



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

# WILD MONTANA

Eric Heidle

SUMMER 2017

**FIGHTING FOR  
THE UPPER  
MISSOURI RIVER  
BREAKS**





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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The State Council is Montana Wilderness Association’s governing board. It serves MWA’s mission by assuming fiduciary responsibility for the association and ensuring the organization effectively serves its members and conducts the work of the association. Council members are outdoor enthusiasts who are committed to wilderness and wildlands in Montana and have gained skills and experience in governance by working and volunteering in their communities. Every year the need for new Council members is reviewed. Currently our Council is at full capacity, and new Council members are not being actively recruited for 2018. If you are interested in serving on the State Council in the future, please contact Daphne Herling at daphne.herling@business.umd.edu or 406-531-8347.



BIDDING BRIAN GOODBYE

In May, we said goodbye to Executive Director Brian Sybert, who left Montana Wilderness Association to become the executive director of Conservation Lands Foundation.

When Brian first arrived at MWA in 2010, the organization had 12 employees working in five offices around the state. Seven years later, MWA has 25 staff members in eight field offices. If you were to drive from one office to the next in a loop, you would cover more than 1,000 miles. Yet, during Brian’s tenure, we’ve all worked closely together. Collaborative decision-making has become the norm, and this teamwork has rendered some impressive results.

During Brian’s tenure, our staff, members, and volunteers worked to pass the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act, permanently protecting 275,000 acres of public lands, including 67,000 as Wilderness. We campaigned with the Blackfeet Nation and other partners to successfully remove the last 17 remaining oil and gas leases from the Badger-Two Medicine area. We launched a statewide trail stewardship program, built the largest pro-public lands movement in the West, and tripled the size of our network to 22,000 supporters.

Now, without Brian at the helm, teamwork has become even more important. New threats to our public lands are looming on the horizon. A few have already arrived here in Montana.

In late April, President Trump signed an executive order calling for a review of 27 national monuments, including Montana’s Upper Missouri River Breaks. The order framed these American treasures as “burdens” and “barriers,” failing to recognize that 77% of Montanans support their protection.

Our team wasted no time in galvanizing people around the state. We helped launch Hold Our Ground, a group of Montanans standing up for national monuments and other places that embody our heritage. The group quickly drew a national spotlight, generating stories in USA Today and on NPR. Three months and 12,000 public comments later, the Trump administration has changed its tune on the Missouri River Breaks. On June 27, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said he was “unlikely” to recommend changes to Montana’s most beloved monument. We’re now working to ensure Sec. Zinke stands by his word.

Looking ahead, we’re confident that Montanans will continue to speak up for our public lands, in no small part because MWA provides a rock-solid platform for making their voices heard. In the near future, we will have a new executive director, and that person will have big shoes to fill, but he or she can step confidently forward knowing that MWA is the strongest it’s been in the organization’s 59-year history.



Gabriel Furshong,  
interim executive  
director



Mark Hanson,  
council president

WILD  
MONTANA

SUMMER 2017

BUILDING A BULWARK  
FOR THE BREAKS

Montanans hold their ground on behalf of Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.



Eric Heidle

DISCOVER  
THE WILD

Another summer connecting people to the places that make Montana special

UPDATES FROM  
THE FIELD

The latest from MWA’s on-the-ground work around the state



# A BULWARK FOR THE BREAKS

**MWA LAUNCHES EFFORT TO PROTECT UPPER MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS NATIONAL MONUMENT AND THE LEGISLATION USED TO CREATE IT**

*By John Todd*

**O**n an uncharacteristically warm day in November 2001, I drove into Fort Benton to buy a beat-up, 16-foot canoe. Fort Benton is quiet that time of year, almost empty, as if in the beginning stages of hibernation. Later that day I would shove off from town's boat ramp headed 150 miles down the Missouri River and through one of Montana's most storied places.

Over the next seven days, wind battered us, and the warm weather abandoned us. By day we followed bighorn sheep on the canyon walls high above. By night we listened to the howl of coyotes echoing from those same walls under ink-black skies. By the end of our trip, my canoe was breaking through skim ice in the eddies. The experience has stayed fresh in my memory ever since.

Steeped in stories that go back thousands of years – stories told by Native people, Lewis and Clark, and homesteaders –

the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument has remained largely unchanged for more than 10,000 years and become an indelible part of Montana's outdoor heritage.

That's why MWA jumped into action after President Trump signed an executive order back in April instructing Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review dozens of monuments designated in the last 21 years with an eye towards possibly shrinking or revoking their monument status altogether. The Breaks was one of those monuments, even though 77% of Montanans support it and all other existing monuments, according to a 2017 Colorado College poll.

*continued*

*Above: LaBarge Rock and the White Cliffs in the the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument*



*John Lambing*

*entropyimages.com*



**REST ASSURED THAT MWA AND HOLD OUR GROUND WILL CONTINUE FIGHTING FOR THE MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS SHOULD THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ATTEMPT TO MODIFY THE MONUMENT.**



In early June, MWA helped launch Hold Our Ground, a campaign by a group of diverse Montanans aimed at protecting national monuments and other public lands that hold cultural, historical, and scientific value for the people of Montana and the United States.

Thanks to the quick action taken by MWA members and the work of Hold Our Ground, which included social media videos, television commercials, print ads, and even billboards, Sec. Zinke indicated in late June that he would recommend no modifications to the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

But there's still work to do. As of press time, Sec. Zinke had not yet formalized his recommendations on Upper Missouri River Breaks as he has with other monuments. The deadline for his recommendations on national monuments under review is August 24, 2017.

**You only need to scan the petroglyphs** or walk among the tipi rings to realize people, including Lewis and Clark, have been passing through the Breaks for thousands of years. Every year, thousands of people float the river for the opportunity to lay their heads in the same spots where these two explorers did the same back in 1805. Many more come to peer into aging homesteads perched above the river and imagine the hardship and grit that came with making a living in a place so often inhospitable.

*Horse petroglyph along Eagle Creek*



Shortly before I arrived in Fort Benton in 2001, Montanans had completed an 18-month process that included comment periods and statewide public meetings held by the Secretary of the Interior, the governor, and the Bureau of Land Management. As a result of those comments and meetings, President Clinton designated the area in 2001 as the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

Six months after the monument was designated, Montana Governor Judy Martz assembled a task force to review the designation. The task force gathered 1,700 comments from Montanans. A total of 1,100 of those who commented expressed support for the monument as it was designated. Zinke might have had those 1,100 comments in mind when, as a state legislator in 2011, he crossed the aisle and voted against a joint resolution opposing any new national monuments.

Since the designation, there have been many attempts to weaken the Antiquities Act, the legislation that gives U.S. presidents authority to create national monuments. Montana Senator Steve Daines has been a regular source of many of these attempts, having sponsored legislation that would gut the Antiquities Act by taking designation authority away from the president.

In their remarks at the executive order signing, President Trump and Sec. Zinke clearly signaled they wanted to undo the Antiquities Act, a central pillar of Theodore Roosevelt's conservation legacy. Sixteen presidents – eight Democrats and eight Republicans – have used the Antiquities Act to designate 157 national monuments.

Rest assured that MWA and Hold Our Ground will continue fighting for the Missouri River Breaks should the federal government attempt to modify it. We will also broaden that fight to hold Sen. Daines and Sec. Zinke accountable if they continue trying to weaken the Antiquities Act. For more on our Antiquities Act campaign and to learn how you can help, be sure to log onto **holdourground.org** and visit our Wild Word blog at **wildmontana.org**.

A friend who grew up near Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument reminded me that our national monuments tell the story of who we are and where we come from. Let's make sure that our story lives on and we protect the places that tell it.

*John Todd is MWA's conservation director*

entropyimages.com

*Hole in the Wall, Upper Missouri River Breaks*



# DISCOVERING THE WILD WITH MWA

Every year, Montana Wilderness Association provides a smorgasbord of opportunities for people to connect with the places that make this state so special, many of which we're working to protect. You can join a Wilderness Walk, lend a hand on a trail project, or venture out on your own with a trail suggestion from our online trail guide, Hike Wild Montana.

Here are some snapshots from a few of the 100 day hikes, overnight trips, and trail building and maintenance projects we're offering this summer.

There are still plenty of outings left this year. View the entire Wilderness Walks schedule and sign up for a trip now at [wildmontana.org/walks](http://wildmontana.org/walks). And don't forget to also visit our online trail guide at [hikewildmontana.org](http://hikewildmontana.org), where you'll find for more than 300 trail descriptions.

*Bitterroot flower in the Hall Creek area of Badger-Two Medicine*



Casey Perkins

*Along the Sun River in Hannan Gulch*

*MWA Trail Steward Mike Skladanowski and his crew rerouting a section of the Continental Divide Trail near Lincoln from a road to a single-track*



Gene Sontz



## DISCOVERING THE WILD WITH MWA

*Right: On the way up  
Windy Peak in the  
Highwood Mountains*

*Below: Building a new  
section of the Continental  
Divide Trail on Granite  
Butte near Lincoln*



*Rogger Peffer*



*Lee Boman*

*Near the Continental Divide  
on Black Mountain*



*Casey Perkins*

*Grizzly track in  
the Hall Creek  
area of the  
Badger-Two  
Medicine*



*Matt Bowser*



*Randy Gray*

*Gathering at Monument Peak  
Lookout in the Little Belts*



# UPDATES FROM THE FIELD



John Ruth



*Above: Ruby Valley and the Snowcrest Mountains*

## RANCHERS AND CONSERVATIONISTS JOIN FORCES ON BEHALF OF THE SNOWCREST

Southwest Montana is home to some of our state's wildest landscapes, including the Snowcrests, Italian Peaks, and Lima Peaks. At the doorsteps of these unprotected ranges are some of Montana's oldest working ranchlands, stewarded by Montanans deeply connected to the land. These wild ranges and working ranchlands form a symbiotic relationship.

Wildlife forage in the high backcountry during summers and move to the private valley bottoms to winter. Our headwaters begin in the high country, flowing to the valley bottoms to provide clean water for our blue ribbon trout streams. The connection runs deeper than water and wildlife, though. The men and women who steward the valley bottoms rely on historic permits for grazing on public lands.

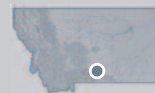
This connection between the backcountry and front country have inspired a unique relationship between landowners and conservationists in the Ruby Valley, at the doorstep of the Snowcrest Range. This relationship has taken shape as the Ruby Valley Strategic Alliance (RVSA), of which MWA is a proud partner. Over the last year, MWA and other RVSA partners have arrived at a solid understanding of each other's concerns and priorities as we determine ways we can move forward as partners.

The first step in moving forward together was establishing the group's shared values. Here is an abbreviated version of those values:

- Building lasting relationships among partners
- Preserving our wilderness heritage and quiet landscapes.
- Maintaining our working landscapes
- Maintaining and enhancing our outdoor way of life in the greater Ruby landscape for future generations
- Maintaining and enhancing high-quality recreation experiences

Be sure to check [wildmontana.org](http://wildmontana.org) for updates on this budding collaborative. For more information, contact me at [scathey@wildmontana.org](mailto:scathey@wildmontana.org).

— Sally Cathey, southwest Montana field director



## GOING TO BAT FOR WILD PLACES IN THE CUSTER GALLATIN

In July, the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CGNF) released its wilderness inventory, the first of four steps in its wilderness evaluation process and an important stage in its forest plan revision. The evaluation process will help determine which lands the CGNF will recommend as Wilderness.

Here are a few comments MWA offered the Forest Service:

- Include the Big Pryor Plateau and the entire Bear Creek watershed in the wilderness inventory.
- Include qualifying lands within checker-boarded areas.
- Do not exclude snout sites, the historic Windy Pass Cabin, and communication sites from the inventory.

The Forest Service is accepting comments from the public until August 12.

If you would like to weigh in on the inventory and need some help finding your way through the process, or if you'd like to learn about other ways you can help ensure the Forest Service recommends wild places in the CGNF as Wilderness, please contact me at [scathey@wildmontana.org](mailto:scathey@wildmontana.org).

— Sally Cathey, southwest Montana field director



## MEDIA TURNS SPOTLIGHT ON KOOTENAI FOREST STAKEHOLDERS COALITION

On a sunny June morning in Kalispell, four reporters and I loaded into a plane headed to Libby and the Kootenai National Forest. With the Whitefish Range behind us, we were soon looking out at the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness on one side of the plane and Lake Koocanusa on the other. We viewed the rolling hills of the Yaak and the sharp peaks of the Scotchman Peaks in the distance and admired the landscape as we landed in Libby to talk with locals about the land and communities of Lincoln County.

Our goal was to share how the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition (KFSC), of which MWA is a member, was having a positive impact on the community while meeting challenges for public lands management. On the ground in Libby was Mark Peck, Lincoln county commissioner; Robyn King, chair of KFSC and executive director of the Yaak Valley Forest Council; and Kristin Smith, board member of Kootenai River Development Council and co-owner of Cabinet Mountain Brewing. These three explained how the KFSC is actively changing the false narratives of the past, which pitted wilderness against forest management. Instead, the group is working together to support more wilderness, create a sustainable timber industry in the area, and expand more recreational opportunities.

We all agreed that if there isn't room for all of us on the 2.2 million acre public lands of the Kootenai National Forest, then we're doing something wrong.

The KFSC remains committed to moving our agreement forward in ways that includes timber management, motorized and non-motorized areas, and 180,000 acres of designated Wilderness for the Yaak, Scotchman Peaks and Cabinet Mountains. Our morning in June

proved eye-opening for the media as people in Libby shared positive stories of change and unity for a struggling, beautiful, and mysterious part of our state.

Interested in learning more? Visit [kootenaifuture.org](http://kootenaifuture.org) or participate in one of our wilderness walks or stewardship opportunities by first checking out [wildmontana.org/discover-the-wild](http://wildmontana.org/discover-the-wild).

If you have any questions, please contact me at [arobinson@wildmontana.org](mailto:arobinson@wildmontana.org)

— Amy Robinson, northwest Montana field director

*Rock Lake, Cabinet Mountains Wilderness*



Steven Gram



WILDFEST 2017  
SEPTEMBER 8-9  
FORT MISSOULA  
MISSOULA, MONTANA

Join us for a celebration of Montana's wild places with live music, hikes, food, and lots of family activities.



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 Northern Rockies Heritage Hall, Fort Missoula

12 – 5 p.m. Swap adventure stories, take a virtual tour of Missoula's backyard wildlands, and learn about our groundbreaking work to protect the Bitterroot, Blackfoot, and Great Burn. Also learn about how we've helped create a nationwide groundswell in support of our public lands and how you can help in the fight.

5 – 9 p.m. For a \$35 entrance fee, enjoy appetizers and locally crafted beer, wine, cider, and non-alcoholic drinks. Listen to renowned Montana author Pete Fromm as he delivers hilarious and poignant commentary on wilderness, parenting, and growing up wild. Finally, bid on silent and live auction packages, including one-on-one photography lessons, a weekend stay at Double Arrow Lodge, and locally sourced and crafted furniture.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 Bella Vista Pavilion, Fort Missoula

**Morning** Go on a hike or tour, meeting at Fort Missoula Regional Park or at locations near trailheads. Reservations are required at [wildmontana.org/wildfest](http://wildmontana.org/wildfest).

**Afternoon** Learn backcountry first aid, build an alcohol stove, get adventure tips, learn how to fly fish, see a pack string, watch raptors soar, dissect owl pellets, write and draw, brush-up on the latest gear, and more. Food trucks will be on site with tasty options catering to multiple dietary needs.

**Evening** Kick back with local food and brews while enjoying delta blues from **Holy Smokes & the Godforsaken Rollers**, funk grooves from Missoula's own **Shakewell**, and regional bluegrass stars **Kuinka**.

Special Room Rates

Stay at the downtown Missoula Holiday Inn with a special rate of \$132/night. Rooms will go fast! Call 406-721-8550.

Find more information, sign-up for guided activities, and reserve a ticket for the Friday evening reception all at [wildmontana.org/wildfest](http://wildmontana.org/wildfest).



Shakewell



Kuinka

MEMBERS MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Thanks to the new members who joined Montana Wilderness Association from January 21 to July 26, 2017.

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SUPPORT MWA

Inserted in this newsletter is a ticket you can enter to win a prize package offered in the 23rd annual Montana Shares Raffle.

By entering, you'll be supporting Montana Shares, a partnership of nonprofits that includes MWA and works together to improve quality of life in communities across Montana.

The member groups of Montana Shares address issues such as healthcare, sustainable living, conservation, the arts, families and children, and animal welfare. They work

together to bring each other's important messages to audiences across Montana.

Your donation will not only benefit MWA, but also help Montana Shares in its work to support MWA and other member groups.

To enter the raffle, mail the enclosed ticket, along with your donation in any amount to:  
Montana Shares, P.O. Box 883, Helena, MT 59624

THANK YOU!



MWA thanks these sponsors of WildFest 2017.





# WILDFEST 2017

**SEPTEMBER 8-9  
FORT MISSOULA  
MISSOULA, MONTANA**

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of Montana's wild places with  
live music, hikes, food, and  
lots of family activities.**



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