



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

# WILD MONTANA

WINTER 2019



# RALLYING FOR OUR WAY OF LIFE

Eliza Wiley



# 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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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### THIS OLD GAVEL



When I became MWA's new president at the beginning of 2019, I was handed an old, weathered gavel. It is heavy, handmade, and comfortable to hold. Yes, I thought, this feels good, and it has significance. Its well-worn handle of smooth bark speaks of past MWA presidents who held it. It also speaks of an illustrious history filled with landscapes, people, and heroic persistence.

I come to MWA with something of a motley background. I played clarinet in the Butte City Band while in high school, believing I was destined for a jazz band life (reality checked in soon after I graduated). I clerked at the local Safeway during my college years, and later taught at Seeley Lake Elementary.

For a few years, I owned my own local newspaper, aptly called the Backwoods Press. I owned and helped manage a successful construction business for almost 20 years and ultimately retired after 15 years owning and managing Rovero's – an all-in-one Ace Hardware store, Conoco gas station, and fresh deli and pizza stop – in Seeley Lake. Through it all, Montana's wildlife and clear waters have fed my spirit and given me the energy and reason to keep moving forward.

I think it's my little-bit-of-everything history, and my role as a mother and grandmother, that has prepared me for this legacy work I'll be doing as MWA's president.



To me, this old gavel reflects the connection to wild places we hold. It also reflects our organizational history and the promise of the legacy we bestow to future generations. I see embedded in its old wooden fibers Montana's prairies, mountains, forests, and its people. I also see people like you, our members, who share a spirit fed by our wildlife, clear waters, and majestic mountains and prairies.

MWA remains the same strong grassroots advocate for wildlands as when this gavel was first used, but we have grown with the times and changed with our evolving world.

That evolution showed in January when we organized the Rally for Public Lands, which drew some 2,000 of you from across the state to hear Governor Bullock and Senator Tester deliver thunderous speeches celebrating our public lands. It showed again in January, when the Forest Service formally recommended nearly 80,000 acres of Wilderness for the northern Whitefish Range, something we achieved by working collaboratively with our partners in the Whitefish Range Partnership. And it showed at the end of last year in our defeat of three bills that would have rolled back protection on more than 800,000 acres of our wildest public lands.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can over the next few years and to connecting through our love of wild public lands. It's that connection and love, after all, that fuels this organization and glues us as a community of public land champions.

Thank you, as always, for keeping it wild.

– Addrien Marx, MWA president

## WINTER 2019 WILD MONTANA

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Montanans gathered from around the state in the Capitol to celebrate and stand up for public lands

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Anti-WSA bills defeated, and investing in our outdoor heritage



# 2,000 STRONG FOR PUBLIC LANDS

THE RALLY FOR PUBLIC LANDS SETS THE STAGE FOR THE 2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Eliza Wiley



Mary Hollow, Prickly Pear Land Trust, and Lt. Gov. Mike Cooney



Anson Nygaard

*"Montana's a special place. It's because of our public lands. Let's keep them in our hands."*

— Senator Jon Tester

**O**n January 11, some 2,000 Montanans gathered at the State Capitol in Helena for the Rally for Public Lands.

Hikers, backpackers, campers, hunters, anglers, motorized users, mountain bikers, skiers, climbers, photographers, birdwatchers, and other public land users came from as far as Miles City, Sanders County, and the Hi-Line, filling the floor, the upper levels, and the balconies of the Capitol. We came to celebrate the outdoor way of life that defines our state and to make it clear to decision-makers that Montanans will not allow special interests to seize and exploit our public lands for private gain.

We also came to make it clear that access to public lands is not a privilege reserved for the wealthy or well-connected but a fundamental part of what it means to be a Montanan.



Anson Nygaard

*"An attack on public lands anywhere is an attack on public lands everywhere."*

—Governor Steve Bullock

With the crowd gathered expectantly, emcee Mary Hollow, executive director of Helena's Prickly Pear Land Trust, fired up the crowd with a call-and-response chant.

"Keep public lands..." she began. "In public hands!" the crowd shouted back.

"Today," Hollow continued, "we celebrate our public lands, and I want you to make it loud and clear so that every legislator, every lobbyist, and everybody else in this building knows exactly what our priorities are!"

Hollow proceeded to introduce a surprise guest from Big Sandy via Washington D.C. Senator Jon Tester, one of Montana's public lands champions, electrified the crowd with a speech calling on Congress to reauthorize the overwhelmingly popular Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). He led a chant of "L-W-C-F", the raucous crowd sending a clear message to his senatorial colleagues that Montanans wholeheartedly support this keystone conservation program.

Ryan Busse, vice president of sales at Kimber Manufacturing, had the unenviable task of following Tester.

With his son Badge (named after the Badger-Two Medicine) at his side, Busse rose to the occasion, calling on the legislature to protect Habitat Montana, a "visionary program" that acquires land and establishes conservation easements to protect wildlife habitat and public land access.

The importance of public access to public land was reinforced by the next speaker. Co-owner of Dropstone Outfitting, Maggie Carr leads pack trips into the Rocky Mountain Front and Bob Marshall Wilderness from her home base in Choteau.

Public lands, Carr said, allow small business like hers to flourish, directly stimulating the economy and providing some of the 71,000 jobs that are so central to Montana's \$7 billion outdoor recreation economy.

*continued*

Anson Nygaard



**“Public lands allow small businesses like mine to flourish.”**

– Maggie Carr, Dropstone Outfitting

Anson Nygaard



**“What more can anyone ask for, than this incredible treasure of public lands that we have?”**

–Dr. Shane Doyle

After Carr, Dr. Shane Doyle stepped to the podium, where he opened with a Northern Cheyenne song that he dedicated to the crowd, whom he called “true, high-minded, big-hearted human beings who aren’t afraid to say what’s right.” Dr. Doyle, an enrolled member of the Apsaalooké (Crow) Nation, told the story of Chief Plenty Coups, an Apsaalooké chief who, deep in the Crazy Mountains, experienced a vision that left a profound impact on the history of Montana. Dr. Doyle celebrated the fact that today, he too can go to the Craziest with his wife and children.

“What more can you ask for,” he asked the crowd, “What more can anyone ask for, than this incredible treasure of public lands that we have?”

As he did in 2015 and again in 2017, Governor Steve Bullock closed the rally with a thunderous speech that called on the Montana legislature and Congress to properly fund the public land infrastructure that’s so central to our Montana way of life.

“We cannot and must not leave to our kids and grandkids anything less than the unrivaled outdoor experience and heritage that our parents and grandparents worked so hard to preserve for us,” he declared, setting the stage for the legislature to take meaningful action.

An example of real legislative progress would be passing a bill like SB24, which would better fund our state

parks and fishing access sites and create a new made-in-Montana trails fund for badly overdue trail construction and maintenance. (At press time, SB24 was headed for a vote on the Senate floor.)

Bullock also addressed legislation that Senator Steve Daines and Congressman Greg Gianforte introduced last year stripping protection from over 800,000 acres of our wildest public lands, legislation he said “cut the public out of decisions over our wilderness study areas.” We’ve so far defeated these bills, at least for the time being, but that anti-democratic spirit lives on in

Eliza Wiley



**“Nowhere else on this globe do the people own such a wide swath of true natural assets.”**

–Ryan Busse, Kimber Manufacturing

Anson Nygaard

bills like Rep. Kerry White’s HB207, which could give counties the power to declare new roads on federal lands and remove the public from having a say on public land management.

Bullock concluded his speech by addressing the big picture: the pattern of attacks on public land across the country by the current Presidential administration. “An attack on public lands anywhere is an attack on public lands everywhere,” he added. “It flies in the face of who we are as Montanans and who we are as Americans.”

Along with the 2,000 Montanans who gathered in the capitol, we’re committed to fighting for our public lands each and every day this legislative session. We’ll do that by beating back bad bills like HB161, Rep. Brad Tschida’s bill to forbid Fish, Wildlife and Parks from using social science and public comment to inform wildlife management. Just before going to press, we were able to defeat White’s aforementioned HB207.

But defeating bad bills isn’t enough: we want to build on the incredible enthusiasm that Montanans have for our public lands to enact proactive legislation that ensures, as Governor Bullock said, that our kids can have the same experiences on public lands that we do today. That’s why we’re advocating for bills like SB24, which would provide sustainable funding for our public land infrastructure in a way that would be affordable for Montana families.

We know that the public lands and outdoor experiences we enjoy are the result of the decisions and investments made by past generations. We’ll be working as hard as we can during the legislative session and beyond to do the same for the next generation.

– Kayje Booker, policy and advocacy director



# BIG WIN IN THE WHITEFISH RANGE

## THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE EMBRACES THE WHITEFISH RANGE PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL IN ITS FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST PLAN.

Take a hike in the northern Whitefish Range, and you'd think you were in a designated wilderness area. You could come across grizzly, lynx, or even wolverine tracks before scaling a peak where everything you see below is intact, remote, silent.

*We're thankful for the support of our partners, and members like you, who made this success possible.*

Thanks to the work we accomplished through the Whitefish Range Partnership (WRP), the Forest Service now recommends that Congress permanently protect nearly 80,000 acres in the northern Whitefish Range as Wilderness.

MWA has been advocating for Wilderness in the Whitefish Range since the 1960s. With that goal in mind, in 2012 we were a founding member of the WRP, where we held a seat at the table alongside loggers, mountain bikers, snowmobilers, equestrians, local business owners, and fellow conservationists.

*continued*



*The Tuchuck-Whale Recommended Wilderness in the northern Whitefish Range*

*The Whitefish Range is home to three wolf packs and is a key corridor for the most robust population of grizzly bears in the Lower 48.*



Steven Gnam

*Hiking on Nasukoin Mountain in the Whitefish Range*



Amy Robinson



*The Forest Service's Wilderness recommendation for the Whitefish Range will protect pristine watersheds and secure vital habitat for grizzly bears, lynx, and other wildlife.*

The WRP formed in preparation for the Flathead National Forest (FNF) management plan revision, which would dictate how all 2.4 million acres across the Forest will be managed for the next two decades. This revision process offered us the best opportunity for gaining protection of portions of the Whitefish Range that remain intact.

The early conversations were difficult, but eventually the group developed trust in one another, found resolution, and struck an agreement. As Frank Vitale, a horse packer from Columbia Falls, put it: "Everyone walked away from the table with more than they came with."

***"Everyone walked away from the table with more than they came with."***

—Frank Vitale

The agreement was a set of recommendations submitted to the Forest Service, with the approving signature of every party in the group. The WRP proposal recommended timber harvest in suitable areas, expanded opportunities for mountain biking and snowmobiling, and about 80,000 acres of Wilderness in roadless areas in the northern part of the range. The WRP stayed true to their recommendations for seven years, faithfully advocating at every step in the forest planning process.



Dee Linnell Blank

*Fairy slippers in the Whitefish Range*

At the end of January, the agency released its final management plan for the Flathead National Forest. The new management plan largely reflects the WRP's recommendation. Considering zero acres in the Whitefish Range were recommended Wilderness in the previous version of the plan, we can certainly say 'we walked away with more than we came with.' We're thankful for the support of our partners, and members like you, who made this success possible. It's time for a big pat on the back.

— Grete Gansauer, northwest Montana field director

## REASON TO CELEBRATE AS ANTI-WSA BILLS BITE THE DUST

At the end of 2017, Senator Steve Daines introduced a bill to eliminate the Big Snowies, Middle Fork Judith, West Pioneers, and Sapphires Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), as well as half of the Blue Joint WSA. The bill threatened the biggest rollback of protected public land in Montana history. A few months later, the threat nearly doubled in size as Congressman Greg Gianforte introduced a bill mirroring Daines' and another bill eliminating an additional 24 WSAs.

All told, these three bills would have stripped protection from more than 800,000 acres of Montana's wildest public lands, lands we depend on for clean water, healthy fish and wildlife populations, and much of our \$7 billion outdoor recreation economy.

We're proud to announce that these bills died at the end of 2018, thanks to thousands of Montanans who made phone calls to Daines' and Gianforte's offices, submitted op-eds and letters-to-the-editor, attended county commission meetings, and signed an open letter to our congressional delegation calling for a much different approach to resolving our WSAs than the one Daines and Gianforte took. Governor Steve Bullock underscored that request with his

own letter to the junior senator and congressman, saying he was "particularly troubled by the lack of public participation." Indeed, neither Daines nor Gianforte offered the public an opportunity to weigh in on the fate of our WSAs before introducing their legislation, and refused to meet openly with members of the public to get feedback on their bills after they were introduced.

Montanans' displeasure with Daines' and Gianforte's bill became undeniable in May 2018, when the University of Montana released its bipartisan 2018 Public Land Survey, which revealed that 81 percent of Montanans opposed the legislation and a scant 11 percent supported it.

Gianforte's two WSAs bill received a hearing last summer in the House Natural Resources Committee, but that's as far as his bills went, while Daines' bill didn't go any farther than a February hearing in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Of course, Daines and Gianforte could reintroduce those bills, but we'll be ready, and confident that we can fend off those threats as well.

— *Aubrey Bertram, eastern Montana field director*



One of our volunteer trail crews, at the summit of Moose Peak in the Cabinet Mountains

Matt Bowser

## INVESTING IN OUR OUTDOOR HERITAGE

Trails are the arteries that connect us to public lands, and MWA is playing an increasingly large role in leading the maintenance of these vital trails across Montana. In response to the high demand for trail stewardship work, our volunteer trail stewardship program has expanded its scope to incorporate work in all parts of the state. Subsequently, this year we'll be tackling trail stewardship projects on six of the seven national forests in Montana and in one state park.

As our efforts to improve our trails continue to expand, we're increasingly engaging in off-trail efforts that raise awareness about the backlog of maintenance facing our public land trail infrastructure. We're also actively involved in advocating for solutions to ensure that our trail infrastructure is adequately funded for the long term.

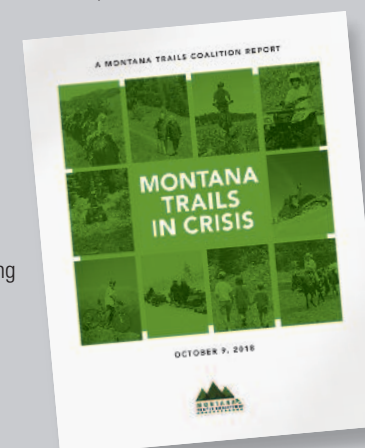
To that end, MWA is a pivotal member of the Montana Trails Coalition (MTC), comprised of a broad spectrum of recreation interests, whose vision is to work collaboratively to advocate for sustainable trails funding and to support our public land management agencies. In 2018, MTC produced *Montana Trails in Crisis*, a report that details how funding for our trails is lagging far behind the growing demand, a critical shortfall that's threatening our access to public lands.

Since 1980, Congress has cut Forest Service trail funding by 32 percent, leading to the massive \$296 million maintenance backlog we have today. Ironically, even while our trail funding has stagnated, Montana continues to grow and attract new residents and visitors who are drawn here by our incredible access to public lands.

Stagnating funding amidst rising trail use isn't a problem that will fix itself. It's time for Montanans to take matters into our own hands and create a fiscally responsible state-level program to better fund trail work on our public lands. SB24, a broadly supported bill that would increase the state parks fee portion of the light vehicle registration tax from \$6 to \$9, would better position communities across Montana to meet rising recreation demand and assist Forest Service trail crews in reducing the mountainous backlog in deferred maintenance on trails.

During the 2019 legislative session, we're committed to advocating for legislation like SB24, to ensure our public land trails receive the funding they need to stay open, accessible, and well-maintained for all Montanans.

— *Matt Bowser, stewardship director*



Read the report:  
<https://bit.ly/2Sk0ZZd>



Big Snowies WSA, safe for now

Zack Porter

## VOLUNTEERS HONORED AT 2ND ANNUAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER

In December, MWA honored the winners of the 2018 Brass Lantern Awards, as well as the Trail Stewardship Volunteer of the Year, at our 2nd Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, held at the Kleffner Ranch in East Helena.

The Brass Lantern Awards are presented for "leadership and taking action that promotes wilderness, quiet trails, and responsible management by managing agencies." The awards went to:



Congratulations to our Ravalli County Rockstars for receiving a Brass Lantern Award

**Alan Weltzien, Jack Kirkley, and Pete Bengeyfield** of Dillon, for their work advocating for the importance of public input and transparency in potential anti-wilderness study area (WSA) legislation, particularly in Beaverhead County

**Marilyn Wolf, Micki Long, Pat Tucker, Kathy Hundley, Taylor Orr, and Butch Waddill** of Ravalli County (AKA the Ravalli County Rockstars) for their tireless work

making calls, sending letters, attending hearings, writing op-eds, and appearing on billboards in defense of our WSAs

**Dave Byerly** of Lewistown, for his commitment to leading Wilderness Walks, writing public comments, speaking publicly, and being one of the primary spokespeople for Our Land, Our Legacy

**Kari Gunderson** of Condon, for her extraordinary leadership and grassroots organizing in defense of wilderness in the Swan Valley, as well as her oversight of local timber projects and her "re-wilding" efforts

**Dave Morey** of Helena, for his invaluable trail stewardship work and his continued willingness to tackle any project, no matter how unglamorous, in support of MWA's work

**Dean Center** of Bozeman, for his enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership and guidance of the Madison Gallatin Chapter's Adopt-a-Trail and Wilderness Steward programs

**Karen Aspevig Stevenson** of Miles City, for leading Wilderness Walks in the Terry Badlands and for her dignified and powerful defense of the Terry Badlands WSA while serving as a spokesperson for Our Land, Our Legacy.

The winners of the Trail Stewardship Volunteer of the Year award went to **Mark and Karen Sheets** of Thompson Falls. Mark and Karen have volunteered with our volunteer trail crew well over a dozen times, and have been unflagging advocates for public land, wilderness, and access in northwest Montana.

**Congratulations to all 2018 award winners. Your contributions are an invaluable part of MWA's work, and we truly couldn't do it without you.**

## CALL FOR BOARD OF DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS

The Board of Directors serves Montana Wilderness Association's mission by assuming fiduciary responsibility for the association and ensuring the organization effectively serves its members and conducts the work of the association.

Board members are outdoor enthusiasts who are committed to wilderness and wildlands protection in Montana and have gained skills and experience in governance by working and volunteering in their communities.

If you are interested in serving on our board of directors, please contact Laura Parr at [lparr@wildmontana.org](mailto:lparr@wildmontana.org) or 406-443-7350 ext. 110.

## MEMBERS MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Thanks to the new members who joined Montana Wilderness Association from November 6, 2018 to February 17, 2019.

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## SAVE THE DATE

Plan on joining us in Columbia Falls for this year's WildFest, September 6-7. For more information, contact Courtney Wantink at [cwantink@wildmontana.org](mailto:cwantink@wildmontana.org).





2019

# SPRING INTO SUMMER

**COMING SOON TO A  
TOWN NEAR YOU!**

**Join our members, volunteers, partners,  
and supporters to celebrate the arrival of  
summer learn about our upcoming  
(and free!) Wilderness Walks season.**

Spring Into Summer is a great chance  
to learn more about MWA's programs, enjoy  
a drink and a snack, and meet MWA staff  
and fellow wilderness supporters.

We'll be announcing every event on  
[wildmontana.org](http://wildmontana.org), by email, and on  
social media, so keep your eyes peeled!

For more information, please contact  
Mike Rooney at [mrooney@wildmontana.org](mailto:mrooney@wildmontana.org)  
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