Editor’s note: This year Sally Cathey, our Southwest MT Field Director, will be writing a series of articles about priority campaign areas for MGC newsletters. This is the first.

Last summer I joined MWA staff in traversing the Crazy Mountains. We crossed the range starting at the Big Timber Canyon trailhead and ending at the Ibex Cabin. My first time deep in the range, I found myself constantly in awe of the rugged peaks, alpine lakes and pristine landscape. This range is a backpacker’s dream with over a dozen 10,000-foot peaks and even more alpine lakes.

Management of the island range is divided between two forests, the Custer Gallatin and the Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forests. Each forest is currently determining the future of this wild and special place.

The Crazies are a roughly 50 million year old igneous formation that rise from the plains just north of the Yellowstone River. The island range provides tremendous elk habitat, mountain goat habitat and is occ. These critters find a safe space among the 82,000 roadless acres found on the CGNF portion and 30,000 found on the HLCNF.

The range is also a culturally significant landscape. The name Crazy Mountains were named from a loose interpretation of the mountain’s true name given by the Crow tribe, Awaxaaippia, meaning “high landscape that is jagged or rough and have a bad reputation or omen.”

A complicated range, there remains a significant amount of private inholdings and many access issues. When hiking in the Crazies, it is important to keep in mind the private land you traverse.

Over the next couple years, MWA will be asking members and supporters to speak up for the Crazy Mountains. We would like to see the roadless lands within the range given recommended wilderness status so as to preserve its wild, rugged character and to protect the cultural significance that makes the range so special.

For more information on how to get involved in protecting special places like the Crazy Mountains, please contact MWA’s Southwest MT Field Director, Sally Cathey, at scathey@wildmontana.org.

Campfire Lake, photo by Emily Cleveland
So Distant So Near  by Tom Ross

We tread a narrow, snow packed trail to our destination, through a forest of Lodgepole pine and Douglas fir and mainly in the shadow of higher ridges to our south. Seldom do we have patches of sunshine to enjoy, but we benefit from the forest’s shelter from the wind. Off the trail, the snow is deep and soft, and animal tracks abound. At one point we scan a small meadow below the trail for moose tracks, but can’t verify anything without a steep descent through deep snow, which we are unwilling to attempt at these temperatures. We stop for only short rests, balancing the chance to catch our breath and share our thoughts against the penetrating chill we feel when not moving. The creek we followed upstream is frozen in spots and rushing wildly in others, creating the only sound we hear other than our voices and muffled footsteps. Spray has covered the snowy logs lying across the creek with ice columns that reach down to the water like seasonal stalactites.

It’s a welcome sight for our small group, eager to stop for rest, food and warm drink. We hope to find a spot in the sun and out of the wind for our lunch, and our search is successful. It’s a beautiful setting, even though some of our group have to take the word of others that there is indeed a wonderful alpine lake before us. It’s habitat for trout, eagle, bear, cougar, deer, elk, moose, squirrel, hare and chipmunk. Now, we see only a flat and brilliant expanse of snow, soft and gently buffeted by the breeze that seems to be building, sometimes lifting powder off the canyon slopes and rock faces and blowing it across the flatness. Nothing else moves. We wonder where the actual shoreline is, given how low the lake appears to be and how well hidden the liquid is, buried under feet of snow and maybe half as much ice.

We’re alone, eating and talking and enjoying the surroundings as we sit on logs and rocks brushed somewhat free of snow. We gather warmth from the sun, whose low journey across the winter sky has lifted it just above the high ridge to our south. That ridge is steep with scree and scattered trees and is matched by forested slopes elsewhere, save where occasionally interrupted by vertical rock faces and ancient avalanche debris at the shoreline. The frozen lake is nestled far below 10,000+ foot peaks barely visible in the distance, farther up the shoulders of the watershed. We’ve climbed 1600 vertical feet to reach this 47 acre jewel, which was created by landslide, unlike the many glacier-carved lakes in the region. It’s beautiful, serene and pristine in its cloak of snow and ice.

This is a wilderness experience, one that resonates with our soul. It connects us to a distant past perhaps because it runs upstream against change and counter to what sometimes passes for progress. Nature and weather and natural events created and continue to dominate this landscape and our experience. It inspires us to lofty thoughts and an appreciative mindset.

So, how far did we have to journey to reap these benefits? Well, not far at all. No, it’s simply a winter hike up nearby Cascade Creek to Lava Lake in the Spanish Peaks Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area. Yes, that Lava Lake; Bozeman’s nearby, easily accessible and often visited alpine lake. Barely 30 miles from Bozeman and three miles from the highway, this popular destination is still attractive and still providing the tangible and intangible benefits of wilderness precisely because, and only because, it is Wilderness, officially designated and protected by the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and Management Act approved by Congress and signed by President Regan in 1983.

The bill was sponsored by Montana Senator John Melcher and named in honor of former Senator Lee Metcalf.

Continued on next page

Lunch at Lava Lake, photo by Tom Ross
On Saturday, March 18, a group of seven hikers got together for a late winter MWA walk to the Hogback in the Paradise Valley. A hogback is an elongate, steep-sided ridge formed by sedimentary rock that have been tilted and is resistant to erosion. It was sufficiently late in the winter that snowshoes weren't needed and very little snow was encountered. The hike was led ably led by Roger Breeding with Karen Williams doing the sweep. Our fellow hikers came from Bozeman, Billings, Ennis, and Denton (near Great Falls). We hiked roughly 5 miles point to point from the trailhead in the Paradise Valley, towards the west near the divide between the Paradise Valley and the Trail Creek area, and gained about 2000 feet in elevation. From the spine of the Hogback, we had great views across the valley to Pine Creek, to the south to Emigrant Peak, and to the north to the Crazies. As we progressed further west, we had views into the Chimney Rock area. The Hogback trailhead is on private land, with access provided by the landowner, but further west the trail crosses on to state land. The trail traverses juniper and pine with many open areas affording great views (and great wind in our case). Although the beginning of the trail is moderately steep, further on the grade lies down and it feels more like a ridge walk. We enjoyed good company, pleasant temperatures (perhaps a surfeit of wind), and no ticks!
### Announcing the MGC 2017 Summer Walks

**To sign up for a summer Wilderness Walk visit** [wildmontana.org/walks](http://wildmontana.org/walks)

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<td>Sun., June 4</td>
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<td>Fri., July 14</td>
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<td>Sun., July 16</td>
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<td>Sat., July 22</td>
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<td>Sat., July 29</td>
<td>Cottonwood Lake</td>
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<td>Thurs., August 3</td>
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### Far from the Maddening Crowd by Barbara Geller

There are many iconic hikes in the Custer Gallatin National Forest, such as Mt Blackmore, Pine Creek Falls, Pioneer Falls and Lava Lake, but they’ve been discovered and are apt to be crowded. (Well, crowded by locals’ standards, not by Sedona or National Park standards.) Where can you go for some true solitude? [HikeWildMontana](http://hikewildmontana.org), MWA’s online, crowd-sourced, free hiking guide can help. Sure, it contains the popular trails, but it reveals some little-known gems, too.

The Crazy Mountains host stunning lakes in mountain cirques, such as Cottonwood Lake and Twin Lakes, but head farther north to [Loco Mountain](http://locomountain.com) to stroll along a wide meadow of a ridgeline reminiscent of Windy Pass.

[Elkhorn Creek](http://elkhorncreek.com) is a geological oddity. Where the map shows the creek emptying into the Gallatin River there is no creek, but keep climbing up the trail and you’ll find a trickle, then a rivulet and eventually a true creek. Usually only campers at Red Cliff Campground use this trail; for maximum privacy, head there in spring when the campground is still closed.

On the east side of the Gallatins, [Rock Creek South](http://rockcreeksouth.com) leads up through the Gallatin Petrified Forest to the Gallatin Crest. For a longer hike to the Gallatin Crest, try [Big Creek](http://bigcreek.com). It’s an easy stroll for the first several miles with interesting rock formations, but eventually there is a big climb up to Eaglehead Mountain.

The Lionhead area near West Yellowstone is home to the Continental Divide Trail. Hike up [Mile Creek](http://milecreek.com) to the Continental Divide, with an option to continue on to Targhee Peak. For a weekend trip, add on [Sheep Lake](http://sheeplake.com) or [Coffin Lake](http://coffinlake.com).

For off-trail adventures, head farther east, past the Beartooths, to the Pryor Mountains. [Cave Ridge](http://caveridge.com) trail is an easy option for a short spring wildflower hike. [Crater Ice Cave](http://cratericecake.com) is a cool option in summer.

All of the trails listed above are in roadless areas that are potential candidates for Recommended Wilderness in the planning process currently underway in the Custer Gallatin National Forest. Now is a great time to familiarize yourself and your friends with these areas so you can tell the Forest Service whether you think these areas should be protected.

Get more details to plan your next hike at [hikewildmontana.org](http://hikewildmontana.org).

After your hike, share what you saw by filing a trip report.
USFS Volunteer Opportunities 2017 by Dean Center

One of the generally agreed upon conclusions of the Gallatin Community Collaborative was the value of stewardship. In response to this part of the collaborative, a couple of us have been exploring opportunities to continue assisting the Gallatin Forest with its mission.

One area that interests us is trail work. Historically, volunteers working on trails have been part of a user organization, generally based on mode of recreation. This makes the Forest Service’s task of coordinating easier and the appearance of volunteers at the appointed time more reliable. The MWA has been focusing its trail volunteer opportunities statewide on the CDT in recent years, which requires a one week away from home commitment, and that doesn’t meet everyone’s needs.

So we have decided to be an Ad Hoc Trail Crew of Two, responding to the unexpected or the small. Such projects don’t warrant a full, paid seasonal trail crew, or they arise at times when no such crew is available. These projects might take ½ to 2 days of work, but generally not require spending a night out (unless we just want to Q).

We invite any members of the Madison-Gallatin chapter of the MWA who would like to help on occasional trail repair and maintenance to join us. This would be an extremely flexible commitment, except that all volunteers will need to attend a volunteer orientation and training prior to being called out. Cody Yeatts, the Gallatin Volunteer Coordinator, will be holding a session one weekend later this spring.

There are other volunteer possibilities to help the Forest Service which don’t involve mud and case lots of band-aids. The Custer-Gallatin has piloted a Trail Host program and additional volunteers might be needed. Other Forests have volunteers working in a variety of capacities and we could probably convince the Supervisor to take advantage of your education, experience and interest in whatever capacity you think might be helpful. (Did I mention that Kimberly Schlenker has retired?) In the past, I suspect USFS employees might have felt an office based volunteer was taking a paycheck away from a staffer, but with the huge funding reductions with which the Forest Service currently operates, they would probably be much more receptive, particularly if you are a self starter who needs no baby sitting. If you want to do clerical work, help collect/organize/input data, assist with public meetings, wash trucks, or have a completely different idea for service, let me know and we can talk our way in the door.

If you are interested in helping out our local national forest, or want to learn more, please contact Dean Center at garbage4me@yahoo.com or Sally Cathey at scathey@wildmontana.org.

Changing of the Guard by Roger Jenkins

On Tuesday, March 21st, our Chapter Board of Directors unanimously elected Tom Ross to be their new President, following the announcement by David Steinmuller that, while remaining on the Board, he is “retiring” from that position.

Along with a BS in Civil Engineering from UVA and post-graduate studies in Forestry at VA Tech, Tom’s experience includes 27 years within the forest products industry and nine years with an environmental consulting firm. A lover of wild places, he has hiked and backpacked all over the United States, and currently lives in Gallatin Gateway.

Also, after serving for over seven and a half years in his position as Treasurer (the longest serving officer on the Board), Bob Bayley announced that he is stepping down. The Board elected Roger Jenkins, a past President of the Board, as its new Treasurer. Barbara Geller, the Vice President, and Steve Griswold, the Secretary, will remain in their current positions.
It’s Spring!!! Time for the First Adopt A Highway 2017 Clean Up Day by Roxanna McLaughlin

Saturday, May 20 is the day we will have our first highway clean up of 2017, sponsored by the Madison Gallatin Chapter of MWA, and we are looking for helpers to make the task as quick and fun as possible. And this year, when you join us to help, you will have a chance to win a prize!

Our designated stretch of Hwy. 191 is between mile markers 77 and 79. We will meet at 9:00 a.m. in the Bozeman Hot Springs parking lot, and after a brief safety talk, distribution of safety vests, and bags for trash, and a drawing for prizes, we will divide into four groups, and carpool to the nearby clean up area.

Because this is a very busy section of highway, we can only accept adult helpers.

The MDT has tips for what to wear as follows:

- Shoes or boots, not sandals or thongs…. We could encounter glass, nails, cactus, or stubble.
- Hats (and sunglasses?) to prevent sunburn and improve vision.
- Gloves to protect hands from splinters, glass and other hazards.
- Long sleeve shirts and pants to prevent sunburn, insect bites, cuts, scrapes and abrasions.

We have ‘grabbers’ for you to use, but if you prefer to bring your own equipment, that’s fine.

Please bring your own snacks and water. After we finish, we invite you come picnic together at the tables in front of the Coffee Pot Bakery and Deli. You can bring your lunch or purchase something delicious there at the deli.

Please contact Roxanna McLaughlin by May 14 at gaia_maid@yahoo.com or you can text or phone her at 406-539-7379 to sign up or get more information. Knowing how many people are coming will really help us be sure to have enough bags and safety vests for you to use, as well as keep you updated on any last minute changes.

This is a great opportunity to join your chapter in caring for the beautiful place that is the Gallatin Valley.

Highway pickup May 2016, photo by Roger Jenkins
Upcoming Events!

Monday, April 3, 5:30-7:45 p.m.  Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) Planning Public Meeting - Hilton Garden Inn

Tuesday, April 4, 12:30-5:00 p.m.  CGNF Planning Collaborative Session - Hilton Garden Inn  
6:00-7:00 p.m.  CGNF Planning Closing Public Meeting - Hilton Garden Inn

Friday, April 7, 7:00-9:00 p.m.  Horse Packing in Mongolia, special presentation by Greg Schatz, Room 233, Strand Union Building, Montana State University

Tuesday, April 18, 7:00-9:00 p.m.  Madison Gallatin Chapter (MGC) board meeting, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Office*

Wednesday, April 19, 5:30-8:30 p.m.  Green Drinks, Lindley Center

Monday, May 1, 5:00-8:00 p.m.  "Spring into Summer", Map Brewing, 510 Manley Road, Bozeman

Wednesday, May 3, 7:00 p.m.  Wilderness And... Montana conservation politics in 2017: challenges and opportunities during a Trump Administration, presented by John Todd, Conservation Director, MWA

Tuesday, May 16, 7:00-9:00 p.m.  Madison Gallatin Chapter (MGC) board meeting, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Office*

Saturday, May 20, 9:00 a.m.  Adopt A Highway Spring Cleanup - see previous page for details

Tuesday, June 20, 7:00-9:00 p.m.  Madison Gallatin Chapter (MGC) board meeting, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Office*

* All MWA members are invited to attend Board meetings. It's a great way to get involved.