

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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UNESCO World Heritage Committee to Investigate Threats to Waterton-Glacier

At this year's meeting in Seville, Spain, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's World Heritage Committee considered a petition submitted by a coalition of 12 conservation organizations from the U.S. and Canada to place Waterton-Glacier Park on the short list of endangered World Heritage Sites. This is a big deal. Of the 890 sites world-wide considered to be of major cultural or natural significance, only 30 are listed as at-risk, usually due to severe political or developmental pressures. Having a site added to the endangered list is a major diplomatic black eye for the host country. (Or host *countries* in this instance; Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park spans the U.S.-Canada border.) Just getting such an issue placed on the agenda is a bit of an eyebrow-raiser, especially when it is submitted by an ad-hoc coalition of conservation groups with no formal standing, albeit backed by 50,000+ signatures.

In essence, the petition stated that Waterton-Glacier, a World heritage Site since 1995, faces a significant threat due to planned and potential resource extraction activities in the drainage of the Canadian Flathead, including coal mining and coalbed methane development. Of particular concern is the Cline open-pit coal mine, which will leach pollutants into the headwaters of the Flathead River and affect not only Water-Glacier, but also Flathead Lake and the surrounding communities.

On June 26, after the usual behind the scenes diplomatic tap dance, the committee voted to send a mission to investigate the situation. A press release posted on the savewatertonglacier.com web log summarized it nicely: *[The committee voted] unanimously for a 2009 World Heritage Centre mission that will "evaluate and provide recommendations on the requirements for ensuring the protection" of Waterton-Glacier, citing concern about the threats that potential mining and energy development within the Flathead Valley would have on water and ecosystem connectivity. It asked Canada and the US to work together to prepare a report – by February 1, 2010 – that examines all Flathead River Valley energy and mining proposals and their cumulative impacts.*

So, the issue is not laid to rest and has gained considerable international recognition. Monitor the gravel.org website for further developments. Among other items, we'll be posting the full text of the World Heritage Committee resolution concerning Waterton-Glacier as soon as it becomes available.

[Editor's note: The web log at savewatertonglacier.com was established specifically to report on issues related to the World Heritage Committee meeting and is a good source of additional information.]

The North Fork Landowners' Association Web Site is Good Information Source

One of the destinations on our web site's "Related Links" list, the North Fork Landowners' Association site (www.nflandowners.com), is an excellent source of news and events related to the North Fork. Of special interest is the Road Page which has well-researched information on the North Fork Road. Especially interesting is the North Fork Landowners' Road Committee discussions on April 12 with Chas Cartwright, Superintendent of Glacier National Park. The entire web site, however, is worth reading.

Mending the Web: From Wolves to Elk to Songbirds

Everything is connected in nature, as part of the web of life. Wolves affect everything in an ecosystem, this is why they are called keystone predators. Remove them from a landscape, and the whole system begins to collapse—similarly to how when you remove the keystone from an arch, the arch falls apart. When you get rid of a top predator, such as the wolf, elk and deer grow more abundant and bold, damaging their habitat through intense herbivory. This leads to loss of biodiversity and destabilization of ecosystems. Lacking top predators, ecosystems become capable of supporting fewer species. With top predators in them, ecosystems contain richer and more diverse habitat, and thus can support a greater number of species of animals such as of songbirds and butterflies. Some scientists have found that wolves even have positive effects on trout and beaver habitat, and on things we can't see, such as insect communities that live in the soil and micorrhizal fungi. Additionally, wolves enhance elk fitness, by preying on weak animals.

Scientists are studying these effects in Yellowstone National Park, where since the 1996 wolf reintroduction they have documented dramatic recovery of over-browsed aspen, willows, and cottonwoods. They have found formerly eroded streambanks stabilizing, and an increase in the diversity of songbirds. These trends may be appearing in my study areas in Glacier National Park. Here I am taking a very close look at how predators affect their prey, and how that affects everything else in nature, using radio-collared wolves and elk, and by measuring plant communities and biodiversity. I am finding that wolf presence and absence have left bold

patterns on this landscape. During the many decades in the last century when there were no wolves in Glacier, few aspen grew into mature trees. Since wolves have returned, aspen, which provide valuable habitat for songbirds and other species, and important food for elk in winter, are once again flourishing.

However, my science is revealing that it may not be enough to simply have wolves in a landscape, we need the right amount of them to reap their ecological benefits. Although we may have crossed this threshold with current wolf numbers in the northern Rocky Mountain Recovery Area, we need more human tolerance and a greater understanding of exactly what it is that wolves do to an ecosystem before we can be assured of achieving these goals after they are de-listed.

Cristina Eisenberg is a PhD candidate at Oregon State University and a wolf researcher, working in the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem in Montana and Alberta, as well as on a Colorado working ranch. She has lived in northwest Montana since 1997 and has a book forthcoming with Island Press about keystone predators in all sorts of ecosystems.

Cristina will be the speaker at the annual meeting of the North Fork Preservation Association on Saturday, July 25, at 7:30 pm.

Friends of Chuck Jonkel Unite!

Dr. Charles Jonkel has been in the North Fork studying bears – first black then grizzly – for well over thirty years. Before that he worked on polar bears in the vicinity of Churchill, Manitoba. Currently he is the president of the Missoula-based Great Bear Foundation.

The Great Bear Foundation and Salish Kootenai College Media decided they should do a documentary on Chuck. Part of it is completed, but this is expensive. The producers have already raised over \$12,000 from private donors and a challenge grant from The Cinnabar Foundation, but they still need \$8,000 to reach their fundraising goal.

If you would like to help, the address is

Great Bear Foundation
P.O. Box 9383
Missoula, MT 59807

Make your checks out to Great Bear Foundation, and please specify that the donation is for the film project. More information about the film may be found at www.greatbear.org where you may also donate online.

Honoring Family History in the North Fork

The following article is reprinted with permission from the Fall 2008 edition of View Points, the newsletter of the Flathead Land Trust.

As trustees of the Helen C. Foreman Family Trust, Margaret (Peggy) Cohn and Edward Foreman felt a responsibility to preserve the family's remote North Fork acreage as their parents, Orville and Helen, would have wanted. "We were always a very conservation minded family," said Edward. "Our mother and father both thought the North Fork property was ideal for conservation, so when Peggy and I learned about easements, we were very interested."

In 2005, they worked with the Forest Service to place an easement on a little over 10 acres of the property, including the river frontage, but there remained 225 more acres to consider. The heirs to the Trust, thirteen in all, agreed they wanted to spell out specific guidelines for what could and could not be done with the acreage, so they turned to Flathead Land Trust for assistance in pursuing a voluntary conservation agreement. After several months of fine tuning easement language and completing the required assessments of the property, the 225-acre donated easement is expected to be finalized by the end of October.

As landowners in the area since the 1940s, the Foreman name is well known and well respected in the North Fork. Helen's uncle L.O. Vaught, after whom Glacier's Mt. Vaught is named, purchased the late Emil Peterson's homestead in the 1940s as a family summer home. He then split the acreage between Helen and her brother Edward Cleary, whose family still owns part of the original homestead. In the 1950s, Helen and her husband Orville added to their family holdings when they bought the G. Ed Peterson homestead.

Already well established as summer locals in the North Fork by the 1960s, Orville Foreman, an attorney, is still remembered today as one of the founders of the North Fork Compact. Considered one of the first such land planning agreements in Montana, the compact grew out of the concerns of some residents about the threat of subdivision and potential environmental harm that could come with no land use plan in place. Foreman's vision progressed from an idea to informal group planning meetings to a final compact written and formalized by Orville in 1971. The compact, with slight revisions, is still in effect today.

The Foreman family history in the Glacier Park area goes back much farther than ownership in the North Fork, though—much farther, in fact, than the existence of Glacier Park itself. Though L.O. Vaught purchased the first piece of family land in the '40s, he first visited the region in 1896 on an extended camping trip with friends on Lake McDonald. He and his friends continued this summer tradition for nearly 25 years, only moving camp to Upper Quartz Lake when tourism from the newly established Glacier Park brought a lot more people to their corner of the world. Over time, Vaught's niece Helen wanted her family, including her children Peggy, Connie and Edward, to come along. Because the children were too small for wilderness camping, they re-established the Lake McDonald camp tradition in 1933 and continued there until 1948, when Vaught purchased the Peterson homestead.

There are two residential areas on the current property, representing the locations of the original Emil and Ed Peterson homesteads. The original homesteaded cabins remain on both parcels and are still used today, along with other original outbuildings, a log building converted to a bunkhouse, and a "new" cabin built by Helen and Orville in the 1960s.

Today, the descendents of Helen and Orville continue to enjoy the family home during summer visits. The land is still wild and provides natural habitat for many of the same native plants, fish, and wildlife that abounded in the time when L.O. Vaught first came to love it. Common loons, bald eagles, raptors, bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, grizzly and black bears, mountain lions, grey wolves, deer, elk and moose all call this area home.

In 1999, Tim Foreman, Edward's son, completed the Forest Stewardship course and developed a stewardship plan for their acreage. This carefully crafted plan will form the basis for their management of the forested land in the future.

L.O. Vaught purchased the first family land, Peggy says, because "he felt so strongly about Montana, not just for education and recreation, but for general health and well being." Peggy is proud that five generations of the Foreman family have now had the experience of learning about wilderness conservation from spending time on the property, and share Vaught's strong feelings for the place. "This easement is the culmination of our family's bent toward conservation," added Edward. Because family members are scattered from Oregon to Pennsylvania and as far away as Amsterdam, Peggy considers the property "a very important emotional center for the family." But the value of this donated easement extends beyond the Foreman family itself, and beyond the benefits to the land that has been protected. The Foreman's effort to honor Orville and Helen and their North Fork heritage has value for all us who enjoy knowing there are places out there that will remain forever wild, and that there are families like the Foremans who care enough to protect them.

But wait, there's more . . .

If the gravel.org web site and our humble newsletter aren't sufficient, there's also John's mailing list. John Frederick, the president of NFPA, sends out alerts and other information one to four times a month, depending on circumstances. If you would like to receive these emails, send John a note at john@nfhostel.com.

North Fork Preservation Association Summer Events — 2009

Wednesday, July 8, 1:00 p.m. Inter Local at Sondreson Hall, hosted by the North Fork Preservation Association. Preceded at 10:00 a.m. by a Firewise meeting and at noon by a potluck with hamburgers and sauces provided by Glacier Institute. Be there! Questions: 888-5084.

The “Firewise meeting” mentioned above is a Fire Mitigation Committee workshop. The workshop will assess the status of federal, state and private wildfire mitigation efforts on the North Fork six years after the Wedge Canyon fire. Agency representatives will consider what's been done and what remains to be done.

Saturday, July 25. North Fork Preservation Association annual meeting at Sondreson Hall. Potluck at 5:00pm. Business meeting and elections at about 6:30 p.m. 7:30pm program features Cristina Eisenberg of Oregon State University with a PowerPoint presentation titled “Trophic Cascade and Wolves.” All are welcome.

Other Activities

These events are sponsored by the North Fork Landowners’ Association. See their web site (<http://www.nflandowners.com>) for further details and listings of more activities, including cycling and canoeing/kayaking/rafting trips. For the hikes listed below, do not just show up, let them know you are coming.

Monday, July 13, 8:30 a.m. Hike to Link Lake; 3.5mi, easy. Meet at Red Meadow Creek & North Fork roads. Contact Linda Pittman, 888-5319.

Saturday, July 25, 8:30 a.m. Mount Thompson-Seton hike, 11mi, strenuous. Meet at Whale Creek & North Fork roads. Contact Linda Pittman, 888-5319.

Sunday, August 2, 11:00 a.m. Community Float from north end of Wurtz Airstrip to Sondreson Meadow. For further information or to arrange shuttle, call Gerry Stearns at 752-7985.

Wednesday, August 19, 8:00 a.m. Nasukoin Mountain hike, 12-plus mi, strenuous. Meet at Red Meadow Creek & North Fork roads. Contact Linda Pittman, 888-5319.

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

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

If you have paid your dues for 2009. ***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 _____

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 Lane
Columbia Falls, MT 59912
(406) 752-2909

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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.

Don't forget to keep an eye on our web site! – www.gravel.org

North Fork Preservation Association

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