the high country of the northern Bitterroot Mountains along the Idaho-Montana border and in the heart of the 250,000 acre Great Burn Proposed Wilderness. Beginning from the high-elevation Schley Trailhead, take your pick of three outstanding destinations, or hit them all in one trip by leap-frogging along the view-packed State Line Trail #738.



Zack Porter

**Kid Lake:** Easy, four miles round-trip, 400 feet of elevation gain. Great for family camping and fishing.

**Kid and Mud Lakes:** Moderate, nine miles round-trip, 1,700 feet of elevation gain. Great for horse packing and enjoying wildflower-filled meadows.

**Kid and Mud Lakes plus Admiral Peak:** Difficult, 11 miles round trip, 2,300 feet of elevation gain with views to eternity from the top.

From Missoula, go west on I-90 and get off at exit 66. Go south on Fish Creek Road (FS Road 343) for approx 16 miles. Turn left (west) on Surveyor Creek Road (FS Rd 7734) and go approximately 14.5 miles. The Ninemile Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest maintains a gate at Schley Saddle that is

generally open between mid-June and Labor Day. Call the ranger station at 406-626-5201 for the latest information. If the gate to the upper parking lot is closed, add four miles round-trip to the above hike distances.

—Zack Porter, Western Montana field director

# 6

## NORTHWESTERN MONTANA

### MOUNT THOMPSON-SETON



Mount Thompson-Seton is in the heart of the wildest roadless lands of the Whitefish Range. At 7,820 feet this is the second highest peak in the Range. You'll climb for about 3,000 feet for six miles (12 miles round trip) to get to the top of this distinctive pyramid. The trail is well maintained with varying terrain, providing sweeping views of Glacier National Park, the Canadian Flathead, and Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area. At the top, relax with 360-degree views while eating your lunch among remnants of an old lookout.

From Columbia Falls, head north on the graveled North Fork road, along the west side of Glacier National Park. Continue north past Polebridge for several miles and turn left (west) onto Whale Creek Road (#318). Park at the end of the road and climb trail trail #79 to Inuya Pass and then continue on trail #28 to the summit of Mount Thompson-Seton.

—Amy Robinson, Northwestern Montana field director



By selecting the "Wilderness" plate next time you visit your licensing bureau, you're not only displaying your pride in our special wild places, but you're helping to protect Montana's wilderness and traditional recreational opportunities for everyone.

For more information, call 406-443-7350 or drop by your county licensing bureau. Go wild with the "Wilderness" plate from the Montana Wilderness Association today.



## MEMBERS MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Thanks to the new members who joined Montana Wilderness Association from January 1 to March 31, 2015.

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Patricia Callaghan  
Larry Taylor  
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Barbara Evilsizer  
Mary Lee Larison  
Troy Lechman  
DA Davidson,  
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Lynn Gagnon  
Daniel Gragert  
Nancy Harris  
Ian Jackson  
Carol McBride  
Steven Velaski  
Joane Vincent  
Cheryl Youngblood

## FOUR WAYS TO JOIN MWA ON THE GROUND THIS SUMMER

- 1 Sign up for a Wilderness Walk.** We have more than 160 Walks to choose from this year, from easy to strenuous, spanning from the Pryors to the Cabinets. Check out the selection of Walks at [wildmontana.org](http://wildmontana.org).
- 2 Hit the trail (and help build it) with CDT Montana.** There are several volunteer opportunities to help maintain and build the Continental Divide Trail in Montana. Check out [cdtmontana.org](http://cdtmontana.org).
- 3 Help us build the case for new wilderness.** Volunteer for a wildlands inventory outing to document wildlife, campsites, noxious weeds, and trail conditions. Contact Sally Cathey at [scathey@wildmontana.org](mailto:scathey@wildmontana.org).
- 4 Come to our Wild Fest annual gathering.** September 12, at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort. See page 14.



## WHY I GIVE

*Last summer I spent four days on the Swan Crest and never saw another person. That's wilderness. There are different ways to protect natural values—wilderness doesn't have to be the only answer—but wilderness is special. Montana Wilderness Association staff and volunteers have an admirable level of expertise and commitment to wilderness, but they also have an ability to work with all the interested parties to try to find mutually agreeable solutions. It's all well-done, and it's happening right in my local area.*

—Jim Rafferty, Kalispell, MT

# WILD FEST 2015

SEPTEMBER 12, 2015  
FAIRMONT HOT SPRINGS

## SAVE THE DATE!

**JOIN US FOR GREAT MUSIC, SPEAKERS,  
HIKES, FAMILY ACTIVITIES, AND MORE  
AT THE 2015 WILD FEST, SEPTEMBER 12  
AT FAIRMONT HOT SPRINGS.**

Room reservations can be made for the group rate of \$124 + tax.  
Just call 406-797-3241 and tell them you are attending the  
Montana Wilderness Association Wild Fest.

Camping right next to Fairmont Hot Springs is available at the Fairmont RV Park. Lost Creek State  
Park is just minutes away from Fairmont and offers camping on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Visit [wildmontana.org/wildfest](http://wildmontana.org/wildfest) throughout the summer for more details. For more information,  
contact Laura Parr at 406-443-7350 ext. 110 or [lparr@wildmontana.org](mailto:lparr@wildmontana.org).



**FAIRMONT**  
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[www.fairmontmontana.com](http://www.fairmontmontana.com)

## Solar Power = Wilderness Power!

When you invest in small scale, local energy production, that's energy that doesn't require drilling, mining, or excavating on public lands. And now, with the low cost of solar modules, generous tax credits, and the Solar Power=Wilderness Power partnership between MWA and Thirsty Lake Solar, the benefits of investing in solar are even greater.

Install a solar electric system on your home or business  
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*"It was a simple yet dramatic  
action we could take to  
decrease demand for large-  
scale energy generation  
and decrease the need for  
infrastructure on sensitive  
public lands."*

—Terry and Katy Meyers, Kalispell



# YOU ENJOY THE BACKCOUNTRY. WE CARRY THE GEAR!

10% for the Front

Gene Sertiz

## Join Dropstone Outfitting for a traverse of the northern Rocky Mountain Front, July 27–30.

Help Dropstone Outfitting celebrate the first new Wilderness in Montana in over 30 years by joining us for a trip along the Front and experience first hand what the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act is all about. Experience stunning reefs, dramatic views, majestic wildlife, and seldom-used trails. We carry the gear and do the cooking, leaving you to enjoy days on the trail with a light backpack.

We will donate 10% of the proceeds from this trip to noxious weed control, one of the requirements of the legislation. Noxious weeds are perhaps one of the greatest threats to the integrity and overall ecosystem function of our landscape. That's why we're more than happy to lend a hand where we feel it's needed most.

For details and information:  
[www.dropstoneoutfitting.com](http://www.dropstoneoutfitting.com)  
[info@dropstoneoutfitting.com](mailto:info@dropstoneoutfitting.com)  
406-461-2114



## YOU CAN LEAD THE WAY TO WILDERNESS

### We're looking for talented, passionate people (like you) to join our State Council.

The State Council is a group of volunteers who lead the way for Montana Wilderness Association. We're business owners, students, teachers, accountants, techies, and retirees. We're into hiking, camping, hunting, birding, fishing, horseback riding, backpacking, photography, and a host of other outdoor endeavors. We love wilderness, and we work together to make sure MWA is the best possible organization it can be.

The Council is a diverse and effective group with individual members bringing relevant skills or experiences to our work protecting Montana's wildlands. Desirable skills include governance, finance, political experience or connections, fundraising, community organizing, outreach, and communications.

Would you or someone you know like to join our State Council team?

**Submit your nominations by May 15, 2015.**

To learn more or to submit nominations, contact Daphne Herling  
at [daphne.herling@business.umn.edu](mailto:daphne.herling@business.umn.edu) or at 406-531-8347.



Ryan Edwards



## GET SNAPPIN'

It's that time again! Montana Wilderness Association wants to know how you Picture Wild Montana for our seventh annual photo contest.

**Earlier and extended submission dates:**

Submissions are invited starting

**June 1 through July 31**, so now is the time to hit the trail and find that perfect shot.

This year, **prizes worth more than \$1,000** are up for grabs for those photographers who can best highlight Montana's remaining wild places. So get out there, get that perfect shot, and enter to win at **[www.wildmontana.org/photocontest](http://www.wildmontana.org/photocontest)**.

For more information, contact Amanda at [ahagerty@wildmontana.org](mailto:ahagerty@wildmontana.org).



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