

the Montana Sierran

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Wind blows smoke from the Lolo Peak fire southwest of Missoula

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photo — Rebekah Welch



ENERGY

Emissaries of Smoke: Sierra Club Leads Montana Climate Delegation to Capitol Hill while Fires Rage

by David Merrill

Sierra Club Senior Organizing Representative,
Missoula field office

LATE THIS SUMMER, while stepping into his backyard near Missoula's University of Montana campus, **Rev. Gary Hawk** heard a sound that cut straight to his heart: children playing. "It had been so long since I had heard that," he recalled with misty eyes in Senator Jon Tester's Washington, D.C. office the morning of September 13, 2017.

The writer and retired pastor shared this reflection with each Congressional office we visited as part of a federal lobbying delegation from Montana, led by the Sierra Club. The central purpose of our visits with Senator Tester, Senator Daines and Greg Gianforte's legislative aide was to lobby for maintaining stable funding for the EPA, which is a critical agency in the fight against climate change. The group I led not only included Reverend Hawk, but also a fly fisherman, a veteran, a fire chief and a high school science teacher.

On a river not far from where Gary Hawk pondered the laughter of children, **Travis Craft**, fishing guide of 21 years, was in all likelihood that same day sitting in a drift boat. His client would be yet another fisherman on the ultimate trout pilgrimage: to Montana. For this is the northern colossus state ribboned with cold, clean creeks and rivers, flashing with a renowned wild, silvery quarry. Craft's guiding business lost silver this year, however. He didn't know how much yet, but Smoke was undoubtedly the thief. "Would like to get those figures,"

Senator Tester told him.

Just upriver, **Mike Jarnevic** lives in Milltown, Montana. In a baritone voice, the veteran recalled to our people in DC his 42 years in the Marine Corps and Army Special Forces, describing his service under arms as not only protecting the people of our country, but also the land. He is retired from military engagements, but not from The Mother of all Battles he fears his species could lose.

Sharing generously from his newfound bounty of time, he lectures, writes, and lobbies in the public interest. And he locks horns with the powerful when necessary, as he did with Senator Daines on this trip (over forest policy). He did not darken Greg Gianforte's door however, believing his presence would be an endorsement of the Congressman's appalling behavior at the end of his campaign.

John Woodland, for ten years the fire chief of Superior, Montana, told of watching a midnight running crown fire in recent years and thinking "that doesn't happen at 11:30 at night." He bluntly asserted in each Congressional office that the extreme fire behavior we're seeing is the result of climate change, not forest management.

Alecia Jongeward teaches science in a public high school in Livingston, Montana. Her lessons on climate change are far more unique than they should be.

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Some of her colleagues have expressed concern that this focus puts her job at risk. It should be of concern if students *aren't* given instruction on climate change by science teachers. It is after all the greatest threat facing Montana today...a threat brought to our attention by *scientists*.

Finally, I relayed how my wife and I and our two children fled our smoke-engulfed Labor Day campsite on Flathead Lake, and then abruptly pivoted west from Missoula's "hazardous" air for a week, working remotely from my wife's parents' house. There we experienced the depressing and pathetic exercise of looking late at night for an air filter to clean our indoor air back home during what is usually the full summer glory of Montana's outdoor season.

Montanans did not just suffer a bad fire season this year. It was a socially traumatic event that will linger in our memories for some time. Day after day, week after week, starting in earnest in July and stretching well into September, smoke invaded our valleys, our homes, our lungs. Some fled. But fleeing only magnified the remorselessly closing forces of environmental breakdown. The thought progression:

1. *Not everybody can escape.*
2. *For those who can, escape is costly and distressing.*
3. *There are fewer and fewer places to escape to.*



A delegation of Montana citizens went to Washington, D.C., focused on the EPA, climate change, and fire. From left, John Woodland, Travis Craft, Reverend Gary Hawk, Mike Jarnevic, David Merrill, Alecia Jongeward, and Senator Jon Tester.

4. *Get real: You can't escape. The Climate Talons are sunken in and tightening.*

We must summon from within ourselves a force great enough to cause the Climate Talons to release. That requires confrontation with global warming, the antithesis of escape. Surely this must be our battle cry.

For now, we have no right to expect that Senator Steve

Daines will take up this call. In a speech on the floor of the U.S. Senate on Sept. 6, 2017, Daines blamed "radical environmentalists," but not the human-caused global warming, which climate scientists agree is the primary force driving the mushrooming wildfire threat in western U.S. forests. Until Senator Daines publicly accepts this scientific reality, a federal response from him that would actually do some good, will not be forthcoming.

"Every day I hear things I don't want to hear," Jon Tester told his fellow Montanans. And sit and hear he did.

Reverend Hawk ended his remarks, benediction style, with this Terry Tempest Williams quotation:

"The Eyes of the Future are looking back at us and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time."

How will Senator Daines, Senator Tester, and Representative Gianforte answer this prayer? How will we, the people of the world's most powerful country, answer it? ✧

Residents of three states turn out; call for 2025 shutdown of huge Colstrip plant

by David Merrill

EIGHTY PEOPLE turned out in the middle of a work day in Spokane for a public hearing on the Integrated Resource Plan for Avista, one of the co-owners of the Colstrip coal-fired power plant. The facility, located in Colstrip, MT, is the largest climate polluter in the American West, according to 2016 figures from the Energy Information Administration.

The Sierra Club has been working for years to get the four-unit plant closed. The older two units (1 & 2) are slated to shut down by 2022. Now the fate of units 3 & 4 is finally coming into focus. Recently, Colstrip's largest co-owner, Puget Sound Energy, signaled that they believe the useful life of these newer units will end in 2027. The utility also recently pledged money for transition for the workers and community of Colstrip as

well as for clean-up of toxic contamination. Avista, however, is holding onto a 2037 exit date. Our focus for the hearing,



Public hearing in Spokane, Washington Wednesday, November 8, 2017

therefore, was to convince the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission to compel Avista to exit the plant by 2025, as well as provide funds for cleanup and transition. The climate benefits of shutting down

the coal plant are significant and many people who spoke underlined this objective. Perhaps even more persuasive to a utility board charged with keeping electricity prices reasonable, however, we stressed the tremendous financial risk entailed in holding onto Colstrip as clean-up costs mount, carbon constraints tighten, and co-owners head for the exits.

Climate change exacerbated wildfires that devastated Montana this year, causing an oppressive plague of smoke to descend on our communities, radically diminishing the quality of life for citizens. With these memories still fresh, twelve Montana volunteers mobilized to either phone bank for hearing turnout, or to make the 400-mile round trip to participate in this hearing.

The closing of Colstrip will open up transmission for *continued on next page*

Act Now to Solve the Climate Catastrophe

by Jonathan Matthews

IN MY ROLE as Montana's Chapter Chair and Council of Club Leaders delegate, I have been pushing hard for action that effectively responds to our current climate catastrophe. Why do I call it a "climate catastrophe," rather than a "climate crisis" or "climate change" or "global warming"?

"Young People's Burden: Requirement of Negative CO₂ Emissions," published by elite climate scientist James Hansen and 11 top climate experts from around the world (*Earth Systems Dynamics*, 8, 577–616, July 18, 2017), informed us that the current global temperature is slightly higher than the Earth's average temperature during the Eemian interglacial period, 130,000 to 115,000 years ago, when ocean levels were approximately 30 feet higher than they are today.

This startling fact means that the temperature to cause these higher seas is already here. Even if the Earth gets no hotter, all coastal cities will experience devastating floods. The only reason sea levels are not already 30 feet higher is that we have increased the Earth's temperature so unnaturally rapidly that its massive ice sheets – Antarctica's ice coverage averages 1.3 miles thick – have not had enough time to melt. Scientists estimate that the melting from the Earth's current temperature could take between 100 and 400 years.

But here's the kicker: the heating of the Earth due to human-caused emissions is not stopping at this current temperature that hasn't been seen in more than 115,000 years. *It is continuing to rise.* Given our presently ineffective response to the situation, how much hotter will our Earth be in 50 years? Hot enough to cause 100-foot higher sea levels? "Catastrophe" seems to me to be an appropriate description of the imminent effects of the current warming of the Earth, and the even worse effects from unchecked additional warming.

After Pearl Harbor, the U.S. radically transformed its economy in just months (e.g. auto factories were rapidly retooled to make tanks), to fight WW2. I believe we need a similarly radical transformation of the world economy to energy efficiency and clean energy, right now, as the long-

term catastrophic consequences we are facing are greater than the crisis the U.S. faced on entering WW2. Human society has never seen a problem as large as the devastation of all coastal cities, worldwide. This would be the most dramatically negative effect, of the many we have purchased in advance with the greenhouse gasses we have already pumped into the Earth's atmosphere.

To avoid this tragedy, we need to focus nearly all of human ingenuity, and nearly all of our resources, on environmentally responsible actions to reduce Earth's temperature. An example of one action that our emergency response could involve would be to put solar panels on all homes as fast as possible, irrespective of expense, as the cost of not doing so would actually be far greater. Similar clean-energy-and-efficiency transformations need to occur across the board, worldwide, beginning right now. Any delay exacerbates the problem.

"Young People's Burden: Requirement of Negative CO₂ Emissions" will be used as the primary evidence, in February, in the case *Juliana et al. v. the U.S.*, when a group of young people and climate scientist James Hansen will be suing the government for inaction on climate change – inaction that is dooming the current generation of young people to decades of escalating climate disasters.

The lawsuit is based on the emerging legal concept of the Atmospheric Trust – that the planet is held in trust by the current generation for future generations. If the federal trial is decided in favor of *Juliana et al.*, I hope that this ruling will mandate effective action in the U.S. against the climate catastrophe, as *Brown v. Board of Education* mandated the desegregation of public schools. There needs to be a sharp turning point soon, and I hope this will be it.


If you want to join similarly concerned people in trying to figure out what we can do to address this huge problem, please contact the Chapter. ✧

continued from page 2 **Residents turn out**

Montana wind, the second largest wind resource among the 50 states. It is hoped that exporting this valuable resource to Pacific coast states will soften the economic blow of shutting down Colstrip. Montana wind is an ideal fit for Avista, which is a winter peaking utility.

Comments were 30 to 1 in favor of shutting down the Colstrip power plant.

A final decision on Avista's proposed Integrated Resource Plan is expected within a few months. ✧



SIERRA CLUB

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Information about MONTANA CHAPTER activities & meetings – contact – Jonathan Matthews (406) 447- 4351 or visit montana.sierraclub.org Find us on Facebook

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Sierra Club's Vision for Real Recovery of Grizzly Bears

by **Claudia Narcisco** and **Bonnie Rice**

ONCE, 50,000 GRIZZLY BEARS ROAMED vast areas of the American West between the Pacific Ocean and the Great Plains. As a result of human persecution, their numbers plummeted to a few hundred in the lower 48 states before the Endangered Species Act rescued the majestic great bear from extinction.

Today approximately 1,700 grizzly bears are found on less than two percent of their historic range. Many people are surprised that after 40 years of recovery efforts, there aren't more bears on the landscape; because grizzly bears reproduce extremely slowly, it takes many decades to increase their numbers even with strong protections.

Grizzly bear populations are significant in only two of six recovery areas – Greater Yellowstone and the Northern Continental Divide, and these remain isolated from each other. Fewer than 50 grizzly bears exist in two of the other recovery areas – the Selkirks and the Cabinet Yaak. The North Cascades has possibly a handful, and no grizzlies are known to occupy the vast Selway-Bitterroot recovery area.

This is not real recovery. Grizzly bears were listed under the ESA in 1975 as a single entity throughout the lower 48 states. Courts have ruled that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must consider the overall recovery of the species as it was originally listed under the ESA, prior to delisting any part. Today, the grizzly bear struggles to navigate a fragmented and often hostile landscape.

Sierra Club's vision for real recovery of grizzly bears in the lower 48 states is based upon a thriving, connected, and well-distributed “metapopulation” of several thousand bears, where:

- Bear numbers increase, and bears move into new areas of biologically suitable habitat.
- Strong protections for grizzly bears and their habitat are enacted in linkage zones between recovery areas.
- Natural connectivity between grizzly bear populations is achieved, so that both male and female bears can move

through and establish home ranges in linkage areas to ensure the long-term genetic health of populations and to re-establish viable populations in recovery areas with few or no bears.

- Additional, effective measures are enacted to reduce conflicts between people and bears, and bears and livestock.
- Human caused mortality of grizzly bears is significantly reduced, and there is no trophy hunting of grizzly bears.

Endangered Species Act protections should be retained for grizzly Bears until they are truly recovered in the lower 48, with healthy populations – at a minimum – in the six recovery ecosystems, with bears able to move freely and safely between them. ⇨

Grizzlies Need More Protection in the Northern Rockies

THE NORTHERN CONTINENTAL DIVIDE ECOSYSTEM (NCDE) is the heart of grizzly bear recovery in the Northern Rockies. Stretching from the Rocky Mountain Front to the Salish Mountains, and from the Canadian border to the Clark Fork River, at its core are the protected lands of Glacier National Park, the Bob Marshall and Mission Mountains wildernesses, and the Whitefish Range.

This large expanse of protected and undeveloped lands has helped move the grizzly bear toward recovery. But in recent years the Flathead has seen one of the fastest growing human populations in Montana, making grizzly bears more vulnerable once they leave protected areas. The impacts of development and increased pressures on our federal lands put continued grizzly bear recovery at risk.

Today, federal and state agencies estimate the NCDE population at about 1,000 bears. However, the number of bears is not in itself a sufficient basis for recovery. Among other factors, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is required to develop Habitat Based Recovery Criteria (HBRC) for each ecosystem and show that these measures have been met, *continued on next page*

Crossroads or Crosshairs: Grizzly Bear Recovery in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem

by Claudia Narcisco

IN MID-OCTOBER, more than 100 people attended an afternoon conference at the University of Montana to hear contrasting viewpoints on grizzly bear recovery in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE). Montana Chapter Sierra Club was among the cosponsors for the conference titled *Grizzly Bear Recovery: Crossroads or Crosshairs*.

The Flathead-Lolo-Bitterroot Citizen Task Force, a coalition of conservation groups who organized the conference, invited agency representatives to participate in the forum.

After decades of work on the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, its time to bring more focus to the Northern Rockies and imminent efforts to remove NCDE grizzly bears from protections of the Endangered Species Act.

Chris Servheen, retired Fish and Wildlife Service grizzly bear recovery coordinator and Fred Allendorf, UM professor emeritus of biology and conservation geneticist, sparred on the policy known as distinct population segments (DPS). Servheen discounted the policy as not applicable to the NCDE and maintained it would ruin public support. Allendorf focused on the biological and scientific intent, and said the federal government had an uphill battle in delisting grizzly bears in the NCDE because they are not genetically distinct from those of the Cabinet Yaak and Selkirk ecosystems, where recovery goals are not being met.

Mike Bader, independent consultant, emphasized recovery is dependent on connectivity between ecosystems. He showed maps of a landscape fragmented by roads, development, and habitat degradation that limit bear movement and home ranges.

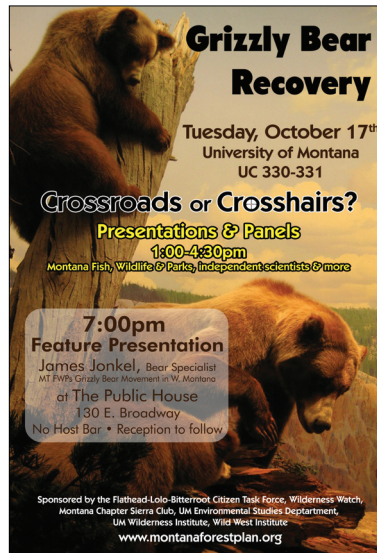
Food sources and other factors to gauge habitat condition still need to be better understood, including effects of climate change. Development in Canada near the U.S. border is also degrading habitat, and its reduced grizzly bear numbers may no longer bolster the NCDE population. He also cautioned that the current political climate puts grizzly bear recovery at risk.

Cecily Costello, research biologist for MT Fish Wildlife and Parks, is hopeful many concerns will be addressed in state grizzly bear plans. She claims the agencies have met goals and made a social contract with communities around the NCDE, and that it is time to make good on this so-called social contract.

In presenting the Tribal perspective Dale Becker, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes wildlife program manager, spoke of the immense cultural and spiritual significance of the grizzly bear to the Tribes. To them, more than the numbers and the science, the prospect of a grizzly bear hunt is a showstopper for delisting.

More than 60 people attended the evening session that featured James Jonkel, MT FWP bear management specialist. Jonkel presented a talk titled “Grizzly Bear Movements in Western Montana.” He pointed out problems that grizzly bears encounter and ways to address these, particularly in populated valleys where grizzly bears are most vulnerable.

The grizzly recovery conference was the fourth event the Montana Chapter cosponsored with the FLB Citizen Task Force this year. We hope to bring more events to inform and inspire our members in the coming year. ✧



Poster for “Crossroads or Crosshairs?” Grizzly Bear Recovery conference held at UM in Missoula in October, 2017.

continued from page 4 **Grizzlies**

before proposing delisting in that ecosystem. At the NCDE meeting in Missoula, November 29, the FWS announced plans to release proposed habitat based recovery criteria for public review and comment.

It was in July 2016, that Sierra Club’s *Our Wild America* campaign and the Montana Chapter testified before the FWS on HBRC. In addition to road density standards such as Amendment 19, we specified that managers must identify high-energy foods and their distribution on the landscape, and secure grizzly bear access to these food sources. Because grizzly bears reproduce so slowly, the uncertain implications of climate change on major food sources makes this baseline information all the more critical.

Current Timeline for Delisting Grizzly Bear in NCDE

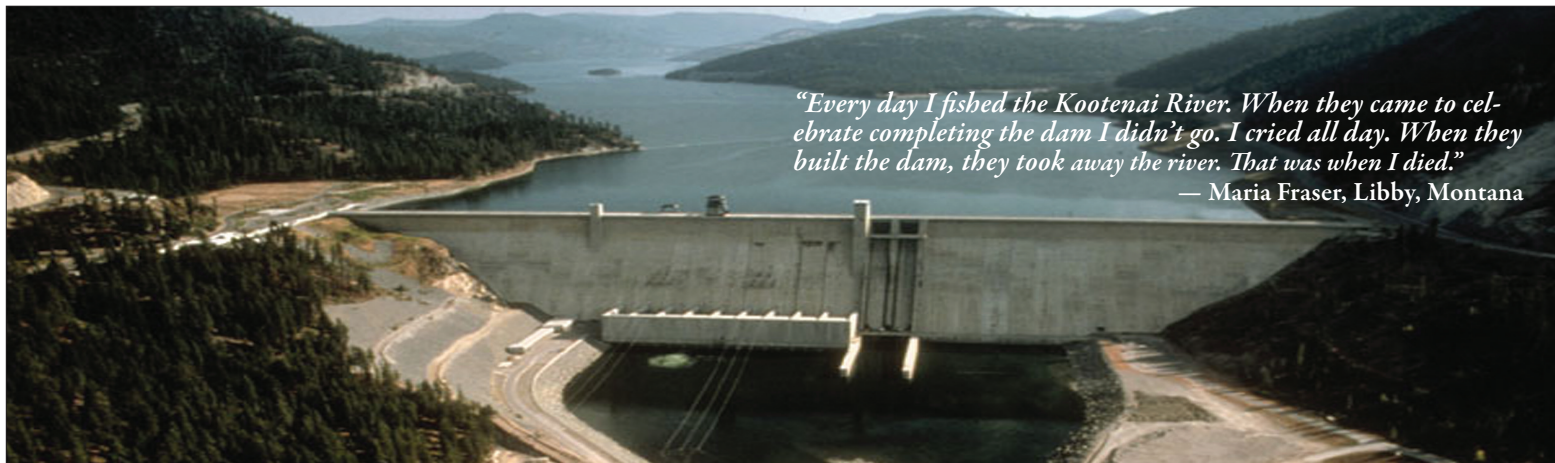
Steps in the process for delisting and the expected timeframes are:

- Final NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy – April 2018
- Proposed Rule – August 2018
- Final Rule – December 2019 ✧

Grizzly Bears Delisted in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

IN JULY, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) removed Endangered Species Act protections for Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) grizzly bears. Despite record high grizzly bear deaths in previous years, FWS pronounced GYE grizzly bear recovered based on a population of 718. A rapid decline in the population from 757 in 2014 to 695 in 2016 shows how quickly numbers can drop due to slow reproduction. Loss of key foods such as whitebark pine seeds and cutthroat trout drive bears to search for alternate foods along the edge of the GYE, where encounters with humans and livestock result in increased mortality. Delisting means grizzly bear management will be turned over to states within the GYE: Montana, Wyoming and Idaho.

At the end of August, Sierra Club along with Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Center for Biological Diversity, and National Parks Conservation Association, filed a lawsuit with FWS to overturn grizzly delisting. “Without continued Endangered Species Act protections, the recovery of grizzly bears in Greater Yellowstone is in serious jeopardy. Inadequate requirements to protect and connect Yellowstone grizzlies to other populations and hostile state management policies will mean fewer bears restricted to an even smaller area,” said Bonnie Rice, with Sierra Club’s *Our Wild America* campaign. “Grizzly bears will be killed through trophy hunts on the doorstep of Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks instead of inspiring millions who come to the region just for a chance to see a live grizzly bear in the wild.” ✧

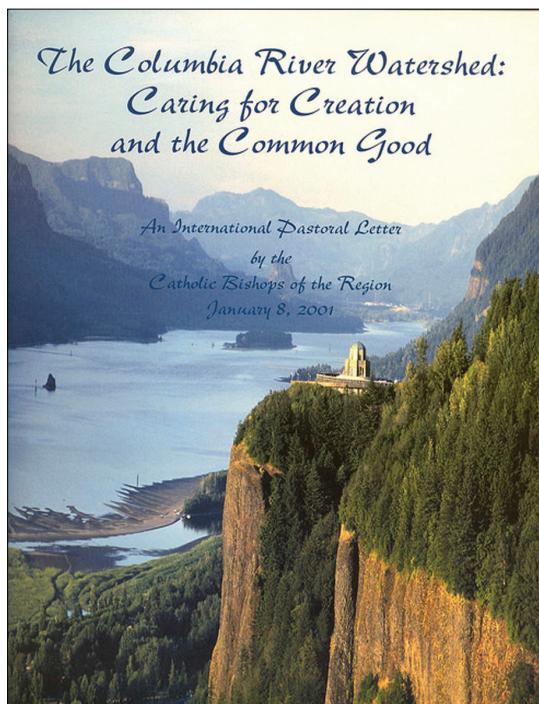


“Every day I fished the Kootenai River. When they came to celebrate completing the dam I didn’t go. I cried all day. When they built the dam, they took away the river. That was when I died.”

— Maria Fraser, Libby, Montana

Kootenai River, Libby dam, “Lake” KooCanUSA. One of four “Treaty dams” in the Upper Columbia, Libby dam brought benefits but also adverse impacts for the Kootenai River and Kootenay Lake. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo)

Columbia River Pastoral Letter



Cover of 32-page Pastoral Letter by the Catholic Bishops of the Region, 2001.

Combining the Pastoral Letter with tools used by hospital ethics committees provides the framework used for promoting stewardship and justice principles in modernizing the Columbia River Treaty.

Guiding principles of the Ethics and Treaty Project are exemplified in the mission of the Pastoral Letter:

“To effect a spiritual, social, and ecological transformation of the watershed.”

The Pastoral Letter is framed around four pillars:

1. **The rivers of our moment** – focuses on the current conditions of the watershed, from beauty to blight and our role as stewards.
2. **The rivers through our memory** – reflects on waters of our memory as they are expressed in regional and religious traditions.
3. **The rivers in our vision** – where we imagine what we would like the watershed to be. This is an idealized vision where we strive to build toward the best possible world.
4. **The rivers of our responsibility** – steps we can take as a regional community to actualize seven convictions for the need to care for the earth.

“Tribes in the United States and First Nations in Canada suffered profound damage by modernizing the Columbia River Treaty is a critical opportunity for Canada and the United States to right historic wrongs, and commit to stewardship of this great river in the face of climate change.”

— John Sirois, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation,

An Overview of Columbia River Dam Building

The Columbia River is one of the most beautiful – and until the dam-building era began in the 1930’s, was one of the most biologically rich – rivers on earth. This changed with the construction of fourteen dams that blocked the flow of waters and fisheries along the Columbia and its tributaries, extending into Montana and Canada. Four of these, including Libby Dam in Montana, are Columbia River Treaty dams.

Dam building altered the cultural traditions, food sources, and economies of the Columbia River Basin tribes. The Grand Coulee Dam, completed in 1941, effectively blocked the Upper Columbia’s ancestral salmon runs.

Creation stories place with the Columbia Basin Tribes and First Nations a sacred responsibility to care for the land, water, and animals. Salmon were the most important to the diet and culture of indigenous peoples of the Northwest. According to tribal myth, when asked by Creator to help the People, Salmon was the first to gift its body to feed the humans. The second was Water, as home to the Salmon. But steelhead, sturgeon, trout and other fisheries, and animals, roots, berries, and medicinal plants, all are ‘First Foods’ that formed the foundation of the cultural diets and economies of the original inhabitants of the land.

In 1944 the U.S. and Canada assigned the International Joint Commission (IJC) to study development and management of the Columbia Basin. Initially, the study included navigation, hydropower, flood control, and irrigation, as well as ecosystem functions such as wetlands and conservation of fish and wildlife. However, in 1948 a record flood wiped out Vanport, a low-lying city along the lower Columbia developed to support industry for WW II. This event provided the impetus to limit focus of the Columbia River study to water storage for flood control and electrical generation, and the apportionment of the river between the two countries.

Columbia Basin Tribes and First Nations retain lands, rights, and responsibilities in the international Columbia Basin. Yet, negotiators for both nations failed to consult with indigenous people, and communities of the Basin as a whole.

When ratified in 1964 the Columbia River Treaty contained only two purposes: hydropower and flood control. Ecosystem function and the welfare of the tribes were not considered. The Treaty undermined their sacred responsibility to care for the land, water, and animals.

Righting historic wrongs by including ecosystem function and traditional values in modernization of the Columbia River Treaty is a purpose of the Ethics and Treaty Project. The goals of the project are to promote principles of stewardship and justice in modernizing the Columbia River Treaty.



Kerr dam was built in the middle of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' (CSKT) reservation on an important religious and cultural site. In 2015, the CSKT purchased the dam, becoming the first tribal government in the U.S. to own a major hydroelectric facility.

Damage and loss from Columbia and Snake River dams. Modernized States to join together in acknowledging damage done, climate change."

One River, Ethics Matter conference, Gonzaga University, May 2014

COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY CONFERENCE One River, Ethics Matter: Western Montana

FREE • OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

5th annual international conference
— on the past and future of the Columbia River —

April 11, Wednesday • 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

U.C. Ballroom • lunch provided • reception 5:30-7 p.m.

Hosted by: University of Montana – Missoula
Center for Natural Resources & Environmental Policy
Department of Geography

You are Invited – Save the Date!

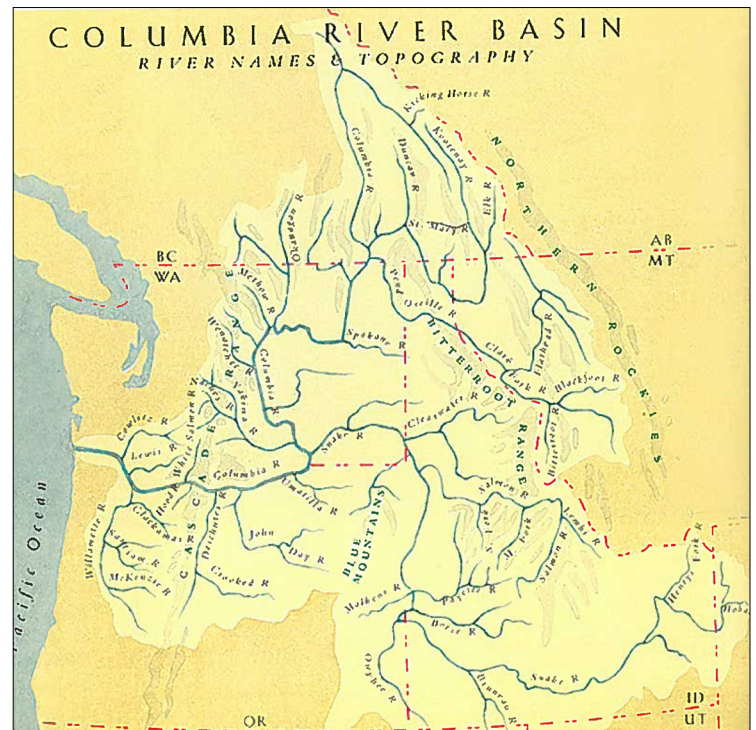
As Canada and the United States prepare to re-negotiate and update the Columbia River Treaty, the **"One River, Ethics Matter"** conference series focuses on the Basin's dam-building era, consequences for rivers in western Montana, and opportunities to protect these waters in a time of serious climate change.

This series of water-ethics conferences on the past and future of the Columbia River seeks to acknowledge injustices inflicted upon Tribes and First Nations, as a result of the dam building. These conferences have two functional models: (1) the Columbia River Pastoral Letter written by the Roman Catholic Bishops of the international watershed, and (2) tools used by hospital ethics committees, as well as South Africa's post-apartheid "Truth and Reconciliation" process.

These conferences are interdisciplinary, bringing together tribal leaders, historians, scientists, ethicists, faith leaders, and others, to understand rivers through our history and as our responsibility.

Given the history and present-day climate change, the Tribes, First Nations, and NGOs are advocating that **ecosystem function** (river stewardship) be added to the Treaty as a third purpose, equal to hydropower and flood risk.

The Missoula conference will focus on the consequences of the dam-building era in western Montana, including Libby dam; Hungry Horse dam; and The Séliš Ksanka Qlisépé Project on the Flathead River, a federal license now held by the Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the first in the nation to own and operate a major hydropower facility.



Reprinted from The Columbia River Pastoral letter, map by Jim Hayes and used in the original with permission of The Mountaineers, Seattle, Washington.

"It's important for residents of the region to understand the history of what happened, so that we can have an informed voice in upcoming government decisions."

— Eileen Delehanty Pearkes, author

A River Captured: The Columbia River Treaty and Catastrophic Change

Understanding what happened to indigenous people in western Montana is part of a larger effort to right historic wrongs, in response to the damming of the Columbia River.

Join us for **"One River, Ethics Matter"** on April 11, to explore justice and stewardship opportunities during the modernization of the Columbia River Treaty.

The "One River, Ethics Matter" conference series is supported by the **Ethics & Treaty Project**

To help with the conference or for more information:

Sophia Cinnamon — sophia.cinnamon@umconnect.umt.edu

Rev. Tom Soeldner — waltsoe@gmail.com

John Osborn, M.D. — john@waterplanet.ws

LCCD Attempts Flathead National Forest Land Grab

by Claudia Narcisco

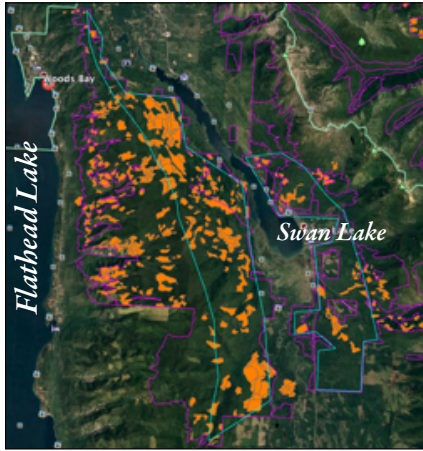
FOUR YEARS AGO the Lake County Conservation District (LCCD) began a feasibility study to establish a “Conservation Forest” in the Swan Valley. LCCD’s plan is to take control of management of 60,000 acres of the Flathead National Forest, for the next 100 years.

An economic analysis for the study estimates logging this area could bring in one million dollars annually for the LCCD. The LCCD claims that transferring lands to a Conservation Forest will continue to be owned by the U.S. Government.

Under the proposal, Montana’s Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) would manage the “Conservation Forest” according to Montana laws, and not federal laws. A legal analysis concluded the proposal is not feasible under existing federal law, and would require an act of congress to establish a Conservation Forest in a national forest.

LCCD attempted to undermine the voice of the American people, true owners of our national forests, by requesting only propertied Lake County residents comment on the proposal. Still, of the 1,384 comments received, 80% opposed the concept. Instead of abandoning its proposal, three of the five LCCD members voted to ignore this strong opposition, and are working to convince Montana’s congressional legislators to carry an LCCD bill to Congress.

America’s public lands in the Swan Valley are critical habitat for



Map of proposed LCCD Conservation Forest (blue outlined areas) in Mission mountains and Swan valley. Areas in orange show extent of timber harvest projects since 1974.

— Map courtesy Montana Wilderness Association

endangered grizzly bear, lynx, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat. Management of our public lands is too important to be handed over to LCCD, which seeks to serve only itself and not the American people or its laws, wildlife, clean waters, wildlands and other values inherent to our public lands.

The LCCD has invested an enormous amount of time and money in an effort to grab our public lands. What precedent does this set for our public lands elsewhere? ⇨

Status of National Forest Revisions & Grizzly Bear Amendments

THERE IS A STRONG NEXUS between forest plans and grizzly bear recovery in Montana. The Final Flathead National Forest Land Management Plan will soon be out, and with it Forest Plan Amendments to Incorporate the Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy for Forests in the NCDE. The Sierra Club has participated in all phases of the Flathead National Forest Planning process, to date. When released, we will review the Flathead’s Final Plan, to determine whether our comments were addressed and how to proceed.

The Helena – Lewis and Clark National Forests (HLC), also in the NCDE, will soon release its draft forest plan and environmental impact statement for public comment. It will incorporate direction from the final Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy for the NCDE. Wildland protection is essential to ensure linkage between the NCDE and the Greater Yellowstone and Bitterroot ecosystems.

In southcentral Montana, the Custer Gallatin (CG) National Forest plan revision is underway. The Club has joined the Pryor Mountains Coalition in comments on the CG wilderness inventory. The CG’s Proposed Action is expected by mid-December and is followed by a 60-day comment period and public meetings.

The Sierra Club will advocate for wildlands and viable habitat as stepping-stones for grizzly bear connectivity between recovery areas. *Stay tuned, your help is needed, to stand in defense of our wildlands, grizzly bears, and other wildlife!* ⇨

LEADERSHIP

New Chapter Director, Summer Nelson

THIS FALL we are welcoming a new Chapter Director, Summer Nelson, who will be working part-time to support our chapter’s work and help us grow! Summer has a long history of environmental and social justice advocacy, and is excited to work with our stellar members across the state to maximize our impact on the issues dear to our hearts.

Originally hailing from the Pacific Northwest, Summer has made Montana home for about 23 years. After studying Resource Conservation and Wilderness Studies at the University of Montana, she ventured into various fieldwork jobs and volunteer advocacy, from field avian studies and restoration tree planting work, to leading wilderness therapy trips for at-risk youth, and volunteering several seasons at the Buffalo Field Campaign in West Yellowstone.

After engaging in several environmental and social justice efforts, Summer decided to attend law school to gain another means of supporting these causes. In 2008 she graduated from law school and worked as Montana Legal Counsel for a newly opened office of conservation stalwarts, Western Watersheds Project (WWP). During her five-and-

a-half-year tenure at WWP, first as legal counsel and later as Montana Director, she worked with allies across the state to protect native bison and their habitat, along with other important species and places.

During a stint in private practice, Summer was also honored to organize with and help represent our chapter in the local fight against tar sands “mega-loads” slated to be hauled through our western Montana communities.

Most recently, Summer has been a part-time at-home mom, while working part-time in a private, public interest law firm with her law partner, Bob Gentry, and working with her husband and kids to set up a sustainable urban homestead on their lot in Missoula. Outside of work, Summer enjoys hiking, camping and cross-country skiing with her family, gardening, and dabbling in various arts and crafts projects. ⇨



Copper City Trails is a new system of mountain biking and hiking/running trails that is being developed near Three Forks, Montana. The Southwest Montana



Mountain Bike Association has begun building trails there with the cooperation of the BLM.

Five miles of trail are already open to the public. Up to 28 miles of new trail are to be built in open, rolling hills with limestone outcrops and incredible mountain views. From a ridge in the area I counted ten mountain ranges!

Sierra Club volunteers are needed this Spring and Summer as Copper City Trails expands and grows. These trails will be an

excellent addition to Montana's outdoor heritage and helping to build the trails will help us build bridges with the mountain biking community. I volunteered to help with trail improvement during their Grand Opening in September and was amazed by the volunteer energy and enthusiasm at the event.

Please watch for opportunities to help with the Copper City Trails. **Wear your Sierra Club shirt** and let folks know who you represent. To volunteer and for information on the Copper City Trails see: Coppercitytrails.org or contact Phil Knight with the Montana Chapter at pknight@q.com.

But it is in the darkest nights, when storms are blowing and the agitated waves are phosphorescent, that the most impressive displays are made.

— John Muir, Wilderness Essays



*Did you know?
Approximately 4,500
wolves have been killed
across the lower 48 states,
since 2011 when gray
wolves were stripped of
federal protections granted
under the Endangered
Species Act ?*

Montana Chapter volunteers represented the Sierra Club at the 4th Annual Speak for Wolves gathering in West Yellowstone, July 27-29th, 2017.



Montana Chapter Conservation Chair, Claudia Narcisco, addresses the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem sub-committee for grizzly bear recovery, at their meeting in Missoula on November 29. She emphasized that we cannot take chances by prematurely removing the grizzly bear from Endangered Species Act protections.



photo: Rob Chaney, Missoulian



In May, Secretary Zinke announced the Department of Interior would review 27 of America's national monuments that were designated or expanded since 1996. In response, Sierra Club organized 'Zinke bird-dogging' rallies around the country to support Bear's Ears and other treasured monuments. Shown here, about 130 protestors attended a Monuments rally in Whitefish Montana in late June, where Zinke attended a Western Governors Association meeting.



Montana Chapter members were among the crowd that gathered to stand up for our public lands in Hamilton, MT on November 18th, 2017. Protesters outnumbered those who came to hear a presentation by Karen Budd-Falen, controversial federal public land transfer czar and attorney for Cliven Bundy.



The Montana Chapter participates annually at **Our Wild America** Greater Yellowstone-Northern Rockies (GY-NR) campaign retreat. The GY-NR OWA team and representatives from the Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho chapters share information about priority projects and help plan the program of work across the GY-NR area ecosystems. Here, a group takes time out for a short hike and some fun around Tom Miner Basin.



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To volunteer with the Montana Chapter of the Sierra Club, contact Jonathan Matthews at (406) 447-4351

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Rod Jude, Vice Chair;
Claudia Narcisco, Secretary
and Alternate CCL Delegate;
Betsy Brandborg, member;
Teresa Brock, member;
Stacey Hellekson, member;
Tom Magarian, member;
Diana Vanek, member

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Phil Knight, Teresa Brock,
Jonathan Matthews,
Stacey Hellekson, Rod Jude,
Bonnie Rice (staff)

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Tom Magarian (Chair),
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Claudia Narcisco, Diana Vanek,
Rod Jude, Mike Scott (staff),
David Merrill (staff)

Finance:

Mark Hufstetler (Treasurer)

Fundraising:

Stacey Hellekson (Chair)
Rod Jude, Mike Scott (staff)

Newsletter:

Teresa Brock (Chair),
Jonathan Matthews, Diana
Vanek, Claudia Narcisco

Nominating/Elections:

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Rod Jude, Janet Fiero

Outings:

Vacant (Chair),
Bob Clark, Michael Jarnevic,
Jonathan Matthews,
Diana Vanek, Will Butler,
Mark Hufstetler

Political:

Jonathan Matthews (Chair),
Claudia Narcisco, Rod Jude,
Mark Hufstetler, David Merrill,
Mike Scott (Staff)

Website/Facebook:

Jeff van den Noort (Chair),
Rod Jude

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and the
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Protect the Planet

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