From the Chapter President

FKC President Chris Rost talks about adaptation in the face of Covid-19 and all the ways it has touched our daily lives.

Backcountry Film Festival is Jan. 28

The Backcountry Film Festival is going virtual this year, but the funds raised still benefit our local chapter. Tickets are on sale now!

Updates from the Field

Northwest Montana Field Director Allie Maloney offers a year in review and unveils an illustrated “Welcome to the Kootenai” map.

Cheers to Your Service!

FKC President Chris Rost wishes a fond farewell to chapter board members leaving their posts this year and thanks them for their service to Montana’s wild places.
Adapt. This word seems to succinctly describe the year 2020. How do you handle the need to adapt? Do you have healthy coping skills and are you able to adapt to new routines? Can you make lemonade from the basket of lemons you’ve been given? Maybe we can choose to see things as Ruth Bader Ginsburg says, “So often in life the things you regard as an impediment turn out to be great good fortune.”

A virus, one of nature’s little pests, has dramatically changed our daily lives. But to look on the bright side, many of us are spending more time outdoors. We are appreciating more and more, the value of wide-open spaces and how time in the wilderness can allow us to forget the stress of a new social logistic. I have always turned to the mountains for rejuvenation, peace of mind, meditation, and perspective. I imagine if you are reading this newsletter you probably have a similar regard for the value of wilderness to the human spirit.

Through this shared appreciation of public lands we have a common goal: to protect and preserve these places for all to enjoy, now and into the future. This looks different to everyone but some of us have been called to action. Your chapter board of directors are servants of this local region. We are a functional cog in the wheel of the MWA striving to accomplish our conservation mission. And we need your help! Many of you have already helped, either financially or through volunteer projects. And for this I want you to raise your hand and pat yourself on the back. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Locally we have a specific need I would like to emphasize. Several board members have left this year for various reasons and we would love to have some new advocates join us. We would especially like to have board members from the Libby and Eureka area. Are you passionate about wild spaces? Are you interested in working with a great team? Do you have questions about what might be involved? Please feel free to reach out to me or other board members so your questions can be answered – you can email us at mwafkc@wildmontana.org.

I would like to thank the people who have served on this board but have left this year. Your leadership will be missed but I know you will continue to be active members of the MWA and this local chapter. Cheers to you for your service! It has been great working with you.

Annual Meeting and Holiday Party

Join us online on Thursday, Dec. 17 at 7 p.m.

It would be great to see you through our electronic windows for our annual meeting. I am guessing this will be the most enjoyable Zoom meeting you’ve had all year! We have just a little business to conduct but then the party begins ... play Jeopardy, win prizes, and learn about caves in Montana.

Please RSVP and we’ll send you the Zoom details: wildmontana.org/fkc

From the President

Chris Rost
Flathead-Kootenai Chapter President

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

Chapter Leadership
President: Chris Rost
Acting Vice President: Jedd Sankar-Gorton
Secretary: Stephanie Rost
Chapter Rep: John Repke
Treasurer: Bret Luedke
Interim Board Member: Will Urbanski

Contact Us
mwafkc@wildmontana.org

Montana Wilderness Association
Flathead-Kootenai Chapter
MWA hosts the Backcountry Film Festival

16th Annual Backcountry Film Festival goes virtual – purchase your tickets today

The 16th annual Backcountry Film Festival is just around the corner! No, it won’t be in person at the O’Shaughnessy Center in Whitefish but, yes, it will still be an exciting night of the year’s best backcountry-themed short films.

Starting Jan., 28, 2021, you will be able to view a virtual screening of all the great films from the comfort of your home. Excitingly, if you’re busy that night the film festival will be available to stream from Jan. 28 all the way through Feb. 18. This way even more of the MWA community in Montana and across the country can enjoy the films and support MWA at the same time.

This year we are asking people to pay $10 if they are going to watch alone or $20 if they will be watching with a group. Remember, this is our major annual fundraiser. Funds raised in our corner of the state directly benefit the Flathead-Kootenai Chapter. Our chapter serves go back to your local backcountry community, so it’s vital you “show” up from the comfort of your own home to support the wild places that are near and dear to your heart.

Purchase tickets online at wildmontana.org/bcff
Although I write to you from a basement in the heart of Whitefish, the majority of my time this year has been laser-focused on the Kootenai National Forest. How do you craft and grow support for 180,000 acres of new Wilderness in northwest Montana during a global pandemic in an election year? Now… I haven’t cracked it (yet). But we have tried out a bunch of innovative and responsive campaigns, and the work continues – and you can help, if you’re so inclined!

Starting in April, we launched the Kootenai Critters Quiz, which used wildlife to explore shared values on public lands. When you took the quiz, it matched you with one of four iconic northwest Montana animals. You learned something about yourself, and a lot about your animal! Then as a reward for quiz taking, I mailed out your animal in sticker form, along with a letter asking you to sign the Kootenai pledge and to send me a wildlife story as an entry ticket into a monthly giveaway.

In July, with our partner collaborative the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition (KFSC), I started to build a “Welcome to the Kootenai” campaign, in order to promote the message of pride of place and regional identity. Using the pattern of vintage tourist maps of the 1950s and 60s, we worked with a volunteer artist to craft a poster that was fun, educational, beautiful, and highlighted our collaborative values. It’s a very detailed image (pictured on page 5) – so be sure to to zoom in and catch all the hidden goodies. Along with this poster map (which we’re planning on selling – if you want one, send me an email, we don’t have a sales platform yet.) we’re crafting a companion “Welcome to the Kootenai” brochure and web page to promote responsible tourism for summer 2021.

In September, again working with KFSC, we hosted a series of small, outdoor, socially distanced Kootenai Community Conversation focus groups to try and understand how the average citizen of Troy, Thompson Falls, Eureka, and Libby connects with the Kootenai National Forest. We’ve been working on building a robust and meaningful legislative package for years, but how have people’s needs and views changed since 2015? What are the sentiments on recreation, wilderness, tourism, wildfire, logging, and community health? Are there any needs we could better address as MWA or as KFSC? While a sharp rise in COVID numbers forced a cancellation in Libby, the other three events were the main highlight of my summer. The conversations we had were polite, insightful, detailed, and wide-ranging. We have plans to share our findings through a special interactive report in the coming months. You may be invited to participate in a supplementary survey – we want to give as many citizens a voice in this project as possible.

So what now? As the year draws to a close, and the nights stretch their longest, I have a request. If you are a person who knows and loves the Kootenai, help me out. I need testimonials, stories, and photos that help to highlight everything that makes this wet and wild corner an absolutely invaluable resource.

“AS THE YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE, AND THE NIGHTS STRETCH THEIR LONGEST, I HAVE A REQUEST. IF YOU ARE A PERSON WHO KNOWS AND LOVES THE KOOTENAI, HELP ME OUT. I NEED TESTIMONIALS, STORIES, AND PHOTOS THAT HELP TO HIGHLIGHT EVERYTHING THAT MAKES THIS WET AND WILD CORNER AN ABSOLUTELY INVALUABLE RESOURCE.”

- ALLIE MALONEY,
MWA NORTHWEST MONTANA FIELD DIRECTOR
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