

NORTH FORK PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

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

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The Second 'Missing Piece Rendezvous' Comes to the North Fork

By John Frederick

The "Missing Piece" refers to the area north of us known as the Flathead of British Columbia (in Canada, the North Fork Flathead is called just the Flathead River). The region east of the river is a logical extension to the existing Waterton Lakes National Park on the other side of the Continental Divide in Alberta. The first "Missing Piece Rendezvous" was at Waterton town site last fall to a large crowd of happy people.

The second "Missing Piece Rendezvous" will be held on the porch of the North Fork Community Hall featuring Harvey Locke and Sid Marty at 7:30 pm on Saturday, July 26. Both are engaging entertainers. Bring folding chairs or a blanket and bug dope, if needed.

Harvey Locke does not give up easily. This well-known Canadian activist has been trying to have the part of the Flathead of British Columbia that is above Glacier National Park added to Waterton National Park for over twenty years.

I met him 25 years ago on a Waterton-Glacier Superintendents' Hike and remember him talking in French to a warden in Waterton Park, demonstrating to me his appealing personality (even though I didn't know French). I marked him as someone unique although I knew nothing about him at the time.

Harvey Locke is recognized as a global leader in the conservation of wilderness and large landscapes. He is known in Canada as one of the leading conservation activists there. He thinks about large landscapes – the movement to establish wildlife corridors from Yellowstone to Yukon was his idea. Harvey has many conservation groups in place on both sides of the border to back up what he says and when he says something it has authority. His connections to powerful individuals are truly amazing. He makes things happen.

I never really met Sid Marty, a well-known Albertan writer, but I heard him play his guitar, sing his own songs and do some readings from twenty feet away at the Waterton Opera House last fall. His songs and words are pleasant to the ear. He has written five non-fiction books, the last being *The Black Grizzly of Whiskey Creek*. His website is at sidmarty.com.

The idea of having a part of the Flathead of British Columbia become a park is an old one. George "Kootenai" Brown proposed it a century ago when he was the only warden for what would later become Waterton National Park.

The 100,000-acre Flathead National Park Harvey Locke envisions in southeastern British Columbia would be a wilderness park with gravel roads and little infrastructure, resembling a wildlife preserve with trails. He can make it happen if we all work together.

The program on Saturday, July 26, starts at 7:30 p.m. at the Sondreson Community Hall at Whale Creek (11 miles north of Polebridge). The potluck and gabfest begins at 5:00 p.m. inside the Hall, followed by a leisurely business meeting at a little before 7:00 p.m. Again, don't forget to bring folding chairs or blankets for the program outside.

The Whitefish Range Partnership

By Amy Robinson

I didn't know what I was getting into in October of 2012 when I jumped onboard with Montana Wilderness Association and soon thereafter joined the Whitefish Range Partnership (WRP). I quickly learned, however, that the Partnership was seriously committed. During the first half-a-dozen meetings the group expanded, and we sorted ourselves be around 30 people sitting around the table representing diverse interests. Caring about the Whitefish Range was only one thing we had in common. People were also tired of old ineffective ways of engaging the Forest Service, and everyone craved alternatives focused on practical solutions to public lands management. We decided it was time to create our own solutions, and we did so by working together.

The goal was to compile a package of recommendations specific to the Whitefish Range that would be submitted for consideration in the new forest plan. Even more, the WRP decided to strive for one hundred percent consensus. Meaning, everyone had to vote positively for each component of the agreement and then the package as a whole.

For thirteen months we worked on the Agreement, meeting bimonthly with the full Partnership and frequently in subcommittees. We tackled a range of topics from weeds to fire, and from wilderness to motorized recreation. All interests and points of view had a place and were respected. We listened, we compromised, and we made tough choices that felt uncomfortable. It was democracy at its best. I'd even venture to say that the process of working together, and learning from one another, changed us. In the end, the Partnership stuck together through the toughest topics, even wilderness.

In November 2013 the Agreement was completed and presented to the Forest Service. It was positively received, and the Forest Service praised the WRP, knowing that full consensus is extremely difficult to obtain among us humans. Nothing is certain, however, and the WRP continues to advocate for the Agreement in the larger forest planning process. If you'd like to learn more about what the Agreement means for you, and explore if you might support it, please inquire with one of us. We love sharing our successes.

Amy Robinson, Field Director for the Montana Wilderness Association, lives and works in Whitefish. She can be reached at arobinson@wildmontana.org.

North Fork Bill Caught Up in Montana Politics

By Dave Hadden

Didn't we all think that the international effort to protect the North Fork Flathead River from coal mining was all but done in 2013?

British Columbia had passed legislation in 2011 banning mining and energy development north of the border. And, for the first time in some 20 years, Montana's congressional delegation all supported a piece of conservation legislation: the North Fork Watershed Protection Act. The stars had finally aligned after 38 years of local, a-political effort to protect the North Fork.

Regretfully, it was not to be.

Congressional gridlock seems to permeate the 'ether', affecting this legislation that everyone supports – Republicans and Democrats, independents, local chambers of commerce and city councils, and even the energy industry. Three Republican U.S. senators from other states put a hold on this made-in-Montana bill. In a blink, the North Fork Watershed Protection Act went from a-political to political.

We hear a lot about 'congressional gridlock'. We think it is something Washington, D.C. invented, and we think our congress-people are somehow above it all, that we can send them to D.C. to 'clean up Washington.' But the history of the North Fork legislation demonstrates that gridlock is just as much a Montana political problem as it is a D.C. problem.

Our congress-people say they support the bill, but during the election cycle (which seems to run continuously from election to election anymore) their support vanishes in election-year rhetoric about how Congress is 'broken'. It's a game where Daines can't 'afford' to give Walsh a 'victory' in his bid for a U.S. Senate seat – and vice versa. Neither can actually accomplish the work of the 'people' because of political engineering.

Montana politics are broken. Montana politics reflects Washington politics of winner take all and the vilification of others. Or, conversely, Washington is just a reflection of our dysfunction at home.

The consequence: legislation that Montanans have asked for – nay, demanded – remains subject to political one-upmanship. Remains un-done.

The brilliant quality of the North Fork Watershed Protection Act is that it brought people together. It demonstrates the power of a good idea and of people working together. The North Fork River is a place everyone cherishes.

And yet... the short-sightedness of our politicians brings us all down to the lowest common denominator: seeking political power for its own sake.

Dave Hadden is the Executive Director of Headwaters Montana. He can be reached at dhadden@wildmontana.org.

North Fork Hiking

By Debo Powers

One of the best things about living in the North Fork is the proximity of great hiking. Surrounded by public lands, we have a rich treasure of magnificent places where we can find quiet, solitude, and natural beauty. While we work hard to preserve and protect the precious natural resources around us, it is good for environmental activists to get out and explore the landscape that means so much to us. Hiking reconnects us with the land and its beauty and reminds us why we work so hard to protect it.

There are many excellent day hikes in our North Fork backyard both in the national park and the national forest. Personally, I try to get to the top of Hefty, Tuchuck, Thoma, Thompson-Seton, Review, Nasukoin, Huckleberry, Cyclone, and Numa at least once every year. It's like visiting old friends.

If you would like to join me, I am leading a hike for the Montana Wilderness Association to Mount Thompson-Seton on Saturday, August 23. Participation is limited to 10 people, so you must register for the hike. Go to <http://www.wildmontana.org/walks> to register and sign the waiver form.

In addition, I am leading a hike for the Glacier Mountaineering Society to Tuchuck on Sunday, September 21. To register for this hike, you must be a member of GMS and signup on their website at www.glaciersmountaineers.com.

Debo Powers has been hiking North Fork trails since 1979.

Bears and Wolverines, Trees and Water, and That Facebook Thing

By Bill Walker

This past year, even casual visitors to the NFPA website (gravel.org) would notice we spent an inordinate amount of time on big, furry omnivores and landscape issues. There's been a lot of concern over the future of wolverines due to projected habitat loss and a great deal of angst over the looming removal of the grizzly bear from the endangered species list. Meanwhile, the non-partisan, broadly popular North Fork Watershed Protection Act got snagged in the U.S. Senate by election-year posturing (see also Dave Hadden's article above). In the midst of all this, the Flathead National Forest was embroiled in the public collaborative feedback phase of developing a new Forest Plan. (Several NFPA members were involved, by the way, as well as a number of other North Forkers.)

The website itself saw a number of improvements. A lot of it was behind-the-curtain infrastructure work, but a few things were more obvious. For example, we now have an "About Us" page hosting the full NFPA mission and goals statement. Also, there are links to a downloadable membership signup form posted several places throughout the site and the "Contact" form has been tweaked a bit.

We expanded the social media stuff, too. Besides the Twitter feed, there's now a Facebook page. Any significant website article is now cross-posted to both Twitter and Facebook. For

those of you who employ a news reader application to keep track of all your website interests, the RSS feed still works, too.

Enjoy!

As usual, we're always on the lookout for contributions – photos, articles, pointers to useful material and so forth. Suggestions are always appreciated, as is the occasional compliment.

The NFPA web site is at <http://www.gravel.org/>.

Hiking with Tools: Introducing the North Fork Trails Association

By Bill Walker

Last year, due to an extended forest service gate closure, John Frederick and I went looking for Trail 4, which appeared to offer a handy back door into the Coal Ridge-Hay Creek drainage area. It turned out to be a very nice route, well worth the effort. Further, the process of rediscovering Trail 4 sparked a lot of general interest and assistance from the North Fork community and got the attention of the Forest Service.

So, the next thing we knew, we had a budding trails organization, which we proceeded to firm up over the winter. There is an extensive trail system in the North Fork, but reductions in federal funding have allowed it to become dilapidated over the last couple of decades. The “North Fork Trails Association” formed with the goal of reversing this process and restoring the trail system to its original purpose as a vehicle to support recreation, forest management and research.

Enough theory, what are we actually doing? It's still early days, but we're off to a good start...

- We're doing actual, on-the-ground trail work. Initially, this means finishing up Trail 4 and expanding our efforts throughout the Coal Ridge-Hay Creek area. We're also eyeing several project areas farther north. (We're open to suggestions, by the way.)
- We're developing a way for both locals and visitors to submit trail reports. This will help us identify and target the areas needing the most work.
- We're looking at funding sources and ways to work with other organizations.

What do we need? Volunteers is the big item. The more helpers, the more stuff we can get done. We also have a couple of openings for directors. Equipment donations are helpful, too. (So far, we've got a chain saw and access to a couple of 1988-vintage Pulaskis.) Oh, and we're going to need some money one of these days, too.

All this to one side, we're already having a lot of fun. Come join us. We have a web site at <http://nftrails.org> where you can see what we are doing and get in touch with us.

Bill Walker is, for now, the chair of the North Fork Trails Association. He can be reached at wkwalker@nvgdi.com.

North Fork Preservation Association Summer Events — 2014

Saturday, July 26. North Fork Preservation Association annual meeting featuring Canadian activist Harvey Locke speaking on “The Missing Piece of Waterton National Park.” He is a charismatic orator who thinks in large landscapes. One of his ideas is the concept of wildlife corridors from Yellowstone to Yukon. Harvey begins his talk at 7:30 p.m. Potluck dinner starts at 5:00 p.m., followed by the business meeting. For more information call 406-888-5084.

Other Activities

This event is sponsored by the North Fork Landowners’ Association. See their web site (<http://www.nflandowners.com>) for further details and listings of more activities.

Tuesday, July 30, 10:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Fifth Annual Robin Cox Memorial Weed Roundup and BBQ. There will be three presentations on weed issues. Bring your weeds and have them identified. Burgers courtesy of Valerie Cox at noon; feel free to contribute other potluck items.

This may be the last weed roundup, so don’t miss it. Contact Valerie Cox for details (phone 406-570-7734 or email coxvalerie329@yahoo.com).

These hikes are sponsored by the Montana Wilderness Association (MWA). They are fielding a number of hikes in Northwest Montana this summer. See the MWA website for full details and to pre-register for any of these hikes (<http://wildmontana.org/our-work/programs/wilderness-walks/2014-wilderness-walks/>). Here is a sampler of hikes related to the North Fork:

Saturday, July 26, Link Lake. Moderate difficulty.

Saturday, August 2, Huntsberger Lake. Moderate difficulty.

Saturday, August 16, Cyclone Peak Lookout Geology Tour. Moderate difficulty.

Saturday, August 16, Moose Peak Hike and BBQ. Moderate difficulty.

Saturday, August 23, Mount Thompson-Seton. Strenuous.

A Gentle Reminder: Time to Pay Your Dues!

If you have not yet paid your NFPA membership dues for 2014, it’s time!

Regular membership dues are \$20/year; \$25/year for the whole family.

“Living lightly” (students and such like) dues are only \$10/year.

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

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

If you have paid your dues for 2014. ***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. _____

Mail check or cash to: North Fork Preservation Association
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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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Please remember to pay your dues!