

NORTH FORK MOUNTAIN PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

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

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Number 1

Reasons for Gravel

By Ben Long

A survey will soon be sent out asking North Fork Landowners once again for their opinion on paving the North Fork Road. Please take these points into consideration before you make your decision.

- ❖ *A gravel North Fork road is safer.* Although paving the road at first blush may seem to promote safety, it will in fact make the road more dangerous for locals and visitors alike. People simply drive faster on paved roads — and speed is the major reason behind wrecks. Safety is particularly important here, since help is often so far away.
- ❖ *Keep our rivers clean.* Dr. Jack Stanford, director of the University of Montana's Yellow Bay Biological Station, points out that minimal road dust makes it into the water. If the road were paved we would see more development and runoff from new driveways and new septic systems that would be far greater than the dust now reaching the water. Slick pavement gives motor oil and other pollution a more direct route to the streams and rivers.
- ❖ *Life in the North Fork is special.* Throughout the world, increased population growth and development has always followed road paving. Keeping the road gravel is the most effective means of slowing down the rate of change and keeping what we all love about the North Fork.
- ❖ *Land-use planning alone isn't enough to slow down change.* Growth in Flathead County is exploding. The County's population is approaching 100,000. In 2004, for the second year in a row, Flathead County was the top residential construction market in the state. In that year, the county registered 160 subdivisions, totaling 1,547 lots and 2,256 acres. New single-family home starts in 2004 totaled 1,136. Stats from 2005 and 2006 are expected to be much higher.

There are 14,700 acres of private property on the North Fork in over 1,000 separate parcels. New divisions are limited to 20 acres. You do the math. We can still have hundreds more residences. The commercial "zoning" approved by the county commissioners is far weaker than the version overwhelmingly preferred by landowners. There are no prohibited uses and any commercial development can be approved by the County's board of adjustments, which lately has been approving nearly every proposal coming before it.

Paving the lower road will inevitably bring more full and part time residents, and increased pressure for additional road paving as well as power and phone. Let's not start down that slippery slope.

- ❖ *A paved road is more dangerous for people and wildlife alike.* Studies have shown that regardless of posted speed limits, straighter roads with more clearing and greater sight distance increase speed and kill more wildlife. They also fragment habitat.
- ❖ *Protect peace and quiet in Glacier National Park.* Standards established in Glacier's 1992 North Fork Management Plan for road and trail use have already been exceeded. A paved road will push use in Glacier far beyond the kind of solitude and quiet we now enjoy — eroding both the park environment and visitor experience.

We can have a better road without going to the expensive extreme of paving the North Fork Road.

And speaking of gravel . . . don't forget gravel.org!

The North Fork Preservation Association's website at www.gravel.org offers an array of news and resources about the North Fork of the Flathead River.

Looking for news about the North Fork? It's on the website. We monitor the news services on a daily basis, posting summaries and links to articles and editorials concerning the North Fork. We also maintain RSS and Atom feeds for those of you who prefer to use feed reader software.

Looking for maps, fire information, current and past issues of the newsletter, upcoming activities, topical articles by local residents and experts? It's all on the website. Check us out.

Got a suggestion or request? Let us know. Get in touch with one of the NFPA board members or send email to webmaster@gravel.org.

Canadian sportsmen oppose coal mine

Keep the Flathead wild, they say

by Steve Thompson

A loose coalition of hunting, angling and outfitters groups and businesses in British Columbia have joined forces with the Montana-based Flathead Coalition to oppose open-pit coal mining in the Canadian North Fork. NFPA is a long-standing member of the Flathead Coalition, which was formed in 1975 to oppose the Cabin Creek coal mine just north of the border.

Today, the controversy over industrial mining in the North Fork has moved upstream. The Cline Mining Company, fronting for large German and Japanese conglomerates, has proposed a mountain-top removal mine in the Foisey Creek tributary to the North Fork.

Harry Leuenberger, who operates an outfitting business in the headwaters of the North Fork, questions the economic and ecological wisdom of permitting this mine. "Is the government willing to sacrifice a 10,000-year-old ecosystem for the sake of a few years of profit for German and Japanese speculators?"

Meanwhile, Australia-based Wasabi Resources and Western Canadian Coal will start moving earth to explore coal resources in the heart of the Flathead River floodplain at the so-called Lillyburt prospect. The Lillyburt exploratory permit was issued despite the government's own analysis, which concluded that "consideration must be given to the proximity of Squaw Creek and the Flathead River. These watercourses raise potential flood problems to *any* pit design" that mining engineers might put forward.

In a statement jointly issued in April by several Fernie-area sportsmen and conservation groups, the Flathead Coalition endorsed the Canadians' notion to "keep the Flathead wild and free of mining." Fernie Rod and Gun Club President Maarten Hart said the wildlife-rich and remote Flathead has long been a special place for hunters from Fernie, Sparwood and other rural BC communities.

Local Canadian opposition to the Cabin Creek mine was a key factor in that mine's demise in the 1980s when the International Joint Commission (IJC) ruled that Rio Algom's scheme would violate the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty between the United States and Canada. So North Fork advocates in Montana are pleased that they have rejoined the fight in 2006.

So far, British Columbia has successfully resisted American proposals to refer the Foisey Creek and Lillyburt mines to the IJC. But adding local sportsman voices for "Flathead Wild" will help in the turbulent world of Canadian politics where anti-American sentiment often lingers below the surface.

Meanwhile, Gov. Brian Schweitzer has appointed a strong team of American experts to a working group that is defining the necessary environmental assessments that Cline must undertake for its Foisey Creek/Lodgepole mine. The Montana delegation includes representatives from state departments of environmental quality and natural resources and conservation, Glacier National Park, the EPA, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Flathead Lake Biological Station.

On a separate track, the governor's office is sending three negotiators to Victoria, BC, this summer to begin negotiating an environmental agreement on transboundary issues. However, BC has refused to delay the mine permits while these discussions continue.

Governor Schweitzer has provided important leadership on this issue, but he needs to know that friends of the North Fork appreciate his efforts. Please send a note of thanks and encouragement to the governor at Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59620.

Steve Thompson is Secretary of the Flathead Coalition. He represents the National Parks Conservation Association, Glacier Field Office. He lives in Whitefish.

Educating a Mega-Giant Corporation?

ThyssenKrupp is a huge, world-wide corporation based in Germany that is a partner in the Cline Mine in Southeastern British Columbia on a tributary of the Flathead River. Presently the corporation is negotiating to acquire a steel-making facility in Hamilton, Ontario, which could use the coking coal of the Cline-owned Lodgepole Mine. ThyssenKrupp has a good environmental reputation so it is responsive to public opinion. Board member Oliver Meister, wrote a letter to the company in German expressing concerns about the Cline Lodgepole Mine. Their less-than-adequate reply was answered in German by NFPA President, John Frederick, with the help of native German speakers.

You may wish to write a letter to ThyssenKrupp mentioning all of the water quality problems that flow south across the border and threaten the North Fork with a mine at that location. Your letter will make a difference and it does not have to be written in German. If you want more information about the mine, see the NFPA web site at www.gravel.org.

Herrn Dr. Jürgen Claasen
Director of Corporate Communications
ThyssenKrupp AG
August-Thyssen Strasse 1
Dusseldorf, Germany

Herrn Hillmar Ellar
Board of Directors of Cline Mining
ThyssenKrupp MinEnergy GmbH
Altendorfer Strasse 120
Essen, Germany

Winton Weydemeyer Wilderness Update (Clint Eastwood Style)

By Mitch Burgard & Rachel Potter

In 1925 Eureka area rancher and farmer Winton Weydemeyer first proposed the Whitefish Range Wilderness. Then in 1964 the Wilderness Act was signed into law. Two years later, in 1966, Clint Eastwood starred in a famous spaghetti western. In 1988 Congress passed the Montana Wilderness Act, recommending areas across Montana, and in the North Fork, as designated wilderness. That same year, President Reagan vetoed the bill at the request of Senate candidate Conrad Burns and his campaign manager, Denny Rehberg. Now, almost two decades since the nation's only presidential wilderness bill veto (and on the fortieth anniversary of the Eastwood movie), we bring you an update on 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly' of the Winton Weydemeyer Wilderness proposal.

The Good (Flathead National Forest/WMPZ):

The Flathead National Forest has recently released its Proposed Forest Land Management Plan for public comment and the NFPA is pleased to announce that much of the Winton Weydemeyer Wilderness proposal within the Flathead is recommended for wilderness designation. This is great news! Earlier versions of the Plan did not recommend any wilderness designation in the North Fork. Your letters changed that. Thanks.

The Bad (Hefty/Thoma exclusion):

Unfortunately, the eastern portion of the proposal (including the scenic Mount Hefty/Thoma ridge and the large roadless acreage of the Ketchikan drainage) was not included in the Flathead's wilderness recommendations. When Weydemeyer first proposed the wilderness in 1925 there was a roadless core of 485,000 acres. Human activity and roads have shrunk that core to less than 171,000 acres today. Such dramatic shrinkage of untamed, irretrievable wild country only emphasizes the need to conserve as much as possible of the little that's left. Inclusion of Mt. Hefty, which borders British Columbia, is particularly important in sending a message to Canada that we see protecting the drainage as the responsibility of both countries.

The Ugly (Kootenai National Forest/KIPZ):

In 1985 the Kootenai National Forest recommended over 100,000 acres of wilderness. In October of 2005, Kootenai Forest Supervisor Bob Castaneda did not recommend even one acre of wilderness from the Winton Weydemeyer proposal. Though not technically in the North Fork drainage, the Kootenai National Forest portion of the wilderness proposal is important ecologically and provides geographic continuity across the Whitefish Divide (along the Grave/Trail Creek roads). Supervisor Castaneda's decision virtually eliminates the chance for congressionally designed protection in the very place where Weydemeyer first formulated his vision for a Whitefish Range Wilderness... his own 'backyard'.

Go ahead. Make their day.

If the pen is mightier than the sword then these three steps will make you more effective at getting your point across than Dirty Harry.

1) *It is critical to write the Flathead Forest/WMPZ* and praise them for including parts of the proposed Winton Weydemeyer Wilderness. Also urge the Flathead to include the Mount Hefty/Ketchikan region as there are no significant conflicts with timber use, fire mitigation or motorized recreation in any portion of the proposed Winton Weydemeyer.

Send your comments by July 31 to: Proposed Land Management Plan, Bitterroot National Forest, 1801 North 1st St., Hamilton, MT 59840. E-mail: wmpz@fs.fed.us. No that's not a typo; the planning team is working out of the Bitterroot.

2) *Write the Kootenai National Forest/KIPZ* and tell them why it is important that their portion of the Winton Weydemeyer area be considered as recommended wilderness. By not recommending wilderness there is no consistency across the Flathead and Kootenai National Forest boundaries.

Send your comments no later than August 10th to: Kirsten Kaiser / KIPZ Planner, Kootenai National Forest, 1101 Highway 2 West, Libby, MT 59923. E-mail: r1_kipz_revision@fs.fed.us

3) *Use 'www' to fight for the 'WWW'*

Go to the National Forest Action webpage (www.nationalforestaction.org) and comment further on both plans. The Montana Wilderness Association has sponsored this fun, informational site that simplifies commenting on both the KIPZ (www.fs.fed.us/kipz) and WMPZ (www.fs.fed.us/r1/wmpz) Proposed Land Management Plans. Though electronic comments might seem like a duplication of your letter writing efforts, the email you compose here will go to a wide audience of Montana Congressmen, the governor and local, national and regional foresters. You are even automatically entered to win some nice outdoor clothing!

For more information about Winton Weydemeyer and the proposed wilderness named after him, go to: www.wildmontana.org.

Mitch Burgard lives in Columbia Falls when he's not at his family's cabin on Trail Creek. He would rather be Jeremiah Johnson than Josie Wales. Rachel Potter lives with her family in Columbia Falls and has a cabin on Teepee Lake.

North Fork Bear News — How It Started

By Ellen Horowitz

Stories of grizzlies ransacking cabins sound more like mountain man tales than recent history. But the break-ins of 19 cabins by a single bear in 1998 became the impetus behind the North Fork Bear News, now in its seventh year.

Following the capture of the rogue bear — a 28-year-old silvertip — several North Fork residents formed a bear-aware working group. Going door to door, they informed neighbors about ursine activities in their area and ways to prevent bear/human conflicts.

North Fork Bear News Editor, Amy Edmonds Secrest, said she joined the group because she was troubled that the “monarch grizzly” had become food-conditioned and that other North Fork bears were in danger of the same fate. “The damage he caused would have been preventable if people hadn’t allowed him to get food rewards,” said Amy. “I saw him in the trap, saw his face, and the whole thing just seemed so senseless. Instead of dying in the woods with dignity, he was hauled away in a trap to be euthanized.”

Amy, a wildlife biologist, had considered starting a newsletter prior to the incident. Growing weary of hearing rumors and misinformation about bear management, she wanted to provide facts. She was curious about the bears. What were their offenses? How often did Karelian bear dogs work the bears and what were the results? She also wanted to share this information in an efficient way. With help from Gerry Stearns, another member of the original neighborhood group, which has since disbanded, the North Fork Bear News was born.

The annual newsletter, sent to all North Fork landowners (and NFPA members), includes updates of grizzly bear activities and management in the North Fork. It provides guidelines for living in bear country and ways to prevent property damage by bears, among other grizzly-related topics. Tim Manley, grizzly bear management specialist with Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, thinks the newsletter is an effective tool to help residents reduce conflicts with bears.

Other communities in Montana have bear-aware groups, but the North Fork was the first (and possibly the only one in the country) to send newsletters to all its residents. It served as inspiration to at least one other group: Last spring a group in the Seeley-Swan mailed its first newsletter.

Stand up for conservation of private lands

By Ben Long

If you live in the Flathead Valley and enjoy the clean water, wildlife habitat and beauty of working farms, then you benefit from voluntary conservation agreements, also known as “conservation easements.” Likewise, everyone should be alarmed that a few folks involved in county politics have a grudge against these valuable, free-market tools for private lands that conserve community values.

Hunters, anglers, birdwatchers, boaters — frankly, just about everyone in the Flathead Valley — benefit from conservation easements. Maintaining our water, beauty and wildlife helps our entire valley prosper.

In short, conservation easements are agreements between property owners and a non-profit land trust. Under these agreements, landowners limit or restrict development on their property to conserve the working landscape, habitat, clean water or other public good. The land stays in private hands, remains on the tax rolls, and is generally used for agriculture or timber production. The public is guaranteed that public values such as scenery, open space and wildlife habitat will remain intact because the easement remains intact no matter who owns the land.

Here are some examples of private land conservation in northwestern Montana:

- The Flathead Land Trust and private landowners have agreed to conserve 2,000 acres of sloughs and associated wetlands in the lower valley, between Kalispell and Flathead Lake. University of Montana experts have identified these lands as crucial natural filters that keep Flathead Lake clean. Under the agreement, the lands may be farmed or used in other ways compatible with clean water, but will never be subdivided.
- The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Plum Creek Timber Company have conserved 300,000 acres of corporate timberland in the Thompson River country. Under this agreement, Plum Creek (or a future landowner) is free to log the land as they see best, but the land will never be subdivided. So the land will be open to provide wildlife habitat and open for deer and elk hunting.
- Home Ranch Bottoms south of Polebridge is well known for its views of Glacier Park and for its resident herd of deer and elk. It's prime habitat for endangered species, such as wolves and grizzly bears, as well as big game winter range. Shortly before he died, rancher Tom Ladenberg signed an agreement with the Nature Conservancy of Montana, again allowing the land to be ranched, but not split up.
- Since 2000, Montana Land Reliance has helped 12 Bigfork-area landowners and families place voluntary conservation agreements on their land that protect its rural and scenic heritage as well as natural areas and fish and wildlife habitat. The agreements total some 1,608 acres in the Bigfork area alone.

Communities like Missoula, Helena and Gallatin County passed local bonds that help fund conservation easements. Hunting groups like Ducks Unlimited and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation use conservation easements to protect crucial nesting habitat or winter range. Clearly, conservation easements are a flexible, voluntary land management tool that both landowners and communities find valuable. No wonder landowners in the Flathead are lining up to find ways to place easements on their land.

Unfortunately, some misguided critics are out to undermine conservation easements. For example, they are trying to discourage conservation easements in the county growth policy, now being written by Flathead County.

The valuable thing about conservation easements is they offer certainty. Future generations are guaranteed cleaner water, robust wildlife, and the freedom to hunt and fish, under traditional conservation easements.

Critics want to replace that certainty with “term easements” that expire after a set time, say a decade. The landowner only promises not to develop the land for a period of time, and may be compensated for it. This results in subsidized land speculation — where a landowner is rewarded for sitting on a parcel, but is still free to subdivide it later, most probably at a profit. This flawed tool lacks the long-term certainty for the public and does not carry the same kind of tax benefits for landowners.

Please contact the Flathead County Commissioners by emailing enelson@co.flathead.mt.us and Long Range Planning task force by contact the chair of the task force committee on Natural Resources, Karen Reeves at kbr@cyberport.net. Tell them that the voters of Flathead County appreciate the long-term benefits of traditional conservation easements. If we treasure our freedom, our clean water and our natural beauty, Flathead County must accept no substitutes.

For more information about conservation easements, contact . . .

The Montana Land Reliance www.mtlandreliance.org (406) 837-217,

The Flathead Land Trust at www.flatheadlandtrust.org (406) 752-8293 or

The Nature Conservancy of Montana, www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/montana/

North Fork Preservation Association Summer Schedule — 2006

Sunday, July 16, Thoma Trail Maintenance. Frank Vitale will pack chainsaws, gas and sometimes people. We need lots of help. Phone John Frederick at 888-5084 or Frank Vitale evenings at 752-2909.

Wednesday, July 19, 5:00pm, potluck dinner at Sondreson Hall courtesy of Glacier Institute. Meat dish provided, bring a side dish. Followed by Inter Local Agreement meeting at 6:30pm. Be there!

Saturday, July 29, 5:00pm potluck at Sondreson Community Hall, **North Fork Preservation Association potluck, annual meeting and elections**. Annual meeting begins at 6:15pm. Program begins approximately at 7:00pm. Wolverines of Glacier presentation by Jeff Copeland, Glacier Park Science Project Leader. Questions: 888-5084.

Sunday, August 13, Hornet Lookout maintenance. Overnight at this remarkable, historic lookout. NFPA will put preservative on the logs. The lookout was built in 1922 at a cost of \$719.38. A fall-back date in case of rain is Sunday, August 20. Phone Frank Vitale evenings at (406) 752-2909 or John Frederick at (406) 888-5084 for directions.

Wilderness, Preservation Thereof

This amazing letter is used with the permission of its author. It was sent to Senator Conrad Burns late last year.

Dear Senator Burns:

My great-uncle, L.O. Vaught, came into the Glacier Park area in 1894. He knew George Bird Grinnell and Lyman Sperry, as well as most of the old-timers in the Belton, Apgar, and Lake McDonald area. There is a mountain on the NW side of McDonald named for him, as he was the first to climb it.

He began a family tradition of enthusiastic support for the preservation of wilderness which has led to membership in several preservationist and conservationist organizations through four generations.

In 1948, my parents purchased land in the North Fork of the Flathead, which was then a fairly remote near-wilderness. We continue to hold that property and pay taxes on it, and enjoy its primitive setting.

Our family has a long history of personal relationships with members of both the Park Service and the Forest Service, dedicated men and women whose major goal is to preserve the national treasure which the unspoiled wilderness and protected regions represent.

As these regions were the legacy of L.O. Vaught, my parents, my sister and myself, for us and for our children and grandchildren, we urge you to help to preserve those areas in as close to their original, unspoiled state as possible. When my parents moved their summer home to the North Fork, it was precisely because the Park was becoming too crowded. Too many motorboats on McDonald, too much road traffic on Going-to-the-Sun Highway. My father - an attorney - even wanted to be out of reach of the telephone.

If motorized vehicles of any sort are allowed into these protected areas, they will be ruined forever. Wildlife will be further disturbed, and there will be more frequent incidents with mountain lions and grizzlies as they respond negatively to the pressure of noisy encroachment on their natural habitat.

Those who wish to hike in solitude, sit quietly and contemplate the astounding natural beauties of the forests and mountains, have the same right to protection as do non-smokers. Permit vehicles, and they have no recourse; permit smoking, and non-smokers have no recourse. There are plenty of places motorized vehicles can operate freely. Put them into the wilderness, and there is no place left for those who wish to quietly commune with nature.

We, as a family with deep roots in Montana, urge you to consider the right to solitude, the right to stillness, the right to be undisturbed of those who treasure nature.

Sincerely yours,

Edward V. Foreman, Trustee
The Helen C. Foreman Family Trust

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 2006. ***Thank you!***

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 \$20.00/year _____
family membership of \$25.00/year _____
living lightly membership of \$10.00/year _____

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

Interested in receiving the "North Fork Bear News"? See the note below.

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

The informative and unusual "North Fork Bear News" is published annually as a cooperative effort of North Fork residents, Tim Manley, grizzly bear management specialist for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the North Fork Preservation Association, and private donors. The editor is North Fork biologist Amy Edmonds Secrest with help from Gerry Wackrow and Ellen Horowitz. It is mailed to landowners. If you want a copy write NFPA, 80 Beaver Drive, Polebridge, MT 59928. Indicate donations to support Bear News on the membership/renewal form "I want to help" line.

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

North Fork Preservation Association

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Please remember to pay your dues!