



“...to protect the natural resources that make the North Fork an unparalleled environment for wildlife and people.”

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Number 1

## Comment Period Opens on Winter Recreation in Flathead National Forest

Usually, when different user groups in the National Forest are getting in each others' way, it is already too late for an easy solution. In Glacier View Ranger District (the North Fork) of Flathead National Forest, we are fortunate that two entirely different winter users' groups — various snowmobile clubs and non-motorized users from the Montana Wilderness Association (cross country skiers and snowshoers) — have gotten together with Flathead National Forest for a compromise agreement. The agreement, which was ten months in the making, divided up the Ranger View District in such a way that no group was ecstatic, but all sides were satisfied enough to sign on.

### Zoning Proposal Goes to the Commissioners!

See page 2 for an  
important action  
item.

The Flathead Winter Recreation Agreement is workable. Most of the historic use stayed the way it was including many play areas around Red Meadow Road toward the lake and south toward Colombia Falls and the Flathead Valley.

Almost all snowmobile use north of Red Meadow is on roads, the exception being play areas around Link, Chain, Red Meadow and Huntsburger Lakes, which are for snowmobile use.

Snowmobiles also can use Whale Creek Road to the vicinity of Ninko Cabin and up to Hornet Lookout. There are crossover roads from Red Meadow to Moose and Whale Creek Roads.

It could be argued that this accord is too favorable to snowmobiles considering that less than 10% of Montanans own snowmobiles, whereas 6 or 7 times that number of Montanans walk, cross country ski, or snowshoe. None-the-less, the North Fork Preservation Association supports this accord as workable, including small changes found in Alternative 3, the U.S.F.S. preferred

alternative, in the recently released Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Flathead Forest has fine-tuned the WRA in the North Fork (they call it Alternative 3) based on public input and scoping concerns, so that approximately 5,000 more acres are available to snowmobiles in the North Fork. This includes Trail Creek Road to Tuchuck campground (which NFPA asked for), passage across small parcels of U.S.F.S. land between landowners and some areas near the North Fork of the Flathead River. On road corridors open to snowmobiles, snowmobiles would be allowed to be on either side of the road for 100 feet to reduce congestion and "allow proper use of liquid-cooled engines." Alternative 3 (the U.S.F.S. preferred alternative) addresses North Fork landowner concerns. In fact, as far as the North Fork is concerned, it has been called the Larry Wilson Alternative.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement can be found at the online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead/nepa/a24/deis/index.htm>. Questions may be answered by phoning Kimberly Smolt of the Forest Service at (406) 758-5332.

*This proposed Winter Motorized Recreation Amendment 24 to the Flathead Forest Plan will resolve problems for the future by dividing up the winter use of Flathead National Forest in a reasonable fashion. However, this will not happen unless you put your feelings down on paper and send it to the person listed below. Flathead Forest now considers form letters as a petition. Therefore, writing a personalized letter is very important. **You have until August 4, but the sooner, the better.***

*Write to Cathy Barbouletos, Forest Supervisor, Flathead National Forest, 1935 Third Avenue East, Kalispell, MT 59901. The fax number is (406) 758-5363. Comments may be sent by email using the "mail-in comment database" link on the web page mentioned above.*

Please support the Preferred Alternative. Flathead Forest also needs site-specific information. Please tell Flathead Forest what areas should be closed to snowmobiles. Is there a place you used to go skiing or snowshoeing that is now over-run by snowmobiles and thereby lessening your enjoyment of the area?

The last time comments were taken on the Winter Recreation Agreement, the response was about two to one against. How this situation is resolved up to you.

## ALERT: Zoning Proposal Goes to Commissioners!

On May 24, the North Fork committee voted 8-2 to present the March 9, 2002, version of the proposed North Fork zoning amendment to the Flathead County Planning Board for consideration. This is the version of the proposed amendment that was overwhelmingly endorsed by North Fork landowners, not the watered-down version that emerged from the Flathead County Commissioners' hearings in August 2002. (That final version was later nullified Sept. 26 by a ruling from the state attorney general.) However, the Flathead County Planning Board resurrected this latter version at the hearing on Wednesday, July 9, in Kalispell.

- ❖ *The letters to the Planning Board ran 4 to 1 in favor of the North Fork committees' proposed zoning amendment. Testimony was 23 in favor and 8 against.*
- ❖ *A motion to approve the proposed zoning amendment failed 8 to 1. Another motion to revive the watered-down version of August, 2002, passed 7 to 1.*

Since the Planning Board voted to forward their proposal on to commissioners, a hearing before the Flathead County Commissioners will follow, probably in August (date to be announced). The commissioners are far more likely to be agreeable to what North Forkers want, being that they are elected officials subject to being voted out of office.

Though small in number, opponents of zoning for the North Fork are well-organized and vocal. So once again, North Forkers must express their support for the March 9, 2002, version of the proposed zoning amendment by sending letters to:

Flathead County Commissioners  
800 South Main Street  
Kalispell, MT 59901

Or emails to: [fccommissioners@co.flathead.mt.us](mailto:fccommissioners@co.flathead.mt.us)

Or fax to: (406) 758-5861

*A large group of supporters is essential.*

*Your attendance and brief statement of support at this hearing is also critical.* Please urge your North Fork neighbors and friends to also write and attend the hearing. Letters may be brief. Please take care to refer to the March 9, 2002, version, which was first presented to the Planning Board on June 19, 2002, and request it be adopted without changes.

*To confirm the hearing date or time of our agenda item, telephone the Flathead County Commissioners' Office at (406) 758-5503.*

Please take a few minutes of your time, once again, for the North Fork.

*Having people show up at the hearing is the most effective.* Letters are next. Emails come after that.

Negative comments about the Planning Board or Commissioners will not be helpful.

Talking points are:

- You bought your property because of the nature of the place and want to keep it that way.
- These regulations do not harm anyone's property rights. They protect them.
- No-one's job is threatened.
- These are fair and equitable regulations.
- A vast majority of North Forkers support the regulations.
- Be sure to mention that you are a landowner.

*This alert was prepared by North Fork Landowners for Zoning, 230 Missy Lane, Whitefish, MT 59937.*

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Editors note: The text of the proposed zoning regulations, as well as other related documents, may be found on the NFPA web site at <http://www.gravel.org/archives.htm>.

## Howard Harrod: An Appreciation

There was a celebration of Howard's life on the North Fork on Sunday, July 6, at the Sonderson Community Hall. He had a special tie to the Blackfeet. His first book, *Mission Among the Blackfeet*, described the role of religion before the arrival of missionaries and recounts the history of the Indian missions and their impact on the Blackfeet. Long Standing Bear Chief attended the observance. The celebration was informal so that friends and acquaintances who wished to participate might do so.

Howard Harrod was president of the NFPA from 1996 until 2000 when he could no longer ignore his cancer. He died this February after a ten-year struggle. His smile and gentle manner befitting a college professor brought him respect and made NFPA meetings with him something special. This June he would have been an old, but young-minded 71 year-old. We miss him.

## Road Paving on Back Burner?

by Rachel Potter

There was renewed concern this winter when Gary Hall, Flathead County's newest commissioner, stated a few times that he would be seeking funds for paving the North Fork Road. A North Fork resident also asked the Columbia Falls City Council for a resolution supporting paving — without success. A number of you wrote letters to Hall and the Montana congressional delegation. Your efforts seem to have paid off. We understand that paving is now on Hall's "back burner," but the Hungry Horse News of June 19 indicated he still wants to pave the road.

There is also speculation that U. S. Senator Conrad Burns felt he was misled by former commissioner Williams about the lack of controversy surrounding paving a few years back, and that he is unlikely to support paving in the future.

In light of the catastrophic impacts paving would have on the resources of the North Fork, the North Fork Preservation Association will continue to monitor this critical issue.

*Editor's note: there is a newly released study from the University of Montana that indicates that most people in the North Fork do not want paving near their house and that since there is no money for paving they might as well get together and decide what other options are available that might make people the most happy. View the study on the NFPA website at <http://www.gravel.org>.*

## Cause For Optimism Over Cleft Rock Trail?

The following is an exchange of letters between Frank Vitale, Vice President of the NFPA and Jimmy DeHerrera, the District Ranger for the Hungry Horse/Glacier View ranger districts, concerning a proposal to re-open the Cleft Rock Trail.

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March 18, 2003

Jimmy DeHerrera, District Ranger  
Hungry Horse / Glacier View Ranger Districts  
PO Box 190340  
Hungry Horse, MT 59919

Mr. Jimmy DeHerrera:

For the past few years there has been great interest within the North Fork community in reopening the Cleft Rock trail. The North Fork Preservation Association (NFPA) board of directors supports the reopening of this trail. Our counterpart on the North Fork, the North Fork Improvement Association (NFIA) also favors this project. Reasons are as varied as the people who live there, but include fire access, recreation, and cultural and historic values. The Cleft Rock Trail is one of the most historic trails in the upper North Fork. It was built and maintained by early homesteaders and is frequently mentioned in North Fork homestead journals.

The trail is consistent with the Forest Service's backcountry non-motorized recreation and travel plan. I do not believe there are any negative impacts on wildlife. The trail traverses some outstanding terrain and Cleft Rock is of scenic and geologic interest. The trail links up to other trails that are presently maintained. These trails are Seemo Pass from Tuchuck Campground, the Ninko Trail from Ninko Cabin, and Mt. Thompson Seton Trail from the head of Whale Creek.

Since 1984, NFPA volunteers have cleared and maintained trails with the Forest Service each summer. The Thoma Lookout Trail clearing project is an annual event. The NFPA would like to include Cleft Rock in its Adopt-a-Trail program. The Cleft Rock Trail would be a valuable addition to this trail system. Larry Wilson, current president of the NFIA, also expresses interest from his membership in volunteering on this particular trail.

As you are probably aware, one small relocation of the Cleft Rock Trail would be necessary at the start of the trail. Last fall, Bob Keibler, John Frederick and I spent a day locating private property boundaries and looking at possible relocation routes. The most practical place to relocate the trailhead is adjacent to the Thoma L.O. Trail.

The Cleft Rock Trail reopening is well supported by North Fork residents and landowners. It is a great community project and opportunity to work with our neighbor, the Forest Service. We look forward to hearing from you. Thanks for your time and consideration on this project.

Sincerely,

Frank Vitale, Vice President  
North Fork Preservation Association

cc: Flathead National Forest Supervisor, NFIA

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United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger Districts  
8975 Highway 2 East P.O. Box 190340 Hungry Horse, MT 59919  
(406) 387-3800 Fax (406) 387-3889

File Code: 2350  
Date: 05/22/03

Frank Vitale, Vice President  
North Fork Preservation Association  
80 Beaver Drive, Polebridge, MT 59928

Dear Mr. Vitale:

Thank you for your letter of support concerning the Cleft Rock trail. As you are aware, the east end of the trail ends on private land and the Forest Service has no legal right of way for access. I support your proposal to reopen this historical trail with your commitment to do the trail maintenance. Before this can take place the trailhead must be moved to National Forest land. Your suggestion of connecting Cleft Rock trail to the Mount Hefty trailhead is a good suggestion and at this time appears to be possible. I have asked Bob Keibler to submit this project to our Capital Investment Program for FY 2004. However, before any project can proceed, a project analysis must be completed. This could delay or ultimately cancel this project depending upon issues and wildlife concerns. If you have any further questions concerning this project feel free to contact me or Bob Keibler here at the office.

Sincerely,

Jimmy DeHerrera  
District Ranger

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*Editor's note: the Cleft Rock Trail project has been submitted for inclusion in the FY 2005 Capitol Investment Program.*

## **A Fortine Gentleman Worth Knowing**

by Steve Thompson

Winton Wedemeyer, the Montana Wilderness Association's founding vice president in 1958, loved to wander into the wild mountains behind his Fortine home in northwestern Montana. Now, the Montana Wilderness Association (MWA), Forest Service officials, and others are seeking to name a prominent mountain peak in the Whitefish Range after Wedemeyer and his brother, Donald.

A tenacious and influential force behind the memorial project is the former president of the Montana State Senate and now current Secretary of State for Montana, Bob Brown, a Whitefish Republican, says he was inspired by Wedemeyer, a lifelong Republican who also served in the Montana Legislature.

"Winton was very distinguished, very well educated," Brown said of Wedemeyer, who died at the age of 89 in 1993. "He was an eminently wise man, a visionary, and a steward of the land. He was shaped by the forest and lived his life in harmony with it. In visiting with Wedemeyer, one had the feeling that he had really learned what Thoreau had gone to Walden Pond to discover. You felt that here was someone who had come face to face with the Great Spirit."

Wedemeyer and his brother grew up beneath the unnamed 7,000-foot peak towering above their family homestead along Deep Creek (about 14 miles from Eureka). The brothers were avid hikers, bird watchers, and photographers. Both emerged as prominent civic leaders and spent their lives working the land.

In 1925 nearly 40 years before the passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act, Wedemeyer submitted an article to a national forestry magazine nominating the mountains behind his home for Wilderness designation. He was responding to an article by Aldo Leopold introducing the concept of Wilderness. Thirty-three years later Wedemeyer helped found the Montana Wilderness Association.

In a 1991 oral history interview with MWA, Wedemeyer expressed regret that much of his proposed Wilderness had been destroyed by roads and clearcuts. Nevertheless, he argued that more than 160, 000 acres of roadless lands in the Whitefish and Galton Ranges- spectacular country that is home to grizzlies, wolves, elk, and bull trout- should be designated Wilderness.

When he died two years later, MWA and the Tobacco Valley Resource Group asked Congress to designate the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area (WSA) as the Winton Wedemeyer Wilderness. However, Congress has yet to permanently protect the Ten Lakes WSA.

Secretary of State Bob Brown says that naming the peak above Wedemeyer's childhood home will bolster the case for designating the larger Winton Wedemeyer Wilderness. The Montana Wilderness Association is hoping the U.S. Geological Survey will so honor the Wedemeyer brothers, perhaps inspiring Congress to fulfill a 73 year vision of Wilderness protection for what remains of Wedemeyer's backyard wilderness....the Ten Lakes, Hefty-Tuchuck, and Thompson-Seton wildlands.

*This article is based on Steve Thomson's lengthy oral interview with Winton Wedemeyer in the summer of 1991.*

## NORTH FORK PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION SUMMER SCHEDULE — 2003

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

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**Saturday, June 21**, Mt. Thompson Seton Hike. 9:00am Tuchuck Campground on Trail Creek Road. Plan on camping on the campground Friday night. Mt. Thompson Seton is the second highest peak in the Whitefish Range at 7820 feet, with an elevation gain of 3220 feet, length 15 miles. Call Dave Hadden of the Montana Wilderness Association at (406) 837 0783.

**Saturday, July 5**, 1:00pm at North Fork Hostel. Board meeting to discuss the Inter Local Agreement meeting on July 15 and the NFPA annual meeting on July 26 as well as possible amendments to the constitution. Everyone welcome! Meet the board.

**Sunday, July 6**, Memorial Service for Howard Harrod, former president of the NFPA. For time and location call Donna Marx at (406) 755 0096.

**Tuesday, July 15**, 6:30pm at Sondreson Hall, Whale Creek, Inter Local Meeting hosted by the NFPA. Make your voice heard to all government agencies. Be there. Potluck at 5:00pm hosted by Glacier Institute.

**Saturday and Sunday, July 19 and 20**, meet 8:30am Saturday at trailhead. **Thoma Trail Maintenance**. Trail #18 and #15. Overnight at Historic Thoma Lookout. Need sleeping bag, pad, water, gloves and food. USFS provides food for evening meal. Bring a tent if you don't want to sleep with the mice. Frank Vitale and his mules will pack your gear. You are welcome to join us Saturday if you can't spare both days. Please call John Frederick (888-5084) or Frank Vitale (752-2909 evenings) so we can plan for food and supplies.

**Saturday, July 19**, 8:00pm at Sondreson Hall, Whale Creek. Grizzly Bear Management Specialist Tim Manley will present the video "Safety in bear country" sponsored by Bear News and NFPA.

**Saturday, July 19**, Mt. Young Hike. With an elevation gain of 2000 feet. Length 12 miles. A Montana Wilderness Association Hike, phone Edwin Fields at (406) 862-9628 days or (406) 862--269 evenings for reservations and to learn the meeting place. \*

**Monday, July 21**, Nature Conservancy Naturalist Hike with Ralph Waldt. Meet at 10:00am in front of Polebridge Mercantile. Location of the hike is determined just prior to the hike based on weather and access.

**Saturday, July 26**, Nasukoin Mountain Hike. Meet 8:00am at the Polebridge Mercantile. Nasukoin is the highest peak in the Whitefish Range, 8086 feet. A strenuous 12 miles, but totally fantastic views in all directions. Leader Debo Powers and phone the Montana Wilderness Association for reservations (406) 443-7350 days.\*

**Saturday, July 26**, Tuchuck Mountain Hike. Meet 8:00am Tuchuck Campground on Trail Creek Road. A 10 mile hike with an elevation gain of 3124 feet. Tuchuck Mountain is the third highest in the Whitefish Range, 7724 feet, and next to the Canadian Border. A Montana Wilderness Association Hike, phone Dave Hadden at (406) 837-0783 or email [paddler@digisys.net](mailto:paddler@digisys.net). \*

**Saturday, July 26**, 5:30pm at Sondreson Hall, North Fork Preservation Association potluck, annual meeting and elections. Program begins approximately at 7:30pm. Program to be announced.

**Wednesday, August 20**, Nature Conservancy Naturalist Hike with Ralph Waldt. Meet at 10:00am in front of Polebridge Mercantile. Location of the hike is determined just prior to the hike based on weather and access.

\* An NFPA activity is also on this day.

# MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

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

If there is a green line on your mailing label, you have paid your dues for 2003. ***Thank you!***

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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 \_\_\_\_\_  
living lightly membership of \$10.00/year \_\_\_\_\_

I want to help. Here is my donation of \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_

Please remove me from your mailing list. \_\_\_\_

NFPA is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your contribution is tax deductible

Mail check or cash to: North Fork Preservation Association  
c/o Ellen Horowitz  
880 Blackmer Drive  
Columbia Falls, MT 59912  
(406) 752-2909

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## **NFPA OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS**

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John Frederick, President (406) 888-5084 [john@nfhostel.com](mailto:john@nfhostel.com)  
Frank Vitale, Vice President (406) 752-2909 [horowitz@centurytel.net](mailto:horowitz@centurytel.net)  
Rachel Potter, Secretary (406) 892-2446 [jrpotter@digisys.net](mailto:jrpotter@digisys.net)  
Ellen Horowitz, Treasurer (406) 752-2909 [horowitz@centurytel.net](mailto:horowitz@centurytel.net)  
Fowler Cary (803) 532-3128 [fowlerbigdogcary@compuserve.com](mailto:fowlerbigdogcary@compuserve.com)  
Amy Edmonds, (406) 758-4105 [edmonds@starband.net](mailto:edmonds@starband.net)  
Rick Mace, (406) 755-8709  
Cole Milstead, (406) 756-3125 [colem49@hotmail.com](mailto:colem49@hotmail.com)

Bill Walker, Web Master/Newsletter Editor [wkwalker@nvdi.com](mailto:wkwalker@nvdi.com)

Officers are elected for a one-year term; board members for two. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact a board member.

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### **NOTICE**

An amendment to the constitution of NFPA will be voted on at the annual meeting on July 26th. The proposed amendment would allow up to two new board members. Presently, NFPA has seven board members and with this constitution change there would be nine. The idea is to have more workers on the board.

### **North Fork Preservation Association**

80 Beaver Drive  
Polebridge MT 59928

*Please remember to pay your dues!*