Stewardship Crew Tackles Logjam

by Charlie O'Leary

In early June, five members of the Southwestern Wildlands Chapter ventured into the U.S.F.S. Torrey Mountain Recommended Wilderness armed with chainsaws, axes, and horsepower (literally).

The goal was to reopen a lesser known trail between Jacobson Creek and Little Joe Creek, which is one segment of a nice 12-mile loop that lets you explore some of the spectacular backcountry of the East Pioneers.

We had cleared the main trail going up Jacobson Creek toward Tahepia Lake last year but, as luck would have it, it was logged in again. That meant a slight delay in starting on our intended goal. Most of us were certified sawyers, so with two saws we moved along nicely.

One thing is for sure: lack of regular maintenance leads to lack of use and, before you know it, the trail tread has grown in. It can be mighty hard to find your way.

You might see an old blaze, or the end of a log cut a decade ago, maybe a piece of orange ribbon some hunter tied on a year before. Add to that the many downfalls from the recent pine beetle infestation and what you have is an honest day's work staring you down.

We cut and cleared until altitude got the best of us. Right around 8,400 feet the snow-drifts got too deep for us and the horses. We called it good after tackling a pair of 15-inch pines that had likely stood for 100 years before being felled by a tiny insect. Maybe next year we'll go in a week or two later.
Chapter Hosts Wilderness Walks

Montana Wilderness Association chapters help lead "Wilderness Walks" every year in their areas of the state. The walks give people a chance to explore new corners of our great state and discover something new -- views to the horizon, wildflowers, animal tracks, fossils, and friends who love the outdoors just as much as they do. The Southwestern Wildlands Chapter led 10 Wilderness Walks this past year. Here are some photos from a few of them.

In August, Fran Galvin and Bill Clark led a hike to Eighteen Mile Peak, located east of Dell, MT. The group hiked through a gently sloping, rock-strewn meadow that was followed by a steep hike to the summit. At the summit, hikers stood on the Montana–Idaho border. They were rewarded with a spectacular view that included the Tendoy Mountains and Italian Peaks in Montana. The view above is looking into Idaho at an extensive range of mountains.

In June, about eight people accompanied retired ecology professor Rick Douglass on a walk up Joiner Gulch, which runs into Mill Creek near Anaconda. Rick has been "monitoring" beaver activity in the drainage for over 30 years. During the 30 years, the beaver have modified what was basically an erosion gully into a beautiful drainage with willow, aspen, and beaver ponds. Beavers have restored the drainage and created wonderful habitat for deer, elk, and moose.

On the walk, Joe Griffin also talked about various Superfund activities in the area and how the beavers are contributing. Beavers are incredible engineers and reclamation experts, and they don’t send society an invoice for their work.

After weeks of hoping to find a break in the frequent early summer rains, Sherry Vogel and Joe Griffin finally had a sunny July day to take a group of hikers to Goat Flats. A well-traveled trail leads the way around Storm Lake in the Anaconda Pintlers and continues up to the Flats where summer was in full bloom. Indian Paintbrush (above) was abundant along the trail, blue penstemons grew out of rock piles, and the alpine meadow was covered with patches of heather and mountain avens.
Greetings from Our Chapter Representative

by Jill Kolb

My name is Jill Kolb, and I’m your Chapter Representative. My main responsibility is bridging the gap between the six other MWA chapters, staff, and the Board of Directors.

Chapter reps and chapter presidents form a working group known as the Chapter Collaborative or CC. We keep up to date with monthly conference calls and face-to-face meetings twice a year. Many of our conference calls include updates from MWA’s Executive Director Ben Gabriel.

I’ve been the Chapter Rep. since our chapter started in late spring of 2016. Our chapter’s mission is to protect Montana’s wilderness heritage, quiet beauty, and outdoor traditions, now and for future generations.

Feel free to contact me at jchefjill@gmail.com if you would like more information about our chapter. Thanks for keeping Montana Wild!

Sincerely,
Jill Kolb

Southwestern Wildlands Members Get Certified!
From Chainsaws to Crosscut Saws

In April, chapter members went through a chainsaw training course at Thompson Park sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service. From left to right in the photo are Charlie O’Leary, Mike Sullivan, Joe Griffin, Russ O’Leary, and Bill Clark.

In May, chapter members attended a crosscut certification course. Crosscut and chainsaw certifications like these are necessary for the chapter to do its stewardship work.
Chapter Participates in the “Adopt-a-Trail” Program

The Southwestern Wildlands Chapter participated in the U.S. Forest Service’s “Adopt-a-Trail” program this year. Our trail is in the Humbug Spires Wilderness Study Area. In May, chapter members took part in installing a sign at the trailhead to provide education about invasive species of weeds. In June, chapter members returned and helped spray weeds in the area.