2 From the Chapter President

Learn about how MWA is responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and the latest from your local chapter.

3 Spring into Summer Webinar is May 29

Join MWA’s Flathead-Kootenai Chapter for our virtual Spring into Summer event to celebrate our vibrant wilderness community and wild public lands.

4 Updates from the Field

Get to know MWA’s Northwest Montana Field Director Allie Maloney and take the Kootenai Critter Quiz

5 Welcome Our Latest FKC Chapter Board Member

Get to know Josh Lewis, our newest Flathead-Kootenai Chapter board member.
These are unprecedented times. By way of introduction as Flathead-Kootenai Chapter’s new board president, I’d like to start out by saying that I have been enjoying our public lands maybe now more than ever. In a conversation with Montana wilderness elder Smoke Elser about a year ago, he noted that wilderness provides us sanity. I happen to agree with him.

As a fifth-generation Montanan from farm and ranch families on the eastern front with a foot in the door in the Flathead by way of a cabin on the Middle Fork thanks to my grandparents, I have been working and playing on our public lands and waters since I was a child. It is my great privilege to now serve in a leadership role for an organization that has been pivotal in growing and maintaining Montana’s Wilderness since 1958.

This newsletter might look a little different than normal because as you know, we’re all working on our ‘new normal’. I am personally very proud of the measures our organization has been taking to protect our personal and organizational health.

Specifically, all MWA offices have been closed with employees continuing to work remotely; Volunteer Stewardship and Chapter Stewardship activities have been canceled through July 10; Wilderness Walks early season hikes are canceled through July 15; and, all public events and activities are canceled or postponed through July 5.

What is not canceled are our public lands and the need to ensure that they continue to be protected and supported. Please take some time to read our Covid-19 Call for Support and consider making a contribution to this organization that we love. Also, please stay in touch as MWA continues to adjust in response to the viral pandemic.

In other news, our holiday party in December was a smashing success thanks to you and our new field director, Allie Maloney. We once again hosted a sold-out Backcountry Film Festival in Whitefish in February. And, we were able to successfully collaborate with the BMWF and NWMT-FFLA to co-host the Speaker Series at FVCC in February and March. Thank you for all of your support.

Our FKC board also developed a Stewardship Committee to work directly towards ‘boots on the ground’ initiatives with the Forest Service. We ran our 2020 scholarship program for students who love wilderness moving on to higher education in Montana from Flathead, Sanders, Lincoln, and Lake counties. And, we voted on three new board members at our annual meeting, and recently voted on an additional interim member.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to a webinar we are hosting for Spring into Summer which stars local Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks bear expert Tim Manley on Friday, May 29 starting at 3 p.m. You can register for this FREE event online (see details on page 3), and I encourage you to participate. Knowing Tim, this is sure to be a knowledgeable and fascinating talk about grizzly management, a topic very near and dear to many of us.

In closing, I want to thank you for your support now and always. These are interesting times, and I hope that this letter finds you healthy and hopeful. It is sure to be a unique summer, and I challenge you to keep your sanity by utilizing and supporting our public lands. At least, that’s what I’ll be doing.

Keep it wild!

From the President

Amy Pearson
Flathead-Kootenai Chapter President

Monthly Meeting

Every second Tuesday
6 p.m. (online for now)

Chapter Leadership

President: Amy Pearson
Vice President: Chris Rost
Secretary: Stephanie Rost
Chapter Rep: Jenn Fugatt
Treasurer: Bret Luedke
Board Members: Jen Corp, John Repke, Jedd Sankar-Gorton
Interim Board Member: Josh Lewis

Contact Us
mwafkc@wildmontana.org

Montana Wilderness Association
Flathead-Kootenai Chapter
decisions affecting millions of acres of public lands in Montana – from the Badger-Two Medicine, to the Musselshell Breaks, to the Gallatin Range – are still being made.

We don’t do this often, but MWA needs your support, now more than ever. MWA is doing our part to protect our staff and volunteers and flatten the curve here in Montana by canceling in-person events and outings – a way we reach thousands of Montanans every year.

That’s impacting our bottom line and threatening the work to protect wildlands. Please consider a contribution to Montana Wilderness Association, whether it’s $50 or $500, so that we can continue the hard work to keep the Montana landscapes we love just the way they are forever. Or, consider joining Wild Bunch, MWA’s monthly giving program – your commitment will not only provide a little certainty, it automatically renews your membership every month!

We are so grateful for supporting your community through these extraordinary times. If you have any concerns or questions about how we are responding to the current health crisis and continuing to carry out our mission, please don’t hesitate to reach out.

Join us online for Spring into Summer on May 29

Register for our upcoming webinar, “Bear Management in NW Montana”

Visit this URL to register:

p2a.co/u2ywPwv

Covid-19 Call for Support

Make a donation today to support Montana’s wild public lands at wildmontana.org/donate

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many challenges to communities in Montana and across the nation that will continue through the weeks and months ahead. And the health and safety of our staff and our communities is our primary concern right now. MWA’s leadership has been closely monitoring the fast-changing developments and taking proactive steps to make sure our staff, volunteers, and supporters are taking necessary precautions to do our part to flatten the curve.

Staff are still hard at work each day defending public lands and wild places while at the same time ensuring that our work routines and practices keep everyone around us healthy and safe. And we are mindful of the physical and mental benefits that open space and public lands can provide during trying times.

We believe community-based conservation in Montana has never been more important than it is today. And with ongoing travel restrictions and stay at home orders, we’re thinking quite a bit these days about the many health benefits of public lands that we often take for granted.

However, even though we are facing the worst public health crisis in century, decisions affecting millions of acres of public lands in Montana – from the Badger-Two Medicine, to the Musselshell Breaks, to the Gallatin Range – are still being made.

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We are so grateful for supporting your community through these extraordinary times. If you have any concerns or questions about how we are responding to the current health crisis and continuing to carry out our mission, please don’t hesitate to reach out.
Thank you for your participation in the Kootenai Critters quiz. We’ve had over 150 people from the Flathead-Kootenai Chapter area take it, and I hope you all enjoyed getting your wildlife sticker in the mail. The quiz will remain open through the summer, so there is still time to take it and share the quiz with friends and family.

Going beyond spending a few minutes finding out what your secret animal identity is – I could use your help. My work as a field director in northwest Montana is collaborative. I go into communities and reach out to people who hold many different values and beliefs and I try to build bridges.

I work to remove the distrust and dislike of “conservationists” and I speak out for the permanent protection of wildlands. I know I am not the sole “wilderness” person out there, and I would like to hear from you (and perhaps meet some of you soon, when it is safe to do so) and learn from you.

If you care about the future of the Scotchman Peaks, the Yaak Valley, Ten Lakes Wilderness Study area, the pockets of ancient giant cedars, the small and struggling population of grizzlies in the Cabinet Range, the prehistoric sturgeons prowling the depths of the Kootenai River, then please reach out to me at amaloney@wildmontana.org.

In addition, I encourage you to take this pledge. The pledge is a demonstration of interest and caring, and we’ll use it throughout this year and the next to connect you with specific ways you can help to shape the future of the Kootenai National Forest.

Remember, I’m a newcomer to this area! When you write to me, tell me about where to explore, what you value, what makes you care about this wet and wild corner of Montana.

If you have a story to share about a wildlife encounter, please share it through the giveaway so that I can send you prizes in the mail!


- ALLIE MALONEY, MWA NORTHWEST MONTANA FIELD DIRECTOR
Welcoming Our Newest Flathead-Kootenai Chapter Board Member

Please join us in welcoming Josh Lewis to the FKC Chapter Board

We’re excited to welcome our newest Flathead-Kootenai Chapter board member, Josh Lewis.

Originally from Georgia, Josh relocated to Montana after falling in love with the Flathead area while visiting some friends he met while working for AmeriCorps. He loved the area so much, he decided to forgo a job opportunity in Portland to stay here. He maintains it’s the best decision he’s ever made.

Now, happily living in Columbia Falls with his significant other and pups and loving life, Josh gets outside every weekend, rain or shine. I’ve recently left the Department of Interior and currently work for a private nutrition company many of us are familiar with here in the Flathead.

Josh is passionate about nature, mountains, and recreating with his favorite people. Having hiked all over Glacier Park, the Kootenai, upper and lower Whitefish Range, Flathead Range, the Missions, Cabinets, and more, Josh has a (moderately ambitious) goal for 2020: climb 100 peaks.

“My goals while volunteering at MWA are simple. I want to help our local chapter in a way that benefits all parties. I have a degree in Natural Resources, Recreation, and Tourism and am intrigued by the relationship between people and the wilderness we’re so fortunate to have at our doorsteps. Environmental impacts, wildlife encounters, stewardship, volunteer work, maintaining pristine forests, creating awareness, and being kind to the environment... that is what I want to achieve here.”

- Josh Lewis

2020 FKC Scholarship Winners Announced

By Stephanie Rost

The 2020 Scholarship program has been wrapped up for the year and the Chapter is pleased to have made its awards to the winners of $500 scholarships to schools including Flathead Valley Community College, Montana State University, and the University of Montana.

The impact of Covid-19 was clearly reflected in the lower than usual number of scholarship applications this year, however the Committee was pleased by the obvious thought and consideration put into the applications that were received.

Playing an active role in the preservation of wild lands, experience in self-preparedness in the wild, and the recognition of “the untamed beauty and elegance of the wilderness” were resonating themes of the essays submitted.

Congratulations to the winners from Flathead, Sanders, and Lincoln Counties!

Introducing: FKC Stewardship Committee

By Jedd Sankar-Gorton

The Stewardship Committee is the newest committee in MWA’s Flathead-Kootenai Chapter Board.

The work of the committee is to engage active and potential MWA members in hands-on conservation work throughout the public lands of northwest Montana to further their role of stewards of the land.

To achieve this we are partnering with the Kootenai National Forest to organize “adopt-a-trail” days this summer and potentially wilderness study area stewardship opportunities in the Jewel Basin next year.

The work of the Committee will help create engagement opportunities, benefit public lands, strengthen partner relations, and broaden the reach of our engagement work.

We are excited to be able to offer MWA members and their friends the chance to get out on public lands here in NW Montana and get their hands dirty improving access to our wildest places. Keep an eye out in the Wilderness Walks book for our scheduled “adopt-a-trail” work days!