If I were to ask you to give up a weekend day, a three-day weekend, or even a week's vacation to undertake manual labor, would you think I'm nuts? What if I said you'd be sleeping on the ground and expected to donate your time and services? (That means no wages.) Well, read on, because that's just what I'm about to do. Don't call the psychiatrist or the boys in white coats just yet.

For the past twenty years I've spent at least one week each year doing backcountry service work for various nonprofit organizations that coordinate with state and federal land management agencies to arrange trail crews that hike to a base camp, pitch their tents, hike some more to a work site, and pull weeds, repair trails, remove blowdowns, cut back vegetation, remove old fences, manage erosion control, even build a bridge. As with any backpacking trip, you can't arrange the weather, so now and then I've swung a Pulaski or driven a crosscut saw in driving rain, sleet, or snow, or sweated out 90-plus degree days. Are we having fun yet? You bet!

How's that fun? Like most outdoorsmen, I enjoy a workout, and a week in the trenches (so to speak) is certainly that. But what got me interested in the first place was a chance to spend a week without a telephone and the Internet. Vacations are essential for good health, and that means mental health as well as physical well-being. There's nothing like hard physical work to clear the mind and clean the creative pipes. Also it reminds me that the business world can in fact survive without me for a week or ten days.

I've had great fun learning about trail maintenance. Much of my work has been done in Wilderness, where power tools are not permitted. Axe, pick, Pulaski, handsaw, crosscut saw, and loppers are the tools of choice. Not all that much different from how things were done a century or two ago. Somehow that's rewarding.

I like to spend time in the backcountry and enjoy the camaraderie of like-minded folks around a campfire. Food always tastes better after a hard day's work, and that's doubly true in the backcountry. A chance to make new friends, unwind, and appreciate the natural world.

Starting to sound a bit more promising? Of course the manual labor isn't a necessary part of hiking or backpacking or otherwise enjoying natural wonders. Here's what really makes service work special for me. It's a chance to give something back, to make the backcountry accessible to others, and to preserve the opportunity for backcountry recreation for the next generation and generations after that. It's a contribution to the backcountry's future.

There are many practical arguments for service work. Agency budgets are reduced again and again; there's no way any agency can manage all the work that needs to be done.
Stewardship continued

needs to be done. Citizen assistance is necessary and much appreciated. If you love the wilderness, shouldn't you do what you can to keep it wild? Each new person who experiences the backcountry is a potential steward and advocate for its protection and preservation. Wild places, especially here in Montana, are threatened with being loved to death. These places need help and their friends should furnish it.

All true, but the personal satisfaction is the best reward for me and the reason I keep going back to get sore muscles and the occasional backache. Sometimes there's immediate gratification from seeing a clear trail at day's end that was impassible in the morning, or no more barbed wire in sight. More often it's remembering that I've done my best and contributed a little bit to the welfare of places I love.

You don't need to dedicate a week or even a full day to become a steward. Many organizations offer half-day weed pulls or trash collection, sometimes within city limits. That may not sound that exciting or glamorous but it's necessary work. Check local publications for calendars of stewardship opportunities. Our MWA Chapter hopes to offer trail ambassadorships on trails in the Gallatins and Madisons this summer. This is a chance to help the Forest Service educate and inform trail users of leave-no-trace principles, safety precautions, respect for land, and recreational opportunities.

For the fitter and more adventure-some, MWA offers weeklong backcountry trips in the northwestern part of Montana. If you prefer to stay around here, the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness Foundation offers similar trips in its namesake Wilderness.

There’s an opportunity for stewardship whatever your level of interest and ability. I hope to see you this summer on the trail – wearing a hardhat.

Our Trails Don’t Fix Themselves by Amanda Garant

We all love our public lands. They’re the places we hike, ski, hunt, camp, spend time with our loved ones, or find much-needed peace in solitude.

This summer, our local Madison-Gallatin Chapter is offering us all a unique opportunity to give back to the public lands in our backyard.

MWA will be adopting two trails in the Custer-Gallatin National Forest: Lava Lake in the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and Cliff Creek, up the Big Creek drainage, in the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area. The Forest Service has a lot of miles to maintain each year, and they need help keeping our trails safe and accessible. There will be multiple chances throughout the summer to come volunteer for a full day of clearing downfall, swinging picks, and fixing trails. Keep your eyes peeled for more specifics coming out soon.

When you’re out and about this summer, you’ll probably spot a few more MWA volunteers on the trails. Our trail ambassadors will be posting up at some of our forest’s most popular trails, teaching folks Leave No Trace ethics, answering questions about wilderness, and spreading the love of public lands.

If you are interested in volunteering for one of our trail crews, or would like to be trained as a MWA trail ambassador, please contact Richard Lyon at montana.angler@gmail.com or 406-551-0545.
Gallatin Forest Partnership — Working Together by Barb Cestero, senior regional representative, The Wilderness Society

In late January, the Gallatin Forest Partnership – of which MWA is a proud member – released its groundbreaking collaborative agreement for the Gallatin and Madison Ranges. This agreement proposes almost 250,000 of conservation designations for the Madison and Gallatin Ranges, including recommended wilderness along the Gallatin Crest.

The Partnership formed in late 2016 as a diverse group of citizens, landowners, entrepreneurs, recreational interests, businesses and natural resource professionals with a shared and direct connection to southwest Montana’s Gallatin and Madison Ranges. The Partnership’s shared goal was to craft management recommendations for the Custer Gallatin National Forest’s management plan revision process. Over the course of 2017, the partners worked hard to create a shared vision and management recommendations for our wild backyard.

Here are some of the key highlights of the agreement. You can learn more at www.gallatinpartners.org.

- Recommends nearly 130,000 acres for Wilderness designation. This includes almost 100,000 acres of the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area in the heart of the Gallatin Range, as well as 22,000 acres in the Cowboy Heaven and Taylor-Hilgard areas of the Madison Range;
- Creates two new wildlife management areas;
- Keeps Bozeman’s water clean with a 70,000-acre “Watershed Protection Area” that keeps current recreation and trail access as it is today; and
- Maintains existing recreation access as it is today while ensuring this stunning part of southwest Montana - the fastest growing corner of the state - remains as it is, a place we can still find quiet and solitude.

The Partnership submitted its agreement and maps to the Custer Gallatin National Forest during the comment period on the draft forest plan that just ended on March 5th. We asked that the GFP agreement be included in the range of alternatives the Forest Service presents in its Draft Environmental Impact Statement – the next big step in this four-year planning process.

Local MWA members should take pride in this agreement, because it’s the product of work we’ve been engaged in for decades. The GFP benefited directly from the knowledge, understanding, and relationships created in the Gallatin Community Collaborative, and was informed by previous legislative efforts to resolve the wilderness study status of the Gallatin Range.

This proposal achieves a goal MWA and its partners have been working toward for decades – finding protection for the Gallatin Range’s wild core, the last unprotected area adjoining Yellowstone National Park. Look for more opportunities to learn more about the GFP agreement and get involved in the forest planning process coming soon.

Looking south along the Gallatin crest toward Eaglehead, photo by Roger Jenkins
This is an exciting and critical time to be a member of the Montana Wilderness Association as we work to advance our mission and protect our public lands from threats at local, state and federal levels. Strong, dedicated members are especially needed to take active leadership roles in shaping the future of MWA and Montana’s wild places at both the state and local levels.

Each year members are asked to submit names for potential nominees to the MWA governing body. This year offers an exciting opportunity to help our governing board transition from a large, thirty-person State Council to a more efficient and effective Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will consist of ten to fifteen directors who are passionate about promoting the mission and work of MWA. There are two to three at-large positions open on the Board for the term beginning January 2019. Board terms are for three years. In addition, each chapter has been asked to submit two names for potential nomination to the Board as members representing the Chapter Collaborative (composed of two members from each of the seven chapters). Potential nominees should have the skills and knowledge necessary for advancing the mission of MWA and a desire to take an active leadership role. Previous experience a with non-profit board is also valuable.

You can make a difference locally! Our Madison-Gallatin Chapter is recruiting potential members to join the Chapter Board. Board members work to plan events and trail stewardship activities and assist in wild and public lands advocacy.

If you would like to be considered as a potential nominee, or if you know someone who you would like to be considered as a potential nominee for the Board of Directors or the Chapter Collaborative Board or the MGC Board, please contact our chapter president, Tom Ross by email at tom.ross51@gmail.com, or contact our current chapter representative, Jeanette Hall at chall59715@hotmail.com for more information. Names for potential nominees must be submitted by Wednesday April 11th. Names submitted will be reviewed by the Council Effectiveness Committee and applications will be mailed to those who best meet qualifications for the Board of Directors. The final slate for nominations will be approved by the State Council in September and will be voted on by the general membership this fall.

Your membership is a valuable contribution to conservation. Consider this opportunity to take the next step – take on a leadership role to HELP KEEP IT WILD!
Preview of MGC Summer Walks

Members should receive their Wilderness Walks book around April 2nd and can register online at [www.wildmontana.org/walks](http://www.wildmontana.org/walks) on Wednesday, April 16. Non-members can begin signing up on Wednesday, April 30.

Sat., May 5  The Hogback (5.2 miles Strenuous)
Sat., June 9  Porcupine Creek (6 miles Moderate)
Sun., June 10  Taylor Fork Geology (10 miles Strenuous)
Sun., June 24  Slip and Slide — near Gardiner (3 miles Easy)
Fri., July 6  Dailey Creek to Teepee Creek (6 miles Moderate)
Sun., August 12  Divide Peak (11 miles Extremely Strenuous)
Fri., August 17  Elephanthead Saddle (9 miles Strenuous)
Sat., September 22  Cowboy Heaven (12 miles Extremely Strenuous)
Sat., September 29  Cinnamon Meadows (6.5 miles Strenuous)

Worth the Effort and Worry by Tom Ross

Most of us know the effort and worry that can accompany the decision to lead a hike. You have to do the planning, scheduling and hike description, track the registration and respond to questions and cancelations. And then there are the email updates about logistics and proper gear and clothing as the date nears. And you worry about the weather on hike day, especially when hypothermia is a real threat and snow storms complicate travel and create concerns about reaching the trailhead. And don’t forget to pick up the snowshoes and collect those liability releases. Then the day comes and you arrive at the designated meeting spot…and nobody is there. Oh no.

But within minutes everyone arrives, including one making a very long drive in heavy snow on unfamiliar roads. And everyone is wearing a smile – that’s good news! And it appears everyone has appropriate clothes and gear for a day in the snow at 20 degrees – that’s really good news! Now you’re feeling better about this commitment you made three months ago.

Flash forward to the end of the hike, and those smiles are still there, despite the cold fingers and toes, and it’s clear that new friendships have been made. And it turns out that all three of our participants are brand new to Montana, each moving here only in the last couple of months, and this is the first Montana outdoor experience for two of them. Now you feel blessed to be part of their experience and to spend a cold, snowy day in the Wilderness with good company. What a great reward for a little effort and worry.

Wild Winter Offering – Lava Lake Hike on March 4, 2018
Leader: Tom Ross  Co-leader: Amanda Garant
Participants: Chrissy Pepino, Barbara Tylka, Corinne Schneinder
Upcoming Events

**GPS Tutorial and Field Trip**

Saturday, April 7, MSU Campus

A combination of lecture and field training for people who want to know how to use their Smartphone or dedicated GPS in the backcountry. Email Roger Jenkins (roger@twohikers.org) for more details.

**Wilderness And... the Life and Legacy of W.R. “Bud” Moore**

Wednesday, April 18, 6:30 p.m.

Large Community Room, Bozeman Public Library

This will be a showing of “Bud’s Place,” a film by George Sibley on the life and legacy of renowned forester, W.R. “Bud” Moore. Moore rose up through the ranks from worker to District Ranger to Deputy Director of Fire and Aviation Management for the Forest Service. In retirement, he bought 80 acres of grizzly habitat and converted it to a conservation easement.

**Custer Gallatin National Forest April Alternatives Meetings**

Saturday, April 21, date and location to be announced

This will be an opportunity to review and contribute to the alternatives which the Forest Plan Revision Team has prepared based on recent public comments on the proposed action.

**Spring into Summer!**

Monday, April 23, 5:00—8:00 p.m.

Map Brewing, 510 Manley Rd, Bozeman

Don’t miss the annual debut of the Madison-Gallatin Chapter’s summer Wilderness Walks!

**Save the Date! September 7—9**

MWA will be holding its annual gathering in Livingston and the Madison-Gallatin Chapter will be acting as hosts. Our area was chosen this year because it is the 60th anniversary of the founding of MWA which happened in Bozeman.

Plans are still being finalized, but here’s the tentative schedule. On Friday, we will most likely join with a number of other groups and the U.S. Forest Service to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. On Saturday morning, there will be hikes and a stewardship project with the USFS. In the afternoon, we will congregate in the theater of the Shane Lelani Center for a welcome and introduction, followed by panel discussions. The night will conclude with a presentation focusing on the 60th anniversary of MWA. The weekend will conclude with a Council meeting on Sunday.

Details will be forthcoming regarding lodging, hike specifics, reservations, etc. But mark you calendar. You won’t want to miss this!