



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

WILDERNESS

MONTANA

SPRING 2016

HIKEWILDMONTANA.ORG
**CONNECTING PEOPLE
TO SPECIAL PLACES**





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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FROM "WHOLLY UNFIT" TO ECONOMIC ENGINE

"Almost wholly unfit for cultivation, and of course uninhabitable."

This quote came from one of the leaders President James Monroe sent to explore the American West in the early 19th century. It pretty much sums up early perceptions that the "Great American Desert" held no economic potential.

My, how things change. According to Headwaters Economics, western landscapes once thought to offer no positive economic impact now lead our nation in economic growth. From 1970 to 2010, employment in the west grew by 152%, compared to 78% for the rest of the country. From 1970 to 2014, employment grew by 242% in counties with ample public land, compared to 73% in counties with less public land. Personal income grew by 333% in counties with lots of public land, compared to 122% in the counties with little.

Visitors deposit \$3.6 billion in Montana's local economies each year and sustain 48,260 Montana jobs. Why is the outdoor recreation and tourism industry booming? Yellowstone, Glacier, grizzly bears, elk herds, the Bob Marshall Wilderness, and about a thousand more reasons having to do with our world-class public lands.

One of the other reasons is the Badger-Two Medicine, a place sacred to the Blackfeet people and special to all Montanans. Thankfully, in March, the Department of Interior canceled an oil and gas lease that could have desecrated the Badger. The department recognized that this place has so much more value than could ever be gained by drilling it, a value that has everything to do with why we live in Montana and why people from all over the world visit.

But we can do better for some of the communities near wild places like the Badger. That's one of the reasons MWA created hikewildmontana.org, Montana's first-ever online trail guide. The guide will help people locate trailheads throughout the state and help them find a great place nearby to have a burger or a beer or to stay for the night. It will help local businesses statewide realize the financial value in their proximity to Montana's wildlands, even if those wildlands aren't a national park.

Of course, economics is probably not what most of us had in my mind when we joined MWA. An abiding love of our wild places and wildlife is perhaps what drew most of us. But it is good to know that as we work to ensure abundant wild places forever, we are also helping to strengthen the quality of life for all Montanans.



Lee Boman,
MWA President



Brian Sybert, MWA
Executive Director

WILD MONTANA

SPRING 2016

HIKE WILD MONTANA

On the cover: MWA launches online, statewide trail guide, connecting people to our special places.



4

BADGER-TWO MEDICINE

The Department of Interior cancels an oil and gas lease that posed an imminent threat to this sacred area.

8

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

The latest from MWA's on-the-ground work around the state.

12





YOUR ONLINE GUIDE TO THE BEST TRAILS UNDER THE BIG SKY



INTRODUCING

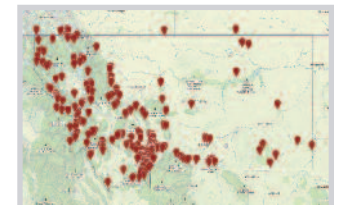
HIKE WILD MONTANA

Made possible by a grant from the Montana Office of Tourism and with the help of more than 70 MWA volunteers who hiked, photographed, and mapped 200-plus trails, hikewildmontana.org offers a single website where people can discover new trails, view inspiring photos, get up-to-date trail conditions, and add their own trail descriptions.

Building on MWA's 55 years of organizing Wilderness Walks, hikewildmontana.org connects people with the wild places we're working to protect. It inspires lifelong Montanans, new arrivals, and visitors alike to not just discover new trails but also to engage in the future of these places as stewards and advocates. Each trail description includes information about the work we're doing to protect the area and ways to give back to these special places.

We created hikewildmontana.org to also strengthen the connections between public lands and local economies. Trail descriptions often include recommendations for nearby businesses where you can find great burgers, beer, breakfasts, or B&Bs. By encouraging people to stop, enjoy, and spend dollars in gateway communities, hikewildmontana.org helps showcase the value of quiet outdoor recreation to rural economies.

continued





WARRIOR MOUNTAIN



Lee Boman

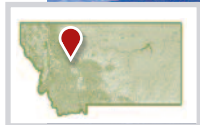
Here are just a few of the trails you can discover at hikewildmontana.org.

With abundant wildflowers and big views, Warrior Mountain offers a stunning glimpse into the heart of the wild Swan Range and into the Bunker Creek Recommended Wilderness. From the summit, you'll be looking over some of the most productive wildlife habitat in North America. Wolverines, grizzlies, mountain goats, and elk all call the land before you home.

Round-trip distance: 10 miles
 Total elevation gain: 3,500 feet
 Land management: Bunker Creek Grizzly Core Area, Flathead National Forest



ROGERS PASS SOUTH ON CDT



Zack Porter

Access to the Continental Divide doesn't get any easier than this. Park at Rogers Pass alongside Highway 200 and simply start hiking south along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. Enjoy incredible views after just one mile and 1,000 feet elevation gain. Turn around here, or wander another three miles along the crest of the Wild Divide.

Round-trip distance: 2–8 miles
 Total elevation gain: 1,450 feet
 Land management: Anaconda Hill Roadless Area, Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest



ROCK CREEK



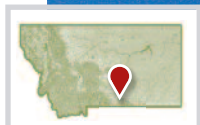
Tyler Courville

Explore Montana's little Grand Canyon, one of the few places along the Hi-Line where a perennial stream flows through a largely intact prairie setting. Enter the canyon through a number of hoodoo-lined coulees, pass old homesteads, enjoy great opportunities for bird watching, then enter into the grand Rock Creek Canyon. Take your time—the canyon is yours to explore.

Round-trip distance: 4–6 miles
 Total elevation gain: 500 feet
 Land management: Land with wilderness characteristics, Bureau of Land Management



BIG SKY TRAIL



Dick Walton, Pryors Coalition

In the poetically named Hikers' Haven area, this trail offers wide-open views of the big sky, the slopes of Big Pryor Mountain, and views into Wyoming. Opt for the four mile round trip version, or continue on a longer loop that climbs from the south Pryor desert, past the rugged rim of Bear Canyon, and up a long, narrow ridge to the heights of Red Pryor Mountain. Long or short, it's a spectacular glimpse into an area deserving of future wilderness protection.

Round-trip distance: 4–10 miles
 Total elevation gain: 630–1,600 feet
 Land management: Bureau of Land Management and Custer-Gallatin National Forest

HIKE WILD MONTANA



"Contributing to hikewildmontana.org gives me a chance to have a great day on the trail and share my love for our wild places. I'm happy to take a little extra time to take notes and photos along the way to build this great community resource. This summer, join me in helping connect people with Montana's wild places. Add new trails or simply share trail conditions when you get back from your outdoor adventures. To help build this community resource, visit hikewildmontana.org and click on 'Add a Trail.'"
 —Barbara Geller, Bozeman



Encouraging people to stop, enjoy, and spend dollars in gateway communities helps showcase the value of quiet outdoor recreation to rural economies.

The Department of Interior takes bold action on an oil and gas lease that posed an imminent threat to the Badger-Two Medicine.

CANCELLED

There will be no oil rigs rolling into the sacred Badger-Two Medicine anytime soon.

On March 17, 2016, the federal government took definitive action to terminate an oil and gas lease held by Louisiana-based Solenex, LLC. The department canceled the lease on the grounds that it was improperly and therefore illegally issued in 1982.

In a letter to Solenex, the Acting Montana Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Aden Seidlitz, wrote that the BLM and the United States Forest Service (USFS) violated the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

He also explained that the agencies “failed to comport with the national policy to protect and preserve the rights of American Indians to exercise traditional religions, including access to important sites.

“The BLM and the Department have determined,” the letter continues, “that surface disturbing activities are incompatible with the irreplaceable natural and cultural resources of the Badger-Two Medicine area. Those resources must be safeguarded from all future oil and gas activities.”

Tribal nations, sportsmen and women, and people across Montana who love wild places—we all raised our voices together, and we were heard. **Thanks to your commitment, the Badger and its clear headwaters, grizzly bears, elk, wolves, wolverines, lynx, and westslope cutthroat trout are one giant step closer to being protected from development.**

Solenex filed its original complaint to U. S. District Judge Richard Leon in 2013, alleging that the government had unlawfully delayed the development of the lease and asking the court to lift the lease suspension

continued



Grizzly Bear

Robert L. Childs

“Surface disturbing activities are incompatible with the irreplaceable natural and cultural resources of the Badger-Two Medicine area. Those resources must be safeguarded from all future oil and gas activities.”

—Aden Seidlitz, Acting Montana Director of the BLM

so the company could begin drilling in the Badger as early as the summer of 2016. This direct threat to the cultural, historical, and ecological values of the Badger-Two Medicine, just south of Glacier National Park, has inspired a cascade of opposition to drilling there.

Ignoring the obvious immorality of desecrating the Badger's millennia of history and deaf to the public outcry against developing a place a few miles from Glacier National Park, Solenex has accused the government of acting out of spite toward the company's dogged attempts to pursue exploratory drilling in the Badger.

Ironically, after years of claiming unlawful delay, the lawyers for Solenex waited a full month to bring a challenge to the cancellation decision. At the time *Wild Montana* went to press, the judge was considering whether to allow that challenge to proceed. Should he do so, the Badger could be the subject of another courtroom battle that could take months, possibly years, to resolve.

We are optimistic that the Department of Interior's decision will ultimately stand, and we will then be able to turn our attention to the 17 remaining leases that span roughly 34,000 acres in the Badger. When it canceled the Solenex lease, the department provided the rationale for canceling the other leases. We are confident it will eventually do so.

Our hopes got a boost in April, when Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell gave a speech in which she mentioned the Badger-Two Medicine specifically as one of the places on American public lands that should be protected for their importance to Native Americans.

"These are special areas," she said, "and I look forward to making progress on them this year."

Montanans realize that there are some places that are too important, too culturally and ecologically significant, to be drilled. The Badger-Two Medicine is one of those places. We're thankful that the Department of Interior and Secretary Sally Jewell came to this realization as well.

MWA will continue working with the Blackfeet tribe and all of our partners who value wild, sacred landscapes until the Badger is finally and permanently protected.

In the meantime, we invite you to experience the beauty and solace of the Badger-Two Medicine this summer on one of our Wilderness Walks to Hall Creek, Buffalo Lakes, or Kiyo Crag.

We also encourage you to stay informed about the Badger and other special places across Montana on our public lands blog, Wild Word, at wildmontana.org/wild-word.

Montanans realize that there are some places that are too important, too culturally and ecologically significant, to be drilled.



Blackfeet youth in the Badger-Two Medicine

John Lambing





Andrea Powers

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD



IT'S TIME FOR CONGRESS TO STOP TREATING OUR TRAILS LIKE DIRT

Montana Wilderness Association works hard to help land managers maintain trail access to and through unforgettable places, from the Bob Marshall Wilderness to Yellowstone National Park and many other places between and beyond. Through our CDT Montana program, MWA is focused on maintaining and constructing the northern third of the Continental Divide Trail, which extends 1,000 miles through a remarkable terrain that we call our backyard.

Unfortunately, Montana's trail tradition, including the CDT, is under threat and, as a result, our access to wild places is endangered.

Since 2009, Congress has reduced Forest Service budgets by 48% overall in Region 1, the region that manages all 10 national forests in Montana. These budget cuts have created real consequences at the local level, where trail crews have shrunk to a vanishing point in some districts during tough years. And if we continue to "borrow" from trails budgets to pay for wildfire in the future, our well for trail funding will run completely dry.

We need all three members of Montana's congressional delegation to help make our trails a national priority by giving the Forest Service the funding it needs and deserves to do its job. This work requires a long-term effort, but there are some initial steps that Congress can take this year, which include passing these three pieces of legislation:

- **Wildfire Disaster Funding Act:** This would separate fire funding from recreation funding, alleviating the need to rob Peter to pay Paul during high-cost fire seasons. We need our delegation to work together to pass a clean version of the bill as soon as possible.

- **National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act:** This would allow agency partners and outfitters to more easily assist in trail maintenance, freeing up agency crews to work on other projects that volunteers might not be able to handle.

- **Recreation's Economic Contribution Act:** This would require the federal government to measure the outdoor recreation industry's impact on the U.S. economy by counting recreation spending as part of our Gross Domestic Product. We can't expect our great outdoors to become a national priority when our nation fails to accurately measure the economic impact of outdoor recreation.

—Shannon Freix, CDT Montana program director



SPANDEX AND LEATHER WORKING TOGETHER

For the past eight years, mountain bikers, backcountry horsemen/women, hikers, skiers, hunters, and other conservationists in southwestern Montana—united as the Montana High Divide Trails (MHDT) partnership—have worked together with the shared understanding that there is room for both more wilderness and more mountain biking in Montana and that we can, by collaborating, protect and expand each other's interests. MWA is a founding member of MHDT.

In addition to helping restore quiet mountain trails and protect wildlands otherwise lost to aggressive and expanding motorized traffic, MHDT has also expanded mountain biking opportunities that are compatible with existing wilderness and lands recommended for wilderness conservation.

Here's a sampling of what we've helped accomplish in the last eight years:

- Since 2008, "spandex and leather working together" has helped the US Forest Service build and restore quiet, single-track across miles of the Continental Divide Trail, from Butte to Lincoln.
 - The 2009 Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Plan protected five non-motorized backcountry and three recommended wilderness areas in the Flints and Lost Creek Canyon, as well as in wild areas found along the Continental Divide in the Pintlers, Highlands, Whitetail-O'Neil, and Electric Peak.
 - In 2010, the BLM converted Scratchgravel Hills north of Helena into a non-motorized trail area, similar to the popular South Hills.
 - In 2012, eight miles of logging roads in Twin Lakes Creek were permanently rehabilitated into single-track bike trails leading to (lower) Four Mile Basin and Twin Lakes, an area adjoining the Pintler Wilderness.
 - In 2013, the Pintler Ranger District completed restoration of non-motorized single-track trails lost to neglect in beautiful Lost Creek Canyon north of Anaconda.
 - In 2016, the Helena Ranger District's final Divide Travel Plan classified 28 miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and five wild mountain tracts along the divide as non-motorized. Additionally, the Divide Plan authorizes the construction of 14 miles of new single-track Continental Divide Trail, to be managed for non-motorized uses, including mountain biking and stock.
- As with snowmobiles and four-wheelers, new technology has allowed bicyclists to penetrate deeper into remote wild country than previously imagined, often on trails built primarily for foot and horseback. A hardline segment of the mountain biking community now believe they're entitled to ride all trails, even through areas the Forest Service has recommended for wilderness.

The partnership has worked together with the shared understanding that there is room for both more wilderness and more mountain biking in Montana.



But as the MHDT partnership demonstrates, Montana is a big state with plenty of room to expand mountain biking opportunities and still have places where we can experience the untrammelled wild.

For more information about Montana High Divide Trails, contact me at jgatchell@wildmontana.org or at 406-443-7350, ext. 106.

—John Gatchell,
public lands policy director

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD



Dexter Hale



BIG SNOWIES: THE WILDEST OF MONTANA'S ISLAND RANGES

Walking across the highest ridge that divides the range, you can see more than 200 miles across an expansive landscape.

Among all the island ranges in central Montana, the Big Snowies stands out as being more intact and wilder than any other.

Located south of Lewistown, this island of rounded ridge tops and deep canyons rises out of the prairie. Walking across the highest ridge that divides the range, you can see more than 200 miles across an expansive landscape. Along the way you'll likely come across ice caves, fossils, and evidence of human use dating back thousands of years.

Complementing the Big Snowy Wilderness Study Area is a "research natural area," a federal designation created to protect rare plants. The Big Snowy WSA is adjoined by the Twin Coulees WSA (6,870-acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management), as well as by four small, roadless areas together covering 9,000 acres. We're urging the Forest Service to recommend most of the Big Snowy WSA and adjoining roadless areas for wilderness designation.

Fearing that the Big Snowy Mountains could gradually lose much of their wilderness character, visionary Senator Lee Metcalf included most of the Big Snowies (88,000 acres) in the 1977 Montana Wilderness Study Act. The act requires the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest to manage the WSA in a manner that will protect its wilderness characteristics until Congress determines whether or not to designate it as Wilderness.

The old 1986 Lewis and Clark National Forest management plan did not recommend the Big Snowy WSA for Wilderness, but over the years most of the uses conflicting with wilderness management have disappeared, thanks to travel management and resource development decisions. Now, the newly combined Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest is revising the old management plan and will again consider whether to recommend the WSA for Wilderness.

Only Congress can designate an area as Wilderness, but without a recommendation, the Big Snowy WSA remains vulnerable to attempts by Congress to release the area as a WSA. With most non-compatible use issues resolved, we have an opportunity through the forest plan revision process to obtain a wilderness recommendation and take an important step towards permanent protection for this unique landscape.

To learn more and see central Montana's wildest island range for yourself, sign-up for this summer's Wilderness Walks in the Big Snowies. And if you want to get involved in the Helena-Lewis and Clark Forest plan, please contact me at mgood@wildmontana.org or at 406-453-9434.

—Mark Good, central Montana field director

MEMBERS MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Thanks to the new members who joined Montana Wilderness Association from January 20 to April 20, 2016.

BUTTE BEAVERHEAD AREA Ivy Fredrickson Lydia Janosko Jill Kolb Janette Reget Karen & Kevin Vaughn	Russ Heaton Varr Heaton Jon Jeresek Max Laughlin Chuck Manning Tim Mushkin Joy Pattengale Sonya Petersen Peter & Nancy Rose Robert Saint-Louis Eric Smart Danielle Spillman Linda Stoverud Linda Thomas Helen Tyree	Johanna Monson Geerts Jerry Ness Robert Pace Colene Parker Brandi Pitt Janet Sedlack Xavier Springer Steve Theisen LaVonne Walker Ann Warhank Emily Wilson Glenn Deuchler Viki Gallagher Jennie Garramon	SHINING MOUNTAINS CHAPTER Nancy Adams Will Ballew Sally Barnes Sue Brownlow Tim Dye Megan Eandi Brea Engel Rachel Garwin Michael Halm Candace Halvorson John Kirkendall Luke Lamar Linda Pilsworth Jenny Rohrer Donald Schriefer Kate Supplee The Sproull Family Chris Vance	OUT OF STATE Stephen Bendit Scott Brubaker Diana Canterbury Celeste & Eric Grace Gregory Harris Robin Harvey David Hunt Lowell Jacobson Jim Kouf Kathryn Levine Silvia Montevocchi Alfred Munksgard Kristina Phillips Ben Pitterle Melissa Puglisi Holly Spooner & Russell Fletcher Michael Wilt Kathy Winscot
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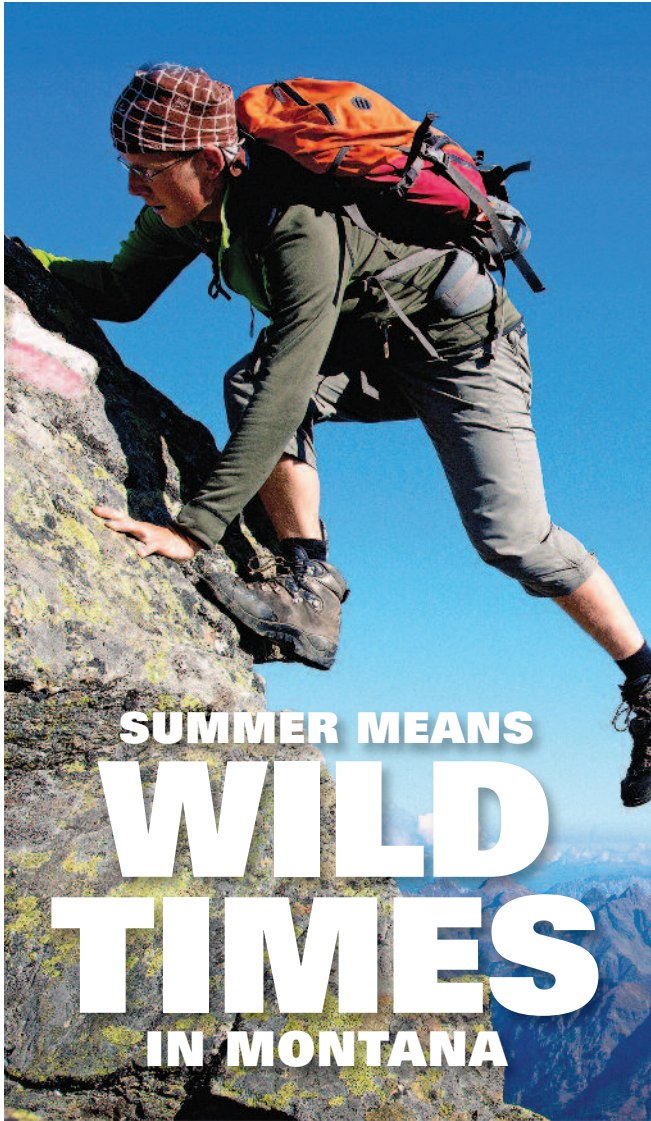
Montana Wilderness Association is led by its State Council. Every year we nominate new members to join this leadership team.

The State Council is a diverse and effective group of volunteers who bring relevant skills and experiences to MWA's work of protecting Montana's public wildlands. Desirable skills include:

- Previous experience on governance boards
- Finance experience
- Political experience or connections
- Fundraising experience or connections
- Community connections

Council members serve as MWA ambassadors, share networks, take leadership roles, engage in philanthropic giving, and have a statewide perspective. We are 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 activities. We love wilderness, and we work together to make sure MWA is the best possible organization it can be.

To learn more, contact Daphne Herling at daphne.herling@business.umt.edu or 406-531-8347.



SUMMER MEANS
**WILD
TIMES**
IN MONTANA

Make plans to explore Wild Montana this summer and let the Montana Wilderness Association help. With our newly-launched online hiking guide, we can help you find new adventures and make unforgettable memories.

hikewildmontana.org

MWA is also hosting more than 100 no-cost outdoor hikes and adventures this summer. Sign up for a Wilderness Walk or volunteer for a CDT Montana service project on the Continental Divide Trail. Spaces are limited, so hurry.

Check out all maps, hikes, and projects online at wildmontana.org.

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