

the Montana Sierran

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*Hiker overlooking the Blue Joint Wilderness Study Area
Bitterroot National Forest*
Photo — George Wuertbner



WILDLANDS

The Congressional Assault on Our Wilderness Heritage

by Montana Chapter Staff and Volunteers

WILDERNESS AND OTHER WILDLANDS have been under attack with the current administration, and we are keeping tabs on several proposed bills that threaten some of the most valuable areas in our state. Bills introduced by Senator Daines (S. 2206) and Representative Gianforte (H.R. 5148 and H.R. 5149), are of particular concern, as they would release almost 700,000 acres of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in Montana to the clutches of industry and special interest groups.

If these bills pass, five of the seven WSAs on 449,500 acres of National Forest lands in Montana (the Big Snowies, Middle Fork Judith, West Pioneers, Sapphire, and Blue Joint), and 24 additional WSAs covering 240,000 acres on Bureau of Land Management lands (including several in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument), would be stripped of their protections.

Without WSA status these areas could be open to logging, mining, off-road vehicles, snowmobiling, and other incursions that would destroy the wild quality of these places, and the unique character of Montana. The bills propose, in effect, the largest reduction in protected public lands in Montana history.

You may have seen our call to action in March, when Rep. Gianforte tried to insert his bills (one of which mirrors Daines' bill) into the Omnibus Spending bill as riders. Fortunately, that effort failed, and the bills have not moved since March 13, when they were referred to the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands. Thank you to all who made calls to oppose

the WSA release bills and protect wilderness lands! Despite that setback to Gianforte, the bills are still alive and the threat remains. We will stay vigilant and ask you all to step up again when the time comes to oppose these bills and defend our wildlands.

Senator Daines' bill hasn't moved since February 7. Around that same time, a few public meetings were held after citizens objected to their county commissioners' support of Daines' bill without public input. The inadequate public input – and failure of commissioners to change position in response to immense opposition at the belated meetings – remains a concern with these bills.

Why are these WSAs so important? WSAs are defined as “federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, and managed to preserve its natural conditions.” While they are not congressionally designated wilderness, they are managed to protect the wilderness characteristics they contain. This not only preserves the areas for potential “big W” Wilderness protection, it also serves to maintain critical wildlife habitat, preserve clean headwaters for fisheries and other benefits, and provide more wild country to visit and recreate in, here in Montana. They also may contain “ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value.”

In a great assessment of these WSAs, High Country News (Feb. 2, 2018) reported that these areas are ~ continued on page 2

A NOTE FROM THE CHAPTER DIRECTOR

Dear Readers,

As I settle into this still-new role as Chapter Director, I have been reflecting on the idea of abundance. When it comes to our natural world and our human communities, abundance matters. It matters how much wilderness we have protected, and how many wild places we can explore. It matters how many species of native wildlife inhabit the state, and the numbers within the populations. It matters how much clean and renewable energy is available and how much energy we use. It matters how many solid, well-paid jobs there are, and what those jobs are. Certainly, the old adage “quality not quantity” has merit. But with wildlife, wild lands, and clean energy, both quality *and* quantity are essential.

I was reminded of just how important and impactful abundance can be during a recent trip to Freezeout Lake Wildlife Management Area, where my family went to admire the masses of migrating birds.

In the mornings by the lake, the kids were bundled and wrapped in blankets, yet still cold. There were frequent visits to the car to warm up and snack as we waited, clamoring excitedly “this is it!” each time the calls of the Snow Geese from the fog over the lake grew louder and more frenzied, suggesting there may be a great lift-off. Sometimes we were rewarded; several times a mass of Snow Geese lifted out of the fog and spread out overhead like a great feathered veil. Each time, we stood with heads thrown back, laughing – laughing in awe and admiration and joy at the sheer abundance of life passing by, the great honking mass and the swish of wings.



Summer Nelson

humans are willing – or unwilling – to coexist with. Through the Forest Plan revision process, we seek to ensure forests are managed so that grizzly bears and other native species are abundant, along with their habitat and opportunities for connectivity. Efforts to move Northwestern Energy off fossil fuels and prepare to close the Colstrip coal-fired power plants reflect the reality that our state can produce an abundance of clean, renewable energy and support an abundance of people and communities, if we do it right. And, through our Outings program, we seek to foster connections to nature and one another, so we may experience the abundance in this community.

Thank you for all that each of you do to protect and enjoy the abundance that surrounds us.

Summer Nelson,
Montana Chapter Director ✧

~ continued from page 1 **Wilderness Study Areas**

wilder than half of all national parks in the Lower 48; and the Sapphires and West Pioneers WSAs have *more intact wildlife communities* than 95% of national parks in the Lower 48. The Big Snowies WSA description is particularly intriguing, as the *quietest and darkest* of the five National Forest WSAs on the chopping block.

Daines and Gianforte consider these precious lands “locked up” and feel they should be easily and conveniently accessible. This narrow view overlooks not only the value of quiet, remote, and wild recreation, but also the multitude of other benefits of Wilderness. The forward-thinking architects of the Wilderness Act did not set aside wilderness solely as organic theme parks for humans, but as spaces where humans are “visitors who do not remain.” As Roger J. Wendall famously noted, “*Wilderness should exist intact solely for its own sake; no human justification, rationale, or excuse is needed.*” Daines and Gianforte should heed these words.

Such wildlands are the soul of our sacred State, with the lands and wildlife they support defining Montana as the Last Best Place. We will continue to keep tabs on these and other threats to our wildlands.

Do you know and love these WSAs? If any of these areas are close to your heart, please get in touch. There is much our members and supporters can do to preserve our wilderness heritage — and together we can do so much more. ✧

Citizens stand in line waiting to speak at the Ravalli County Commissioners meeting in Hamilton, February 7, 2018



At least 250 people relocated to a cold building at Ravalli County fairgrounds, after the crowd exceeded the capacity of the commissioners meeting room in downtown Hamilton. About 75 citizens testified at the hearing on Daines’ bill, which would release five of Montana’s Wilderness Study Areas (including the Sapphire and Blue Joint WSAs in Ravalli County). Notice for an earlier September hearing was so inadequate it drew only one citizen, who opposed the bill. Despite strong opposition of 3-to-1, the commissioners reiterated their support for Daines’ bill. ✧

VETERAN'S VIEWPOINT: Zinke's Attack on the Antiquities Act

— by Michael Jarnevic

“What greater grief than the loss of one's native land.”

— Euripides

WHILE SHIVERING IN A FOXHOLE in western Kuwait; working in some very dangerous areas in Mali and Nigeria; or riding through IED country in Afghanistan, I was fortified by the thought that I would someday return home to my precious Montana and those wild and miraculous places it contains. Yet, that sustenance provided by our hallowed wildlands, which allowed me to endure austere conditions and combat adversity, is under a monstrous attack by the very people tasked with protecting those places.

Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke's proposals to shrivel multiple national monuments is nothing more than caving to the nefarious interests of the extractive resource industry – an industry that has been a consistent foe of wildlife and wildlands. Teddy Roosevelt, our towering icon of conservation, responded characteristically to the unbridled exploitation of our natural resources (by robber barons) with the institution of his “Square Deal,” that consisted of three parts: conservation of natural resources, control of corporations, and consumer protection.

Thus, in 1906, Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act to protect those lands deemed priceless and unique, represented most recently by the Bears Ears National Monument in southern Utah. Teddy famously said: “The ages have been at work on it and man can only mar it.”

Yes, Secretary Zinke, the Antiquities Act explicitly confers on presidents the authority to “declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the government of the United States to be national monuments.” At no point does it mention exploitation and ruination or what my good friend, Blackfeet troubadour Jack Gladstone calls, the “destruction of the ecological infrastructure.”

The dismemberment of Bears Ears exemplifies the wicked intent of the Trump administration – facilitated by Zinke – to eviscerate these sacred, protected lands for mining and drilling by as much as 85 percent. Scandalously, this reduction will almost exclusively benefit extractive resource industries that covet the monument's mineral assets. In particular, Energy Fuels Resources petitioned the Interior



Department to reduce the size of Bears Ears over concern that it is a threat to its uranium mill, which is adjacent to the monument. (Incidentally, uranium prices currently average between \$20 and \$25 per pound and must approach \$40 to \$50 to be profitable.)

Zinke, who gazes in the mirror and perceives himself as a latter-day Teddy Roosevelt, must understand that his behavior is the antithesis of the mind and soul of Teddy. If alive today, Roosevelt would be aghast, angry, and merciless in his condemnation of Zinke as a tarnished utensil of the Trump administration. He would not mince words. He would shout terms like “misconduct” and “sinister influence.” He would roar to the electorate that degrading our natural wonders was “unprincipled” and “vandalism.”

Is this the way Zinke wants to be remembered? Zinke as the “great desecrator” and the self-absorbed footman to the corporate giants? This is not a legacy I would covet, nor would I, as a veteran, want my name associated with this sacrilege perpetrated in the name of greed and industrial self-indulgence.

As a soldier who has dedicated three quarters of his life in service to the ideals, government, and people of the United States of America, I must hang my head and resist weeping for the fate of our irreplaceable landscape – and the deplorable actions of this administration. ✧

Michael Jarnevic is a retired U.S. Army sergeant major with 42 years of service in both the USMC (active and reserve) and Army Special Forces (active, guard, and reserve). He is a University of Montana graduate and former instructor, now writing from his home near Missoula.

Forest Plan Revisions: Protecting and Connecting Our Public Lands — by Claudia Narcisco

LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS ARE IMPORTANT to the protection of our wildlands, wildlife, and waters. Sierra Club has prioritized forest plan revisions in the region. Here are updates on the status of these plans:

- **FLATHEAD** National Forest released its Final Plan and Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy in mid-December. In March, we joined WildEarth Guardians and Western Watershed Project in objecting to inadequate protections for wildlands, wildlife and habitat, water resources, and grizzly bear recovery. Montana Chapter also objected to inadequate analysis for economics and restoration.

- **CUSTER GALLATIN** National Forest released its Proposed Action in January. Sierra Club developed comments that addressed population growth in the area, and climate change and its effect on vegetation and habitat. Our main focus is wildlife habitat and connectivity, and recommended wilderness. We also joined the Pryor Mountains Coali-

tion comments. Members are encouraged to attend the Forest Service public meetings. The Proposed Plan and Draft EIS and next opportunity to comment is expected in winter of 2018.

- **HELENA** and **LEWIS & CLARK** National Forests (HLC) Draft Plan and EIS are expected out soon. The HLC is critical to grizzly bear recovery and connectivity between the Northern Continental Divide and Greater Yellowstone ecosystems.

- **NEZ PERCE-CLEARWATER** National Forests re-initiated its forest plan revision after three years. In February 2018, the Forest held one-day collaborative sessions. The Chapter resubmitted our November 2014 comments and several members submitted additional comments. The Proposed Plan and Draft EIS are expected in November 2018.

- **LOLO** and **BITTERROOT** National Forests are expected to jointly initiate their forest plan revision sometime soon. ✧

EXPLORING WILD BISON RESTORATION ON MONTANA'S NORTHERN PLAINS

by Claudia Narcisco and Summer Nelson

TO MANY OF US, IT IS A FAMILIAR STORY: Wild bison were once the most abundant mammals on earth; an estimated 30 to 60 million bison spanned habitats across North America. But it is the image of massive herds of American bison roaming the vast grasslands of the Great Plains that resonates most. An icon of the west and integral to a functioning grassland ecosystem, in the late 1800's bison were brought to the brink of extinction. Today, they have recovered to some extent, but few wild bison remain.

Though designated the National Mammal, the number of Plains bison in conservation herds is barely 20,000 and is considered near-threatened. Genetically intact, continuously wild bison are far fewer: these are the bison in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. They are heavily managed by the State of Montana and cooperating federal agencies. The outdated Interagency Bison Management Plan (2000) sets a target population of 3,000 and restricts the herds' access to native habitat outside of Yellowstone National Park.

Each year hundreds of bison are hazed, quarantined, or killed if they leave the Park. Few things in Montana are more politically charged than Yellowstone bison management. For years, our friends at the Buffalo Field Campaign have been committed to protecting wild Yellowstone bison and their habitat, and along with Sierra Club and other advocates, have worked to expand areas where bison are accepted. While there are some tribal and conservation herds – there are still no wild public bison, year-round, in Montana.

Bison outside Yellowstone Park are designated a species in need of management, with Montana regulations exerting very strict controls. Due to the influence of the livestock industry, the Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is required to coordinate with the Department of Livestock. In 2009 FWP initiated required planning for re-establishing bison, but a plan has not yet been completed.

Still, the Montana Chapter is considering expanding our bison recovery efforts to include wild bison on Montana's northern Great Plains, which offers an expanse of public lands. Core to this area are the Charles M. Russell (CMR) and UL Bend National Wildlife Refuges managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages the adjoining Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.

The 1.1 million acre CMR Wildlife Refuge extends 125 miles along the Missouri River from Fort Peck Dam to the boundary of

the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. At its heart is the 56,000-acre UL Bend Wildlife Refuge, with 21,000 acres designated Wilderness. A conservation plan completed for the refuges emphasizes ecological processes, including wild bison restoration.

Two interesting projects are prompting our consideration of wild bison restoration on the northern plains and the myriad issues involved with restoring bison – from their legal status and treatment as livestock, to questions of principle regarding private “ownership” of conservation bison.

The first project is a proposal by the Gallatin Wildlife Association (GWA) to form a Montana Wild Bison Restoration Coalition. GWA reached out to the Chapter and others seeking support for the coalition. Goals of the coalition would be twofold: 1) disseminate science-based information on opportunities for wild bison in Montana; and 2) re-establish a genetically-adequate, publically owned wild bison herd on and near the CMR National Wildlife Refuge.

The other project is a proposal by the American Prairie Reserve (APR) to change grazing on allotments it holds on BLM lands from cattle to bison. The APR is at the nexus of large landscape recovery in Montana's northern plains. Through private lands, APR is piecing together over 3 million acres of existing public land, including the CMR, Upper Missouri River Breaks, and BLM lands. Bison restoration is central to their mission. APR has been growing a herd from sources such as Elk Island National Park in Canada, which are free of the brucellosis stigma plaguing Yellowstone bison. The Chapter plans to comment on the BLM-APR proposal.

Sierra Club is committed to Yellowstone bison recovery. In addition, the Chapter is considering participating in the Montana Wild Bison Restoration Coalition. The expanse and quality of habitat on Montana's northern plains requires us to assess opportunities for wild bison restoration in that area. We are reviewing our capacity to dedicate resources to this effort, and would like to hear from our members, about these important issues. Contact us if you want to help or provide feedback. ✧



photo ~ Celeste River

Speak for Wolves



Join the Sierra Club and other wildlife advocates for the 5th annual **SPEAK FOR WOLVES** gathering **July 26-28** at the Historic Union Pacific Dining Lodge in West Yellowstone, MT
www.speakforwolves.com

Newsletter design, layout, copy editor — Celeste River

The Closing of Colstrip and the Persuasion of Northwestern Energy

by Jonathan Matthews

THE SIERRA CLUB IN MONTANA has been working for the last eight years to retire the coal-fired power plants in Colstrip. Why? Because the 4 units of Colstrip comprise the second-largest coal-fired power plant west of the Mississippi, spewing 13-million metric tons of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere each year. This makes Colstrip a significant contributor of toxic particulate pollution to both air and groundwater and it makes it one of the largest single-point contributors to global warming in the world. On top of that, it is becoming increasingly clear that the carbon-based power plants cannot compete with cleaner sources of electricity.

The Colstrip plants have six owners, most of which are out-of-state utilities. The two Oregon owners are mandated by legislation to be off coal by 2030. Washington based Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is the largest Colstrip owner. With the most progressive service territory, PSE has adopted a debt-depreciation schedule so that their Colstrip power plants will be debt free by 2027, and Avista, another Washington-based utility, has proposed taking similar steps. This positions these primary owners to withdraw from Colstrip. PSE pledged transition funding of \$10,000,000 to be given to the Colstrip area and Avista is proposing an additional \$3,000,000. Both companies acknowledge that this is a starting point for transition assistance, not the final number. There is also money set aside for a cleanup fund. It is hard to estimate the cost of cleanup, but as long as the utilities exist, it will be possible to get cleanup funds. PSE alone has pledged to set aside \$300,000,000 to clean up the site, which will translate into jobs and a restored landscape that can support future growth

PSE agreed to study the repurposing of the power lines. We need to have clean-energy generation built in Colstrip that replaces its coal-fired plants. These lines are worth hundreds of millions of dollars in transmission capacity. Existing transmission is very valuable because it is hard to get new transmission easements approved and lines built. Utilities, even with eminent domain authority in Montana, still have great difficulty getting new lines approved.

The closing of Colstrip's coal plants will deliver positive value to Montanans, from reduced air pollution and landscape restoration to the potential for retooling an economy based on renewable energy production and transmission. We need Northwestern Energy (NWE) to follow the lead of the other owners (so far, they have not) because their resistance could harm the company and its clients, if they are the only owner of Colstrip coal power not moving forward with debt depreciation and other transition moves. NWE has a rate-case review coming next year, which may provide an opportunity to get it moving on transition. Avista is involved in a merger right now, which means that their business will be reviewed by the states' utility commissions, which should encourage rational planning for the closing of Colstrip's coal-fired plants.

The 2,311 residents of Colstrip have the highest average household income in Montana – over \$80,000 per year. Moving to clean

energy could distribute some of this revenue to small towns across Montana, as wind and solar generation can occur in many rural areas. We need to think about what the future looks like without Colstrip coal, and how to encourage the renewable energy industry to ensure that new jobs are well-paid union jobs that last, so all workers are truly supported in the inevitable transition to a clean, renewable energy system. Unfortunately, utilities are reluctant now to do clean-energy business with Montana because of punitive legislation from the last Montana state session, in which Republicans, Democrats, and labor leaders sought to penalize utilities for their reasonable plans for closing Colstrip's coal plants.

NWE is currently working on its 20-year integrated-resource plan. We want NWE to prepare for the end of the useful life of Colstrip coal, plan to replace this energy with clean energy, and provide transition and cleanup funds for Colstrip and the nearby Northern Cheyenne as well. Located just south of Colstrip, the Tribe will be affected by the closure.

NWE may state that they want Colstrip to keep working to 2040, but that is not realistic. We want to turn a big light on

~ continued on page 6



**SIERRA CLUB
MEMBERS
LEAD
EARTH DAY
EARLY
ACTION IN
HELENA**

by
Jonathan Matthews

THE MONTANA CHAPTER of the Sierra Club played a leading role in Helena's Earth Day Early Action gathering of more than 150 attendees at Carroll College on April 12. Chapter Chair Jonathan Matthews provided an opening talk on how the current heating of our planet threatens to flood coastal cities, and should motivate us to take immediate and aggressive actions for energy efficiency, clean energy development, and the removal of excess greenhouse gasses from the atmosphere. Other speakers included Carroll College environmental theologian Dr. Eric Meyer, and progressive Helena City Commissioner Rob Farris-Olsen.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Cathy Whitlock, a professor of Earth Sciences at Montana State University and a fellow of the Montana Institute on Ecosystems. She is the lead author of the 2017 Montana Climate Assessment and is internationally recognized for her research and leadership in the field of past climatic and environmental change. Dr. Whitlock provided extensive evidence about the harmful effects of climate change on Montana's ecosystems and economies. The briefest summation of this information is that the average temperature in Montana is now 3 degrees Fahrenheit higher than it was 40 years ago, and the growing season is 12 days longer, giving us warmer winters and hotter and dryer summers.

Considering our future, it was encouraging that more than half the attendees were students. We can hope that the evening inspired some of them to make the primary work of their lives the protection of our magnificent but imperiled world. ✦



Brandy at 50th anniversary of Wilderness Act, 2014

Stewart 'Brandy' Brandborg, a Force of Nature has transitioned. He was 93. His family said "he clung to life and all that he had to offer it, like a mountain goat clings to a cliffside ledge." Known for his role shepherding in the 1964 Wilderness Act, Brandy remained a lifelong warrior for wilderness and inspiration for grassroots activism.

Brandy was raised in the Bitterroot valley by parents who opened doors to the wild around him. His father, Bitterroot National Forest supervisor Guy Brandborg, was an early advocate for the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness. The young Brandy was influenced by such greats as Gifford Pinchot and Bob Marshall. Today, Brandy stands amongst America's great conservationists.

In 1960 Brandy became special assistant to Howard Zahniser, executive director of the Wilderness Society and author of the Wilderness Act. Brandy became "an inspirational spokesman for the wild country, promoting local activism and mentoring 'citizen leaders' who would champion the cause of wilderness conservation in every corner of the nation."

To the end, Brandy championed the value of grassroots organizing, and resisted the reliance of national organizations on large foundation funding, and their push for collaboratives. At a "Tribute to Stewart Brandborg and Wilderness" held in March 2018, Brandy left us with this message:

Your roles as leaders ... in maintaining the wild is essential. If I had one admonishment, I would say go forth and enlist citizens who care about the wilderness, who will spend time and energy in seeing that it's preserved in a wild state ... you are the emissaries.

His family asks, "Tributes to Brandy can be made by participating in the public process, engaging in the conversations, writing letters and making phone calls to our elected officials; fighting to protect the Wilderness Study Areas; and going into the wild."

~ continued from page 5 **Closing of Colstrip**

NWE's plans. In addition to clinging to the Colstrip coal-fired power plant while the co-owners of the plant prepare for its closing, NWE is also interested in building a gas-fired power plant in Montana. But building new carbon-based generation makes no sense, with the severe harms associated with the carbon loading of our atmosphere no longer possible to deny. Also, photo-voltaic solar, wind, and batteries are becoming so cost-effective that building a NWE gas plant doesn't make good economic sense.

NWE's portfolio is 60% renewable energy, based on hydro-electric generation inherited from Montana Power, but we do not want them to build any new fossil-fuel generation. We must help them to realize how environmentally harmful and economically unwise this would be. It is a dynamic, threatening time for utilities, due to so much renewable energy coming online and battery technology developing so rapidly. NWE needs to stop clinging to the past and to embrace the new energy future. The Montana Sierra Club will be working to ensure they make the right choices, and we need you all to join us. ✧

Wyoming's Extreme Grizzly Bear Trophy Hunting Proposal Threatens Recovery

by Bonnie Rice

"**HERE IN GREATER YELLOWSTONE** it's been a long winter,



but a few signs of spring are coming – including grizzly bears emerging from their dens. Unfortunately, grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone region are waking up to a different reality this year...."

To read this article and take action visit our website: <https://montana.sierraclub.org>

OUTINGS

STAY TUNED-IN & CONNECTED!

Watch for additional Outings at: <https://montana.sierraclub.org>

Join our **MeetUp Sierra Club Outings Group** at:

<https://www.meetup.com/Montana-SierraClub-Outings>

INTERESTED IN LEADING OUTINGS?

LEADERS MUST COMPLETE Sierra Club's *Outings Leader Training (OLT)* (offered FREE) and be current in CPR and basic Wilderness First Aid. The Chapter will help with costs for the first aid and CPR courses.

ALL ARE WELCOME to apply. We are especially looking for leaders located in or able to lead outings in more areas across Montana.

CONTACT Outings chairs Drew Sovilla (wildwillysovilla@yahoo.com) or Mike Jarnevic (grossbison@gmail.com), for more information. ✧



Indian Creek Cedar grove, Great Burn

photo - Bob Clark

SPRING~FALL 2018 OUTINGS

These adventures combine good times in the outdoors with an educational component where folks gain conservation-related knowledge about the amazing Montana landscape surrounding us, and issues affecting land, water, wildlife, and energy production.

• **Participants must RSVP** to the appropriate contact and sign a release to participate in an outing. Participants are responsible for their own food/water/sunscreen/gear. We will practice 'Leave No Trace' ethics, so be prepared to pack out whatever you pack in!

JUNE 2, Big Log Gulch/Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Day Hike (Helena area)

Honor National Trails Day by getting out and exploring one! This hike will be a journey into the edge of the vast Gates of the Mountains Wilderness which long ago inspired Lewis & Clark on their journey west. We will meet at 10:30 a.m. at the Big Log Gulch Trailhead, near Nelson, Montana. The plan is to hike 3-4 miles out and return along the same trail. This is a mellow, easy to moderate trail that begins in some interesting rock formations and opens into a vibrant ponderosa pine grassland savannah ecosystem. We will look for early season ephemeral wildflowers, discuss the role of fire on the landscape much of this wilderness burned in 2007, and talk about the importance of preserving and expanding wilderness in the modern age.

RSVP by May 26 to Drew Sovilla, wildwillysovilla@yahoo.com

JUNE 23-24, Monture Creek Backpack Overnight (Missoula/Blackfoot area)

This will be a moderately difficult hike of approximately 10 miles roundtrip into Monture Creek, a Forest Service Inventoried Roadless Area on the edge of the Scapegoat Wilderness. This is also a Congressionally proposed wilderness area and a designated US Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone. Thus, our group will be especially "bear aware" and take all precautions. Participants will learn about bear basics, their habitat, and how to co-exist with bears. Meet at the Missoula Public Library parking lot @ 9:00am Saturday, then car pool to the Monture Creek Campground close to Ovando. We will return by 2:00pm Sunday.

RSVP by June 16 to Mike Jarnevic, grossbison@gmail.com

Survival Class and Outing

JUNE 27, Class: Missoula Public Library (lg mtg room, 6-8 p.m.)

JUNE 30-JULY 1, Outing: Welcome Creek Wilderness Overnight (Missoula/Rock Creek area)

This class and outing combo is a presentation and practice of "down and dirty" basic survival techniques that will keep you alive in the extremes of Montana. Participants can come to either the class or the outing, or better yet both. The class meets at the Missoula Public Library and will cover putting together a survival kit and the Three Priorities of survival: shelter/warmth, water, and signaling. For a follow-on outing, participants will hike into a local area from the Welcome Creek Wilderness trailhead, set up standard backpacking equipment, and demonstrate survival techniques. Participants will be given the opportunity to sleep in an expedient shelter, construct a fire, and learn other techniques of survival. For those traveling from the Missoula area, meet at Missoula Public Library parking lot at 9:00 a.m. Saturday to carpool; returning by 2:00 p.m. Sunday. Contact trip leader to arrange meeting time if you'll join at the trailhead.

RSVP by June 20 to Mike Jarnevic, grossbison@gmail.com

JULY 7, Kid-Friendly Baker Lake Day Hike (Missoula/Bitterroot area)

Baker Lake is south of Darby and at the base of impressive Trapper Peak. We will meet at the trailhead at 10:30 a.m., hike at a pace that works for the group (including young kids), and lunch and linger at the lake before heading back. The trail is considered easy to moderate, with somewhat steep switchbacks in the early portion. It is approximately 2.6 miles out and back (1.3 each way). Please be prepared with drinking water, snacks and lunch to get you and



In the heart of the Great Burn

photo - Bob Clark

the kiddos through (and any bribes that may be needed to keep the kids motivated!). If your kids may need to be carried part of the way, bring what you need to help you do that. This will be a patient, encouraging group, supporting families in getting out and hiking! All children must be accompanied for the entire trip by a parent, guardian, or other authorized adult (in other words, it's not a drop off daycare). We will look for wildflowers, butterflies, and other insects and creatures along the way, and talk about what lives in the area. Feel free to bring a nature journal, pen or pencil, and binoculars if you like.

RSVP by June 23 to Summer Nelson, summer.nelson@sierra-club.org

AUGUST 4, Refrigerator Canyon/Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Day Hike (Helena area)

We will meet at the Refrigerator Canyon Trailhead at 10 a.m. This will be a four-hour hike (2 out, 2 back) at a pace that is not too fast for the slowest member, with a stop for lunch before returning. We will walk out on a gradually ascending trail, with beautiful landscapes and plant life, and likely many wildflowers in bloom along the whole route. Participants will learn the basics of "Leave No Trace" hiking and practice them on the hike. Please bring a baggie to pack out any toilet paper you anticipate using (and bring a trowel if you may need to dig a hole!), and plan to pack out any other trash. Also bring enough food and water for yourself for the 4 hours, appropriate sun and rain/weather protection, and long pants if you prefer (there are narrow spots on the trail).

RSVP by July 28 to Jonathan Matthews, jmatthews@carroll.edu

SEPTEMBER 21, Trapper Peak Day Hike (Bitterroot Valley)

At 10,157 feet elevation, Trapper Peak is the highest mountain in the Bitterroots within the 1.3 million-acre Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The view from the summit is awe-inspiring. The SBW was protected in 1964 with the passage of the Wilderness Act. The Bitterroot National Forest is in the process of developing a new Forest Plan that will assign recommended wilderness status to wild, roadless areas on the Forest. Join us and learn more! Hikers should expect 3800 feet of elevation gain over 6 miles on the standard route (trail #133). Round-trip is about 12 miles.

RSVP by September 14 to Bob Clark, 406-529-6706, bobclark1111@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER 22, Flesher Pass/Continental Divide Trail Day Hike (Helena area)

Come out and celebrate the Autumnal Equinox on the trail! We will meet at 10:30 a.m. at the Flesher Pass parking area north of Helena. This hike will be an out-and-back along a portion of one of the longest trails in the world. This trail is steep and moderate to difficult at the outset and will crest up into some nice views of the surrounding mountains. Distance will be based on the group but will cover in the neighborhood of 2-4 miles each way. Participants will learn about wildlife corridors as this is an important grizzly corridor, whitebark pine as a potential first conifer addition to the endangered species list due to the threats it faces due to insect/disease and climate change, as well as the importance of long trails like the Continental Divide on our landscape.

RSVP by September 14 to Drew Sovilla, wildwillysovilla@yahoo.com

Outings are FREE and Open to the Public



SIERRA CLUB

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