



PROPOSED NORTH FORK ROAD PAVING PROJECT UNDERFUNDED

by Bill Walker

It appears that the money allocated by Congress to pave 10 miles of the North Fork Road south of Camas Creek is only two-thirds of the amount required to do the job. According to an article in the May 2, 2000 *Daily Inter Lake*, "The Federal Highway Administration estimates the project is about \$1.2 million short of what's needed."

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The article goes on to say that the \$2.4 million approved last September was probably not quite sufficient for the construction costs and even that amount was subsequently cut by 13% as part of an effort to meet overall federal spending caps for highway funding. Factor in environmental review (\$700,000) and design and engineering expenses (\$80,000), and the shortfall is almost \$1.2 million.

At this point, it is probably too late for the county to obtain enough additional money to fund the project. There is apparently some likelihood that the funds will be transferred to another project — the article mentioned Big Mountain Road as one possibility.

For additional information and background on North Fork Road paving issues, see the NFPA web site at <http://www.gravel.org/nfroad>. The site includes a link to the complete text of article referenced above as well as many other related materials, including a very interesting brief history of the North Fork Road.

ROADLESS INITIATIVE HEARINGS COME TO KALISPELL

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) will be holding public hearings on the Roadless Initiative in Kalispell on June 26 and 27. Originally scheduled as a series shorter meetings at the Outlaw Inn, the sessions have been expanded and moved to Kalispell High School where there will be room to accommodate more participants.

Here is the announcement placed by the USFS in the June 13 *Daily Inter Lake* (emphasis in italics added by the editor):

The following meetings to collect comments on the proposal and environmental impact statement for managing roadless lands on national forests and grasslands are scheduled for the Flathead National Forest:

Monday, June 26, 5:00 to 9:00 p.m., Kalispell High School Auditorium, 644 4th Ave. West, Kalispell

(There will a 10 minute break each hour)

Tuesday, June 27, 5:00 to 9:00 p.m., Kalispell High School Auditorium, 644 4th Ave. West, Kalispell

(There will a 10 minute break each hour)

This is a new location with expanded hours to accommodate more participants.

At these meetings individuals can make oral comments and have them recorded by a court recorder. The comments will then be sent directly to the team writing the Roadless Area Conservation EIS. *Those who wish to make oral arguments can sign up any time after 4:30 p.m. the day of the meetings*, oral comments will be recorded in the order of sign up. Individual can only make oral arguments once over the two days to allow the maximum number of people to comment. Each commenter may speak for up to 3 minutes.

The extended hours will allow some flexibility for individuals to come and go, rather than spend the entire evening. *Written comments can be submitted any time before July 17. All comments whether by mail, e-mail, orally, or FAX are treated equally* so those interested can chose the most convenient method. Individuals can comment in writing as often as they wish.

For more information, contact your local Forest Service office or www.roadless.fs.fed.us

Send your comments by FAX to: **877-703-2494**

By mail to:

**USDA Forest Service-CAET
Attention: Roadless Area Proposed Rule
P.O. Box 221090
Salt Lake City, UT 84122**

By e-mail from the website: **www.roadless.fs.fed.us**

(continued next page)

(Roadless Initiative hearings, continued...)

And here is an excerpt from *Wild Flathead*, the newsletter of the Flathead Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association, May, 2000, summarizing the Roadless Initiative:

The Roadless Initiative does not create one new acre of wilderness! However, it does provide the best opportunity to secure a policy protecting the remaining roadless lands.

If adopted, part one would immediately restrict certain activities such as road construction in roadless areas identified in RARE II and existing forest plan inventories.

Part two would establish a national direction for managing roadless areas and would help determine if similar protection should be extended to uninventoried roadless areas. Part two would be implemented at the forest plan level through the plan amendment and NEPA process.

This national direction would guide land managers in determining which activities are consistent with protecting the important ecological and social values associated with inventoried roadless acres. It would also guide land managers in determining which activities are appropriate in uninventoried roadless areas.

FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST WILL SEE FEWER SERVICES

By Cole Milstead

This summer visitors to Flathead National Forest will see fewer services. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) was given only a \$12.4 million budget, down \$2.2 million from last year. Alan Rowley, USFS Public Affairs Specialist from Kalispell, said there are two main reasons for the cuts. First, money was needed for the increased administration and personnel in the USFS National Office in Washington, D.C. Second, funds were required for national programs such as the Roadless Initiative and Vice President Al Gore's Clean Water Action Plan. Rowley said that the Flathead National Forest budget has consistently dropped over the last 10 years by about \$1 million annually.

This year's budget cuts will impact seasonal jobs, trail projects and many other services. There will be only 100 seasonal jobs, down 118 from last year. Rowley also stated that only 500-600 miles of the 1100 miles of trails would be maintained, only 50 miles of road will be graded (650 miles were graded last year) and that there will be no pre-commercial thinning in the forest.

There will be only 21 "attack" fire fighters (there were 54 last year). If the fire fighters need additional assistance this summer, they will request help locally then seek assistance from nearby organizations such as Glacier National Park.

Instead of last year's eight personnel, there will be only a four-person crew to spray for noxious weeds. Spraying will be confined to popular scenic sites, trailheads and river access points. Some examples are Big Creek, Ford and Glacier Rim.

The budget cuts will not affect periodic maintenance on the Hungry Horse campsites or forest law enforcement.

This summer, various organizations such as NFPA and the Backcountry Horsemen are volunteering to help clear some of the forest trails. Rowley said that the Forest Service would identify later this summer which trails are to be cleared. For more information, call the Hungry Horse/Glacier View District at (406) 387-3800 or the main Flathead National Forest offices at (406) 758-5200.

STATE OF THE ECOSYSTEM REPORT DUE OFF THE PRESS SOON

by Dave Hadden, Montana Wilderness Association

The State of the Ecosystem report details the remarkable qualities of the North Fork. Emphasis has been placed on the human and natural history of the watershed from the headwaters in British Columbia to it's joining with the Middle Fork at Blankenship. Research and written contributions to the report have come from a diverse group of citizens, resource professionals and scientists.

The NFPA helped move this document towards completion with a generous contribution at a critical stage.

Final production, printing and distribution are expected in July. Ben Long, a free-lance writer and columnist to the *Daily Interlake*, has taken on the job of the final edit. The report will be available through NFPA.

FBC PRESSES IJC ON NORTH FORK ISSUES

from *Basin Watch*, the newsletter of the Flathead Basin Commission, Spring, 2000

In a letter to the Chairman of the United States Section of the International Joint Commission, the FBC has asked the IJC to consider the formation of an international watershed board for the North Fork of the Flathead River. The Commission said the group would be a "responsible, pro-active way of improving broad-based opportunities by interests in both nations [Canada and the U.S.] for monitoring and addressing a wide range of issues that relate to the future of this shared resource." The IJC arbitrates water-related issues between the U.S. and Canada.

British Columbia, meanwhile, has expressed interest in working with Montana to establish a border-wide agreement to cover a wide range of shared concerns, including water quality.

500 ACRES OF OLD GROWTH SLATED FOR LOGGING IN NORTH FORK!

from *Wild Flathead*, the newsletter of the Flathead Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association, June, 2000

State Lands is at it again. Selling off and cutting down old growth that they agreed not to cut. At issue is the Coal Creek State Forest's Unit 5 sale. Five hundred acres of the genuine old growth article. State foresters agreed to an old growth cutting moratorium for this until they revised their old growth policy. However, agency personnel are under pressure to "get the cut out" and Unit 5 is critical if they are to meet their election time target.

The sale has nothing to do with forestry. Everything to do with politics and administrative target.

MWA plans to be heard in Helena on June 19 at the State Land Board Hearing where the fate of the forest will be decided. Three gubernatorial candidates are on that board, O'Keefe, Mazurek, and Cooney. So is the present governor.

We need to pack this hearing. If you can spare a day to attend the Land Board hearing, June 19th, call Dave Haddon at 406-837-2065 or email paddler@digisys.net. Learn more on the car trip over.

[Editor's note: Write the Montana Board of Land Commissioners, PO Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601 even if after June 19th.]

NORTH FORK PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION SUMMER SCHEDULE — 2000

Questions about the NFPA and its activities may be directed to nfpa@gravel.org.
A copy of this schedule is posted on our web site at <http://www.gravel.org>.

Monday, July 3, 6:00pm at Ed Heger's place at North Fork Road milepost 49½. NFPA board meeting and potluck. Everyone welcome. Discuss the Interlocal and the annual meeting.

Saturday & Sunday, July 8 & 9, 9:00am at Tuchuck Campground on Trail Creek Road. Backcountry Horsemen of the Flathead are doing trail maintenance on trails out of the campground – clear and brush out. Also need people to spread gravel on Thoma Trail #18 off Frozen Lake Road. Lots of work for people without horses!! Call 755-8525, 752-3040, or 837-0360 to sign up.

Wednesday, July 12, 7:00pm at Sondreson Hall (*tentative*). Federal Highway Administration public forum on paving the North Fork Road. With Ron Burnett. *Be there if you care!!*

Thursday, July 13, 5:00pm potluck dinner, 6:30pm Interlocal Agreement meeting at Sondreson Hall. Come find out what the different groups and agencies in the North Fork are doing. Hosted by the North Fork Improvement Association.

Wednesday, July 19, 7:00pm at Sondreson Hall. Presentation by A.L.E.R.T. helicopter crew. Jointly sponsored by the North Fork Improvement Association and the North Fork Preservation Association. Bring a snack.

Saturday, July 29, 6:00pm North Fork Preservation Association potluck, 8:00pm annual meeting and elections. At Sondreson Hall. The program will be a panel discussion of international conservation strategies for the North Fork drainage, including the proposal of creating an "International Conservation Reserve". Participants will include Dave Hadden (MWA) and Erica Konrad (East Kootenai Environmental Society). Bring a side dish.

Saturday, August 5. Nasukoin Mountain. Wilderness Walk sponsored by the Montana Wilderness Association (MWA). Strenuous, 12 mile round trip, 4000 feet gain. Call leader Donald Tjaden (844-2303).

Saturday, August 12, 8:00pm at Sondreson Hall. *North Fork Bear Group: A Year in the Life of a Glacier NP Grizzly*. Talk and slide show by Kate Kendall. Snacks provided.

Monday, August 14, 7:00pm at Sondreson Hall. North Fork Compact annual meeting.

Saturday, August 19. Mount Thompson Seton. Sponsored by the Montana Wilderness Association. Moderate to strenuous, 12 mile round trip, 3020 feet gain. Call leader Donald Tjaden (844-2303).

Saturday & Sunday, August 19 & 20, 8:30am. Thoma Trail maintenance, overnight at historic Thoma lookout. Trails #18 & #15. Need sleeping bag, pad, water, gloves and food. Forest Service provides food for evening meal. Bring a tent if you don't wish to sleep with the mice in the lookout. Frank Vitale will use mules to pack supplies. This trail needs lots of work. Phone John Frederick at 888-5241 or Frank Vitale, evenings, at 892-2909.

NFPA GETS IT'S OWN WEB SITE!

by Bill Walker

After several years of borrowing web space from the North Fork Hostel, the North Fork Preservation Association now has its own web site at <http://www.gravel.org>. The impetus for this was the amount of material posted concerning the North Fork Road paving issue. It became much more important to make the site easy to find and readily identifiable with the NFPA.

Currently, the NFPA schedule is posted on the site and there is a section covering the paving issue.

Site hosting is donated "at cost" by North Valley Digital (<http://www.nvdi.com>).

Comments concerning the web site should be directed to webmaster@gravel.org; NFPA email correspondence may be sent to nfpa@gravel.org.

NFPA Treasurer's Report from Treasurer Rachel Potter

Checking account balance 6/1/99 \$4,211.17

Expenses:

NFIA — hall rental	50.00	
T-shirts, <i>Save Don't Pave</i>	625.35	
<i>gravel.org</i> web site	350.00	
Lighthawk donation for aerial flight of drainage	170.00	
Karelian Bear Dog work in NF	500.00	
Montana Wilderness Association (MWA) for Transboundary work and workshop	500.00	
MWA for forest management newspaper ads	200.00	
Photocopying, mailing of paving petitions and misc.	492.21	
Secretary of State incorporation fee	10.00	
Food for Interlocal and NFPA annual meeting	67.67	
		(2965.23)

Deposits

Dues	1034.00	
T-shirts	370.00	
Special donation for "no paving" – <i>THANK YOU!</i>	2500.00	
		3904.00

Account balance 4/26/00 **\$5149.94**

1999-2000 NFPA BOARD MEMBERS

Howard Harrod, President
Pat Gruis, Vice President
Rachel Potter, Secretary/Treasurer
Marca Stickles, Board Member
Frank Vitale, Board Member
John Frederick, Past President

Newsletter Editor: Bill Walker (wkwalker@nvdi.com).

If you are interested in serving on the board please speak to a board member. Elections are Saturday, July 29, during the annual meeting at Sondreson Hall.

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

IF YOU HAVEN'T PAID YOUR DUES YET, IT'S TIME!

I want to help protect the North Fork of the Flathead River Valley at the western edge of Glacier National Park.

_____	New	Name	_____
_____	Renewal	Address	_____

		Phone	_____
		Email	_____

I want to join the NFPA. Here is my membership fee of \$15.00/year _____
family membership of \$20.00/year _____

I want to help. Here is my donation of _____ for _____

Mail check or cash to: North Fork Preservation Association
c/o Rachel Potter
P.O. Box 394
Columbia Falls, MT 59912
(406) 892-2446

North Fork Preservation Association

P.O. Box 4

Polebridge MT 59928

Please pay your dues!