THE GEOGRAPHY OF HOPE

MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION
MISSION
The mission of the Montana Wilderness Association is to work with communities to protect Montana’s wilderness heritage, quiet beauty, and outdoor traditions now, and for future generations.

VALUES

VISION
MWA’s vision is for a Montana where pristine public lands are permanently protected as federally designated wilderness, thus ensuring biodiversity, clean headwaters, and sustainable economic opportunities for nearby communities to thrive in co-existence with abundant wild places.

Montana Wilderness Association
Dear Friends,

The native home of hope. That’s how famous writer and wilderness champion Wallace Stegner described the American West. Wilderness, he wrote, is an essential part of our “geography of hope.”

At the Montana Wilderness Association we feel the same way. I know you do, too. In fact for more than 50 years friends like you have stood beside us, helping MWA defend and protect Montana’s last wild places. Places you and I love. Places that renew and sustain our hope for the future.


To you — to MWA — these places are more than names on a map. These places mean clean water. Critical wildlife habitat. The chance to hunt, fish, hike and horseback in primal quiet. They offer tangible economic benefits to our communities. In a rapidly changing world, they ground us. Simply put, these are the places that give us hope — for ourselves and for our grandchildren — the wild heart of our Montana home.

And 2012 found us working harder than ever to permanently protect these very places. Thanks to your support this past year, MWA’s amazing staff and volunteers were able to:

• Mobilize grassroots support for the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act and the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act;
• Build and repair sections of the Continental Divide Trail;
• Engage the next generation of wilderness leaders on college campuses across Montana;
• Lead Wilderness Walks;
• Inventory prairie wildlands; and
• Educate voters on the value of Montana’s great outdoors.

Abundant wild country. Vibrant communities. Tenacious citizens. At the Montana Wilderness Association, that’s the geography of hope — the vision — toward which we aspire. A brave vision that your steadfast support is helping make real.

Thank you, today and always, for being part of our geography of hope.

Scott Friskics, President
THE WHITEFISH RANGE

A WAY TO PROTECTION

Just outside the western edge of Glacier National Park sits the Whitefish Range. With 8,000 foot mountain peaks that pierce the sky, deep forest drainages and steep cirque headwalls, the Whitefish Range is home to a robust population of grizzly bears, moose, elk and whitetail deer. And in the northwest corner — inside the Kootenai National Forest — is the 34,000-acre Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

Officially designated as a WSA in 1977 until Congress could decide its future, Ten Lakes remains vulnerable.

Right now on the Kootenai National Forest, a planning process is underway to determine oil and gas development zones, the areas to be open to motorized vehicles (or protected as wildlife safe havens), and the landscapes recommended for wilderness designation.

This includes the Ten Lakes WSA and it’s subject to ample discretion by the local or regional agency administrators of these management plans. But Montana Wilderness Association Wilderness Campaign Director Amy Robinson is seizing this as an opportunity.

Thanks to your support of MWA in 2012, Robinson has been building relationships with other public land users in the area — including long-standing adversaries over wilderness. If successful, this thoughtful approach will form the foundation of consensus and trust so essential to crafting a community-supported conservation proposal that will protect the wild beauty of the Whitefish Range.

MEMBER PROFILE

John Larson

With his degree in wildlife biology and long career with the Environmental Protection Agency, it’s no wonder member John Larson was tapped by MWA to help build support for wilderness in Montana.

“I really appreciate the way MWA embraces a collaborative approach to protecting Montana’s wild places,” says Larson, a member of MWA’s Flathead-Kootenai Chapter. “Their innovative approach is at the forefront of today’s conservation movement.”

Today Larson is a MWA representative in the Whitefish Range Partnership, a collaboration of loggers, backcountry horsemen, mountain bikers, offroad vehicle enthusiasts and conservationists. Together they’re finding common ground to shape the future for the area.

“It’s a way to show my appreciation for the land around me,” explains Larson. “Hopefully I’ll have helped protect some very special places for the next generation to enjoy.”

Wilderness Campaign Director Amy Robinson is building community consensus to safeguard the Whitefish Range.
THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT

VICTORY AT THE FRONT LINES

A glorious collision between rolling prairie and east-facing cliffs of the Continental Divide, the Rocky Mountain Front is a rare and wonderful place that sustains everything from the delicate harlequin duck to the mighty silvertip grizzly.

But “the Front” unites more than a wealth of wildlife. Here, ranchers, outfitters, business owners, hunters, conservationists and tribal members all passionate about the Front are working together, to safeguard it for future generations to experience and enjoy. And as an active member of the Coalition to Protect the Rocky Mountain Front, the Montana Wilderness Association is relied upon for its proven ability to build and rally grassroots community support for the preservation of this majestic landscape.

That’s precisely what we were able to do in 2012. Looking to back his claim that public support for the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act was “manufactured” by conservationists, former U.S. Congressman Dennis Rehberg (R-MT) hastily organized a listening session in the ranching community of Choteau.

But MWA Wilderness Campaign Director Holly Baker recognized this listening session as a way to show the breadth and depth of support for the Heritage Act. She rallied the public to attend the meeting.

Attend they did. Nearly 300 people filed into the local high school auditorium on a sunny Saturday afternoon, many sporting lapel stickers that read “Made in Montana.” Still others held signs proclaiming, “This is OUR Homeland Security Bill”—a reference to the Heritage Act’s intent to preserve both land and culture.

In the end, supporters outnumbered opponents by a two-to-one margin...proving yet again, with you by our side, when there is a threat to Montana’s last wild places, MWA will be there.

MEMBER PROFILE

Sara Walsh

The mountain west lured Texan Sara Walsh to Montana. So when friends mentioned a small cabin along the Rocky Mountain Front, Sara thought it might be an ideal place for her and faithful canine companion, Bonnie, to rest for a day or two.

Two days became two weeks. Walsh breathed the clean mountain air. Listened to the music of Ford Creek as it ran past the cabin. Connected with hardy souls in the nearby ranching community of Augusta. It wasn’t long until she purchased a cabin of her own, and with partners from town established Latigo and Lace, a successful art gallery.

“The Rocky Mountain Front is a living, breathing character in my life,” says Walsh. “The Front has taken care of me, provided me with a place to call home and run a successful business. I feel an obligation to take care of it.”
Rising gently between the Smith River and Judith Gap, you’ll find the Little Belts. These mountains are a 900,000-acre “island range” of grassy meadows, forested ridges and U-shaped canyons. And as a direct result of your generosity, the Montana Wilderness Association is the only conservation group in Montana working to preserve these one-of-a-kind characteristics.

It started in 2007, when the Lewis and Clark National Forest settled on a travel plan to handle the increasing number of powerful off-road vehicles. But before the dust settled, vehicle advocates filed a lawsuit challenging the decision.

That’s when MWA intervened to defend the plan — and preserve the Middle Fork Judith Wilderness Study Area and other remaining Little Belts wildlands.

Even when a district court judge sided with off-road vehicles groups, MWA stood strong. We successfully appealed to the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. And when the U.S. Supreme Court denied a request to hear the case in 2012, it was over. Five years after it began, the 2007 plan can finally be put into place.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the MWA, and the fight to save the Little Belts.

Norm Newhall

From the time he was a boy, Norm ‘Dodger’ Newhall has been part of the Little Belts. First traveling with his family to the Circle Bar Guest Ranch, he later became a wrangler there, working seven days a week and guiding horseback rides into the mountains.

An active member of the MWA since making Montana his home in the ‘70s, Newhall advocates for the Little Belts, Big Snowies and other island mountain ranges east of the Divide. He was also instrumental in creating MWA’s Island Range Chapter in Great Falls and served as the first chapter president.

You can still find Newhall volunteering with the Island Range Chapter today, working to see the last wild places of the Little Belts forever protected for future generations.

“Much of the Middle Fork Judith wilderness has been lost since I was first there in 1956,“ explains Norm ‘Dodger’ Newhall (shown with his wife, Sally). “It was all that time on the ranch and in the mountains that I learned about caring for the Little Belts and the importance of preserving wild spaces before they are lost forever.”
COMING TOGETHER FOR THE GREAT DIVIDE

It stretches 980 miles along the crest of the Northern Rockies. Links 14 proposed wilderness areas... eight roadless conservation areas... three designated wilderness areas... and Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks.

Thanks to people like you, the Montana Wilderness Association has invested in the Montana leg of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) since its 1978 designation. Your generosity built new sections of trail, maintained existing sections and conserved wildlands all along the Divide. Until recently, activities were coordinated with the Colorado-based Continental Divide Trail Alliance (CDTA).

That changed in early 2012. The CDTA suddenly closed its doors, leaving 42 percent of the northern CDT unfinished. Guided by our longtime commitment to this critical corridor — and with an eye to the future — MWA took a bold step: we adopted, as our own, the Montana portion of CDTA’s programs and projects.

Reborn as MWA’s CDT Montana Program, it’s now led by Program Manager Shannon Freix. In 2012, our inaugural season, 70 hardworking volunteers helped CDT Montana complete a dozen projects along the Continental Divide Trail! This earned praise from the U.S. Forest Service and the public, a strong vote for your support of MWA’s move to preserve this historic treasure for all to enjoy.

STAFF PROFILE

Meg Killen

Meg Killen is the stuff of legend. Often first up in the morning and last to bed at night, Meg oversees volunteers on MWA’s trail restoration and construction projects. And she shines at every turn, from lining up volunteers to making sure equipment, food and supplies are in place.

The makings of greatness began when Killen took a seven-day backpack through the Grand Canyon—at the ripe old age of six! (To this day, she credits her mom for her love of the outdoors.) After earning her degree in forestry from the University of Montana, she eventually teamed up with Shannon Freix at the CDTA... and the rest is history.

On the trail, Killen is quick to say it’s the “smiles on the faces of the volunteers at the end of a project” that mean the most to her. “Knowing they had a great time, knowing they feel good about what they accomplished. That’s what makes me most proud.” Almost as proud as we are of her... thank you, Meg!
In 2012, your support of MWA helped John Todd, wilderness campaign director for southwest Montana, and Gabe Furshong, senior campaign director, continue their work to expand public support for a truly collaborative approach to land management.

U.S. Senator John Tester’s (D-MT) Forest Jobs and Recreation Act (FJRA) promotes forest stewardship restoration projects while permanently protecting one million wild acres on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Lolo and Kootenai National Forests.

Passage of FJRA will result in long-awaited additions to southwest Montana’s Lee Metcalf and Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness areas, and new wilderness designation for the Blacktail Mountains, East and West Pioneers and Humbug Spires, to name just a few.

Drafted in part from MWA’s Beaverhead-Deerlodge Partnership proposal, the 2009 bill sets aside years of gridlock — replacing distrust with cooperation among Montana’s timber industry, sportsmen and conservationists.

You’re at the heart of this sea change, making possible Todd’s and Furshong’s outreach to community leaders and advocacy groups, public presentations, and more. And this shift in the political landscape towards preserving our wilderness heritage has been confirmed. In two bi-partisan polls conducted in 2012, more than seven out of ten registered voters from across Montana supported FJRA.

Through MWA, you’re uniting hearts and minds for southwest Montana. Thank you!

As a U.S. Forest Service district ranger, “preserving the integrity of the land” was among MWA member Mark Petroni’s greatest achievements.

Mark Petroni

Born in the shadow of Butte’s Berkeley Pit, Mark Petroni’s father and grandfather worked in the underground mines nearby. But Petroni embraced a different future.

After college, he worked for nearly two decades as a U.S. Forest Service district ranger in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Now retired, he rightly feels one of his greatest accomplishments was “preserving the integrity of the land and protecting the high-value wildlife habitat found throughout my district.”

One of those areas was the Snowcrest Range. Spanning more than 100,000 roadless acres, it’s home to large numbers of elk migrating in and out of nearby Yellowstone National Park. At Petroni’s insistence, the Snowcrest and other areas were recommended for future wilderness — areas now included in the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act.

Today Petroni is an important voice for MWA, urging everyone that loves and appreciates the untrammeled landscapes of his former district to “stay strong and stay the course” until passage of the FJRA is complete.
Hope for a Fragile Heart

Home to grizzly bears, lynx, wolverines and other important species, the Gallatin Range is one of the largest unprotected landscapes within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. A jawdropping ridge of snowy peaks — many topping out at more than 10,000 feet — the Gallatin Range is the critical north-south wildlife corridor linking America’s first national park to adjacent wildlands.

At its heart lies the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area (WSA). Popular with hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians and motorized recreation enthusiasts, the area is now the focal point of how to manage the impacts of increasing numbers of people seeking access into this delicate alpine country.

In 2012, after half a decade of litigation to protect this wild ecosystem, the Montana Wilderness Association and its community partners put aside past frustrations and started moving forward building public demand for permanent protection of the Gallatin Range including the WSA.

Using the accomplishment as a springboard for the next step in our campaign, and due to your incredible support, MWA re-opened a Bozeman-based field office in early 2012. It’s now staffed by hardworking Wilderness Campaign Director John Todd — who also oversees the Montana Forests Campaign.

Leveraging MWA’s experience working with quiet trail users to preserve mountain trails and wildlands along the Continental Divide, Todd is now leading a similar effort in the Bozeman area. He’s bringing together a broad coalition of stakeholders to establish a shared vision for the future of the Gallatin Range. And thanks to your help, the stage is being set for a community-supported conservation initiative that will permanently protect the fragile alpine heart of the Gallatin Range.

Concerned this fragile ecosystem couldn’t sustain the damaging impacts of off-road vehicles, the couple found an outlet for their determination to protect the Gallatin by supporting MWA.

“We like that MWA has a purity of purpose,” McDonald explains. “They’re focused on wilderness designation for Montana’s remaining wildlands—and we like the assurance that wilderness provides for future generations.”

As the last unprotected roadless area adjacent to Yellowstone, the still-vulnerable Gallatin Crest benefited from your 2012 support of MWA.
Standing in one spot, you can watch a single gust of wind sweep over native grass from horizon to horizon. Or trace the dark underbelly of an afternoon thunderstorm as it drags shards of rain across the landscape. Welcome to eastern Montana’s high plains, home to some of the world’s last remaining unbroken prairie.

Covering three-quarters of the state, these vast high plains belie the fact that the prairies are in urgent need of protection. The scope is immense. Yet with courage in our hearts and you beside us, it’s here the Montana Wilderness Association is working.

When the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) — the government agency administering more than six million acres of public lands in eastern Montana — began updating plans to manage the conservation, recreation, grazing, and most notably, oil and gas development in the eastern wildlands, it opened a critical door that your support allowed us to walk through.

So during the summer of 2012, MWA Campaign Director Mark Good worked with an award-winning photographer and his assistant to inventory unprotected BLM-managed lands and determine their wilderness character.

Encountering fierce winds, rutted two-track roads, rattlesnakes, barbed wire wounds and the occasional flat tire, the tenacious trio explored countless drainages and potholes, river valleys and badlands, creek beds and animal trails.

More than 50 separate areas were explored. Among them, significant features discovered in 17 areas met all BLM standards to be considered for wilderness. Each was documented using detailed narrative, maps and photographs. And ultimately, the precise mapping you made possible will chart a wise course for BLM’s plan and conserve the eastern wildlands far into the future. Thank you.

That Helen Stevens found MWA was only natural. Raised in far eastern Montana, Stevens cared for livestock on the family ranch under an endless prairie sky. In nearby fields, she often saw deer, antelope, and coyotes.

Today she leads walks near her Ekalaka home as a volunteer in MWA’s Wilderness Walks program, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2012. “Many see eastern Montana as a desolate wasteland only suitable for energy development,” says Stevens, who also serves on a local steering committee dedicated to preserving prairie settings. “But when you stop and take a closer look, it’s teaming with flora and fauna.”

“We’re making progress,” she continues. “People are beginning to see the value in saving part of our heritage. Organizations like MWA may be our only chance to protect Montana’s vanishing prairie.” And thanks to wilderness champions like Stevens, MWA’s work is surely in good hands.

“Organizations like MWA may be our only chance to protect Montana’s vanishing prairie,” reveals MWA member Helen Stevens.
Anticipating 2012 would be pivotal for wilderness conservation, the Montana Wilderness Association launched an ambitious plan to educate citizens. Its overarching election-year goal? Build stronger, statewide nonpartisan support for the preservation of Montana’s wildlands.

This included a particular emphasis on reaching out to students on college campuses through an effort called the Montana Outdoor Heritage Project. Led by NexGen Wilderness Leaders Program Director Zack Porter, the aim was to make sure those who cared about wild Montana were heard at the polls.

Ever on the lookout for new NexGen voices, Porter’s plan was ambitious. Target both Montana State University and University of Montana campuses to find students committed to showing up at the polls and making their vote count for our great outdoors.

Porter recruited a squadron of students. Together, they spent countless hours canvassing, giving class presentations, tabling student events and going door-to-door in key communities to raise public awareness about the future of Montana’s environment.

All told, your MWA membership supported Porter and company as they registered nearly 300 new student voters and gathered more than 5,700 voter pledge cards leading up to the primary and general election. But it didn’t end there. On election day they reminded pledge card signers of their promise, then shuttled said students to local polling stations — new voices to echo long and strong for Montana’s last wild places.

Thanks to your support of MWA’s NexGen Wilderness Leaders program, these student canvassers get out the vote by “keeping it wild”!

A testament to the success of the NexGen Wilderness Leaders program, Rebecca Boslough is at heart of the Montana environmental movement’s bright future.

Camping and hiking for the Helena-based Bosloughs was part of the family routine. But it wasn’t until freshman year that Boslough attended a University of Montana Wilderness Association student group meeting. “I met a great group of people who were really invested in protecting the environment,” she remembers. “I was instantly hooked.”

Boslough put her considerable skills to use in 2012, speaking at a rally in support of U.S. Senator Jon Tester’s Forest Jobs and Recreation Act (FJRA).

For an encore, she sponsored and unanimously passed a student resolution calling for public comment on HR 1581, a Congressional resolution that would have opened to development millions of acres of America’s best wildlife habitat — including areas proposed as FJRA wilderness.

Thank you for your fine work, Becca!
$10000 & above
Campion Foundation
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Dennis & Michelle Tighe
John Larson & Carol Barnes
John & Judy Boehmke
Peter Blood
& Albert Blank

THANK YOU.
**REVENUE**

- Individual Giving: $491,174
- Grant Income: $790,740
- Sales Income: $70,256
- Investment Income: $62,253
- Other: $38,369
- **Total Revenues**: $1,452,792

**EXPENSES**

- Programs: $1,037,673
- Administration: $132,849
- Fundraising: $115,176
- **Total Expenses**: $1,285,698

The Montana Wilderness Association is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under the 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service.

Eighty-one percent of your support goes directly to programs.
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Gerry Jennings, Vice President
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FOUR SEASONS

“We simply need that wild country available to us... for it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope.”

– Wallace Stegner
YOU’RE INVITED...

to be part of something special. Whether it’s leading a Wilderness Walk, volunteering on the trail, or attending our annual gathering, Montana’s last wild places are calling you. And you can call back.

Shannon Freix