



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

WILD MONTANA

SUMMER 2018

**DEFENDING OUR
WILDERNESS LEGACY**

John Lambing



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

Montana Wilderness Association works with communities to protect Montana's wilderness heritage, quiet beauty, and outdoor traditions, now and for future generations.

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AT THE CORE OF OUR MISSION

Late last year, when Senator Steve Daines introduced legislation that would strip protection from five wilderness study areas (WSAs) comprising nearly a half-million acres of our wildest public lands, Montana Wilderness Association jumped into action. After all, this bill strikes at the core of our mission. If it were to pass, it would result in the single biggest rollback of protected land in Montana history,

A few months later, Congressman Greg Gianforte nearly doubled the size of the threat with his own legislation – one bill mirroring Sen. Daines' and another targeting an additional 24 WSAs across the state comprising more than 300,000 acres, including the Centennial Mountains in southwest Montana, the Terry Badlands in the east, and Bitter Creek in the northeast.

Thanks to your unwavering support of our mission, MWA has risen to the challenge and is conducting a campaign commensurate to the threat this legislation poses to 800,000 acres of wildlands that we depend on for clean water, for healthy fish and wildlife populations, and for our outdoor way of life. We've conducted this campaign in partnership with Our Land, Our Legacy – a group of Montanans who know and cherish the targeted WSAs and are dedicated to protecting them.

Since Sen. Daines introduced his WSA bill, more than 2,500 of you have signed on to an open letter (at ourlandourlegacy.org) calling on Montana's Congressional delegation to take a balanced, bipartisan, and inclusive approach to resolving the fate of our WSAs, one that respects the diversity of interests that have a stake in these places. More than 1,700 of you have also called Sen. Daines' and Rep. Gianforte's offices in opposition to their legislation. And hundreds of you have also let your opposition be known in news articles, in newspaper opinion pages, and across social media, making it abundantly clear that Montanans overwhelmingly reject this legislation.

Your response even compelled Governor Steve Bullock to take action. In April he sent Sen. Daines and Rep. Gianforte a letter saying that he was "troubled by the lack of public engagement" that went into the bills, stating "the one-size-fits-all approach in your proposals fails to reflect the diversity of our citizens governing future management of these lands."

Thanks to your fearless defense of our most prized public lands, we have turned the tide on Sen. Daines' and Rep. Gianforte's legislation, as indicated in the 2018 University of Montana Public Lands Survey, which showed that 81 percent of Montanans oppose this legislation and a scant 11 percent support it.

It's no secret that we're in the midst of one of the worst attacks our public lands have ever faced. With members like you, we're confident that we can weather the attack and come out the other side of it stronger than ever before.

As always, thank you for standing up for our public lands and wild places.



*Ben Gabriel,
executive director*



*Mark Hanson,
council president*

WILD
M O N T A N A
S U M M E R 2 0 1 8

On the cover:
Terry Badlands
WSA

DEFENDING OUR WILDERNESS LEGACY

MWA fights back against biggest rollback of protected public land in state history.

TOWARD A WILDER FUTURE IN THE HELENA LEWIS & CLARK

Wildlands across a huge swath of the state are getting the consideration they deserve.

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

The latest on our work standing up for public lands and wild places

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DEFENDING OUR WILDERNESS

LEGACY

Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area

HOW MWA IS RALLYING MONTANANS AGAINST LEGISLATION THAT COULD RESULT IN THE SINGLE BIGGEST ROLLBACK OF PROTECTED PUBLIC LAND IN STATE HISTORY

Last December, shortly before the holidays, Sen. Daines dropped a bombshell on Montana. He introduced legislation that would strip protection from the Big Snowies, Middle Fork Judith, West Pioneers, Sapphire, and Blue Joint Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) – nearly a half million acres of Montana’s wildest public lands. And he did so without first holding a single public meeting or providing any opportunity for Montanans to have input on his proposals.

Then in March, Congressman Greg Gianforte followed suit with his own bills and his own disregard for public input. One bill mirrored Sen. Daines’, targeting the same five WSAs managed by the Forest Service. The other bill went after an additional 24 WSAs, all managed by the Bureau of Land Management. They include the Centennial Mountains in southwest Montana, the Terry Badlands in the east, Bitter Creek in the northeast, and six WSAs within the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

Among these 24, we discovered that the BLM had found portions of eight of them – totaling over 100,000 acres – to be suitable for Wilderness protection, despite Rep. Gianforte’s claim that none of them had been found suitable.

Daines and Gianforte claim they are acting on the recommendations the BLM and the Forest Service have made, but they conveniently ignore the 1 million acres these agencies have proposed for wilderness designation.

In all, these bills would strip protection from more than 800,000 acres of public lands that provide our communities with clean drinking

water, that allow for our fish and wildlife populations to thrive, and that enable Montanans to maintain our way of life and our \$7 billion outdoor recreation economy.

These bills would open these areas to mining, oil and gas leasing, and motorized use for decades. These bills strike at the heart of what makes Montana so exceptional.

Without blinking, MWA rose to the occasion and launched a campaign to ensure these bills will fail. We quickly helped form Our Land, Our Legacy – a diverse group of Montanans from across the state

continued

who each has a special relationship with one or more of the targeted WSAs. The group includes the likes of Dave Byerly, a Lewistown city commissioner who leads MWA Wilderness Walks in the Big Snowies; Karen Aspevig-Stevenson, a Miles City resident who leads Wilderness Walks in the Terry Badlands; Kathy Hundley, a substitute school teacher in Darby who horseback rides in the Sapphires and Blue Joint; and Chris Marchion, a Montana Outdoor Hall

"Our state's citizens value the ability to advance solutions born of compromise and of collaboration."

—Governor Steve Bullock

of Famer who lives in Anaconda and has spent numerous of seasons hunting in the Sapphires.

Over the last several months, many other Montanans have come aboard and stood up for WSAs in one way or another. Here's a snapshot of how Montanans have voiced their opposition to Sen. Daines' and Rep. Gianforte's legislation since December:

Sapphire Mountains Wilderness Study Area



Sally Carlson

- More than 2,600 signers of Our Land, Our Legacy letter, calling for a balanced, bipartisan approach to WSAs
- 1,000 calls made to Sen. Daines' office
- 800 calls made to Rep. Gianforte's office
- More than 100 op-eds and 100 letters-to-the-editor published in Montana newspapers
- 40 people, mostly in eastern Montana, showing up to speak directly to Rep. Gianforte's staff during mobile office hours

Hundreds of Montanans have also shown up and stood up at a handful of county commission meetings to express their opposition to the WSA legislation. They've persuaded commissions and councils – including Helena, Butte-Silver Bow, Anaconda-Deerlodge, and others – to oppose the legislation in letters to both Sen. Daines and Rep. Gianforte that call for an open, bipartisan, and inclusive approach to resolving the fate of WSAs.

This outpouring of opposition compelled Montana Governor Steve Bullock to send a letter to Sen. Daines and Rep. Gianforte in April requesting they change their approach to WSAs.

Bob Ambrose



West Pioneers Wilderness Study Area

"I am particularly troubled by the lack of public engagement used to formulate these proposals," Gov. Bullocks writes in regards to Sen. Daines' and Rep. Gianforte's legislation. "All Montanans value their public lands and have a stake in their future management. No matter how hard fought, our state's citizens value the ability to gather around the table and advance solutions born of compromise and of collaboration."

We learned just how much public opinion was lined up against the WSA legislation in May, when the University of Montana released its bipartisan 2018 Public Lands Survey, revealing that 81 percent of Montanans oppose Sen. Daines' and Rep. Gianforte's legislation. A scant 11 percent of Montanans support it. Opposition included voters from across the political spectrum, revealing that Montanans are united

against this legislation and in favor of protecting our WSAs.

In spite of this overwhelming opposition, Sen. Daines and Rep. Gianforte have pressed on with their legislation. In February, Sen. Daines' brought his bill before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for a hearing. In June, Rep. Gianforte brought his bills before the House Natural Resources Committee for a hearing. Unless abandoned, the bills will next move on to a mark-up in the same committees. No votes have yet been taken on them.

As long as these bills remain alive, MWA will fight with everything we have to ensure they don't pass Congress.

— Casey Perkins, MWA Rocky Mountain Front field director

MONTANA'S WILDERNESS LEGACY IS UNDER ATTACK

Senator Daines and Congressman Gianforte want to strip protection from 29 wilderness study areas comprising 800,000 acres of our wildest public lands. We need YOU to help us stop this from happening! Please consider making an additional donation today to help us fend off this legislation, which could result in the single biggest rollback of protected land in the history of our state.

PLEASE GIVE TODAY. wildmontana.org/donate

TOWARDS A WILDER FUTURE IN THE HELENA-LEWIS AND CLARK

Thanks to you, wildlands across a huge swath of the state are getting the consideration they deserve.

SOUTH BIG BELTS ROADLESS AREAS

The Camas Creek and Baldy/Edith roadless areas are the wildest unprotected areas in the Big Belts. These areas deserve to be recommended for Wilderness in the final plan.

BADGER-TWO MEDICINE

(Not pictured)

The unique wildlands and cultural values of the Badger deserve standards and guidelines that protect these resources and provide more opportunity for Blackfeet input into future decisions.

Earlier this summer, the Forest Service released its latest draft of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest plan, the final version of which will determine how 2.8 million acres of public land across a huge swath of Montana, from the Continental Divide to the Big Snowies, will be managed for the next 30-odd years.

for the protection of wildlands within the Forest, and the draft plan shows that the Forest Service is taking those comments to heart.

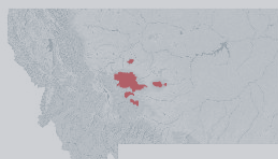
Comments on this draft are due September 6. For more information, contact Casey Perkins at cperkins@wildmontana.org.

Here are some of the landscapes we're encouraging the Forest Service to recommend for Wilderness or otherwise protect in the final plan.

MIDDLE FORK JUDITH

The non-motorized portion of this threatened wilderness study area deserves to be recommended for Wilderness. We are asking the Forest Service to choose the alternative that protects the place Charlie Russell called a "hunter's paradise" in the final plan.

John Gatchell



MWA members and supporters have sent in hundreds of comments advocating

Mark Good

TOWARDS A WILDER FUTURE IN THE HELENA-LEWIS AND CLARK



SCAPEGOAT WILDERNESS ADDITIONS

Three areas bordering the Scapegoat Wilderness – Arrastra Creek, Red Mountain, and Silverking – merit the protections of a Wilderness recommendation. They also have diverse support from the local collaborative working group.

DEEP CREEK

(Not pictured)

This wild corner of the Little Belt Mountains borders the legendary Smith River and is recommended for Wilderness in three alternatives.

NEVADA MOUNTAIN

This stretch of the wild Continental Divide between Lincoln and Helena is recommended for Wilderness in three alternatives and is supported by the Montana High Divide Trails Partnership.



BIG SNOWIES

Three out of five alternatives in the plan recommend 95,299 acres of the Big Snowy Mountains for Wilderness, including the entire Big Snowies Wilderness Study Area. We couldn't be happier.



Jesse Varnado

Jorge Ramirez

Nikki Yancey



UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

TIME TO SPEAK UP FOR THE WILD HEART OF MONTANA



*Above:
Musselshell
breaks*

The wild heart of Montana lies east of Lewistown, where the Musselshell River sweeps north to meet the Missouri, etching oxbow bends and craggy river breaks deep into the wide-open prairie. Distant mountain ranges are dwarfed by the vastness of this wide-open country where roads are few, people are fewer, and wildlife and solitude reign.

This is Musselshell breaks country.

These enormous tracts of public land, managed by the Bureau of Land Management's Lewistown Field Office, comprise one of North America's last remaining intact large-scale Great Plains ecosystems. Truthfully, Montana has what most western states lost long ago: hundreds of thousands of acres of unplowed and undeveloped prairie, stretching from the UL Bend to Arrow Creek and the Missouri River Breaks.

Right now, the BLM is in the process of deciding how these nearly 650,000 acres of wild public lands should be managed for the next several decades. The agency has already identified nearly 200,000 acres of its planning area as having wilderness characteristics, and now we're working to convince the BLM to manage these areas to preserve those wilderness qualities.

At the beginning of June, I journeyed to some of these awesomely remote places with a camera crew, two conservation professionals, and two students of environmental studies to capture the beauty of Musselshell breaks country on film. Andreea Massey, Gabriel Aponte, Katy Anderson, and Rob Beattie have all spent hundreds, if not thousands, of hours outside in Montana's prairies and rivers, researching the birds, fish, turtles, grasses, forbs, and flowers that thrive in Montana's wild grasslands. They shared their love and passion for this country in three short videos, which you can view now at wildmontana.org/musselshellcountry.

The wild future of Musselshell breaks country isn't guaranteed, though. We need you to tell the BLM how vital it is to manage these places for their wild character. The agency is now accepting public comments on its draft resource management plan.

You can learn more about this special place and how to comment at wildmontana.org/musselshellcountry.

You can submit your comments directly to the BLM by sending an email to Dan Brunkhorst, BLM project manager, at blm_mt_lewistown_rmp@blm.gov. You can also snail mail your comments to Dan at 920 NE Main St. Lewistown, MT 59457.

If you have any questions about the process, please contact me at abertram@wildmontana.org, or Mark Good, central Montana field director, at mgood@wildmontana.org.

—Aubrey Bertram, eastern Montana field director

A BIG WIN IN THE BITTERROOT



Last year, MWA teamed up with Earthjustice and built a coalition of so-called "defendant intervenors" to come to the aid of the Bitterroot National Forest after it was sued by off-road vehicle and mountain bike interest groups for its 2016 Travel Management Plan. The plan does a wonderful job of protecting the wilderness character of the Blue Joint and Sapphire Wilderness Study Areas as well as proposed additions to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

We're happy to announce that on June 29, U.S. District Judge Dana Christensen upheld the Bitterroot National Forest's travel plan.

Judge Christensen sided with the US Forest Service and the coalition of intervenors on every substantive issue, creating excellent legal precedent for future Forest Service planning processes. This ruling will encourage more agency officials to take necessary steps to close wild areas to motorized and mechanized uses and protect the wilderness character.

A big win for wild Montana!

—Zack Porter, former western Montana field director

SOLIDARITY IN THE SNOWCREST



In late June, MWA volunteers gathered in the Snowcrest Mountains. The unusually rainy spring produced lush wildflowers and greenery rarely seen so far into the summer, but the verdant scenery belied a surge of noxious weeds. Our crew set out to map and pull houndstongue, a particularly tenacious weed that is toxic to livestock and wildlife.

We spent two days on the Gilbert Trail on the flank of the Snowcrest Mountains, an area home to diverse wildlife and the headwaters of the Ruby River. From the spine of the Snowcrests, the Rubies, Gravelles, Centennials, Madisons, and Beaverheads line the horizon. Hardly any development comes into view.

But the upper Ruby is more than just a place for wildlife, solitude, and clean water. Some of Montana's oldest working ranches have relied on grazing allotments in the Snowcrest and surrounding public lands for generations. Public land grazing has allowed these ranching operations to survive, and in so doing, protected the open space and wildlife habitat in the valley bottoms.

Several years ago, ranchers and conservationists recognized that we all care about wilderness heritage, quiet landscapes, and an outdoor way of life, and that by working

together, we could support each other in preserving what we love about Montana. Since then, the group has supported private land conservation programs in the Farm Bill, opposed the removal of WSA protections, and worked towards shared long-term conservation goals in the Ruby Valley.

The weed project on the Gilbert Trail was a way for MWA to demonstrate our commitment to maintaining wilderness values in the Snowcrests and solidarity with our partners in stewarding the Ruby. Many thanks to our volunteers, whose time and energy fuel this important work and strengthen our voice for conservation.

—Emily Cleveland, southwest Montana field director

*MWA volunteers
after a successful
weed pull in the
Snowcrests*



David Stout



JOIN US IN CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF KEEPING IT WILD

2018 ANNUAL GATHERING SEPTEMBER 7-9

Shane Lalani Center for the Arts, 415 E. Lewis Street, Livingston

2018 is MWA's 60th anniversary, and you're invited to join us in celebrating six decades of protecting Montana's wild places with three days of hiking, workshops, and learning.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7



7 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Join us on the volunteer-led hike of your choice in the Hyalite-Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area and the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. There will be outings to suit all abilities, and hike leaders will fill you in about local landscapes and chapter activities as we go.

5 – 9 p.m.

Rendezvous at the Shane Lalani Center for a welcome address from **Governor Steve Bullock**, as well as Madison-Gallatin Chapter President Tom Ross and State Council President Mark Hanson. Afterwards, stick around for a screening of *Wild Resurrection: The Untold Story of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness*, a film celebrating the 40th anniversary of this irreplaceable Wilderness area.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

8:30 a.m. – noon

More volunteer-led hikes will leave from the Shane Lalani Center at 8:30. There will be offerings to suit all abilities. You can also participate in a GPS training course taught by MWA member Roger Jenkins or a wilderness skills course led by MWA staffer "Backcountry" Bob Ronan.



Noon – 5:30 p.m.

Lunch (please bring your own), followed by an address by MWA Executive Director Ben Gabriel and a presentation on the history of MWA by Senior Conservation Advisor John Gatchell. There will also be panel discussions on public land agency management and the economic power of public lands.

5:30 – 8 p.m.

Enjoy hors d'oeuvres by Homemade Kitchen and chat with chapter representatives before the presentation of awards and an address by **guest speaker Ed Norton Sr.**, a 40-year veteran of conservation who has been involved in The Wilderness Society, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Lands Foundation, and other organizations.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

8:30 a.m.

Head out on another hike or head to the Yellowstone Pioneer Lodge for the State Council meeting. All members are welcome to attend.

Tickets are required for all events. Tickets for the Saturday evening program are \$20, but tickets for all other hikes and activities are free.

Get your tickets and find more information at wildmontana.org/join-us/annual-gathering.

MEMBERS MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Thanks to the new members who joined Montana Wilderness Association from January 25 to August 6, 2018.

EASTERN WILDLANDS CHAPTER

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Adrianna Brown
Raymond Buchheit
Patrick Certain
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Ladd Coates
Carly Collins
Leonard Duberstein
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Lance Edward
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Ivy Merriot
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& Susan Miles
Ben Rigby
Annmarie Robinson
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Courtney Wantink
Kathryn Willcockson
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JOIN US IN CELEBRATING
**60 YEARS
OF KEEPING
IT WILD**

2018 ANNUAL GATHERING
SEPTEMBER 7-9
SHANE LALANI CENTER FOR THE ARTS
415 E. LEWIS ST., LIVINGSTON

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

**Celebrating 40 years of the
Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness**

Friday events are FREE and open to the public.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

**Celebrating 60 years of
Montana Wilderness Association**

Saturday program is open to the public.
\$20 ticket required.

**SEE THE FULL SCHEDULE
OF EVENTS ON PAGE 14**

Volunteers needed!

For more information or to volunteer,
contact Courtney Wantink at 406-443-7350 x111
or cwantink@wildmontana.org.

Learn more or get tickets at
wildmontana.org/join-us/annual-gathering

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