

NORTH FORK PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

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

Volume XXXV

Summer 2017

Number 1

Challenges and Hope

A message from NFPA President Debo Powers

2017 has been a hard year for the environment. Conservation issues have been under siege this year resulting in a defensive posture by conservation advocates. The times in which we live are forcing us to fight for things that we have taken for granted for a very long time, such as public lands belonging to all Americans, protections for clean air and water, and progress toward clean renewable energy. On the national scene, the trends characterized by attacks on national monuments, withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, radical decreases in funding for EPA and the agencies that manage our national parks and forests, and relaxed rules on pouring coal waste into rivers, cause many of us to wonder what challenges will be forced on us here in the North Fork.

As we seek to preserve this wild and beautiful spot, we cannot forget that we are just one small part of this nation and this planet. What happens to degrade the environment on a national and global scale affects the life that we have here.

The hopeful thing about this year is that many, many people who have been silent are no longer so. There is a movement rising. People are demanding a vibrant, healthy world to live in and will not settle for an erosion of our basic rights to clean air and water and public access to natural places. Please join us in our efforts to preserve and protect the biodiversity of the North Fork and beyond. We need your help to make a difference.

Don't forget the NFPA Annual Meeting on July 29 at Sondreson Hall!

See page 6 for details.

Watershed Report

By Randy Kenyon, Chair of the NFPA Watershed Working Group

The heart of our local ecosystem is the North Fork of the Flathead River. All of the rain and snow that falls in this valley ends up in the river flowing south. All of our valley's lifeforms, including us, depend on this watershed. That is why protecting it is important to us.

Invasive Mussels

The issue of the year for our watershed, along with the rest of Montana, concerns AIS (Invasive Aquatic Species), or in simpler terms: mussels, particularly zebra. These pernicious animals can and do have a dramatic, expensive and long-lasting effect by altering the environmental conditions and creating a dramatic loss of diversity. So far, their invasion has been limited, with a noted infestation in Central Montana. Until last week, there were no signs of them in Western Montana until a boat from Michigan was found with them. Despite this, active measures by myriad state and federal agencies are being taken to prevent their arrival. The inconvenience of watercraft inspections is a small price to pay for a healthy ecosystem.

River Management

On April 20, the Forest Service held a Wild and Scenic River (WSR) public information meeting in Kalispell facilitated by Janette Turk. A number of interesting issues were noted. According to their data on the North Fork of the Flathead River, river usage still falls within long-standing (1986!) standards. Really? Anyone who has been on the river the past couple of years might find this somewhat improbable. They are planning to continue monitoring river traffic. As a side note, their WSR management plan is extremely outdated, and hopefully will be updated in the new Forest Plan. American Rivers continues its efforts to expand Montana's wild and scenic river system. They are working with our congressional leaders to include, among others, Trail, Yakinikak and Whale Creek.

Watershed Issues

Other than AIS concerns, there are few new or outstanding watershed issues. Natural resource extraction and logging development north of the border continue to cause unease. Headwaters Montana is leading the charge on this issue, with meetings establishing collaborative efforts among affected states to combat the policies of British Columbia which allow pollution of watersheds in the U.S. Headwaters is also actively pursuing the extension of Waterton Park west, adding the Canadian North Fork quadrant to the Park system. This would ensure protection of the upper east section of our watershed. At this time, large scale logging poses potential impacts to the North Fork of the Flathead River.

Wildlife Report

By Steve Gniadek, Chair of the NFPA Wildlife Working Group

Abundant wildlife is one of the most important characteristics of the North Fork. This abundance is due the plethora of public land, the low human population density, and the diverse wildlife habitats in the North Fork. It is the mission of NFPA to protect these characteristics in order to preserve a safe place for wildlife to flourish.

The Wildlife Working Group stays informed about wildlife issues. At our spring NFPA Board meeting, we discussed the changes in wildlife in the North Fork over the past few decades. For instance, long-time North Forkers have noticed a decline in mule deer populations since the 1980s. It was also noted that in

the distant past, there were mountain goats in the Whitefish Range. Wildlife questions will be raised at the Summer Interlocal on July 19 at the Community Hall.

Our Wildlife Working Group also encourages involvement in Citizen Science Projects, such as Dr. Tabitha Graves' Huckleberry Project. There are a couple of ways to get involved with volunteer wildlife surveys in the North Fork, or elsewhere in Glacier NP or the Flathead NF. Contact the Glacier NP Citizen Science office at glac_citizen_science@nps.gov (underscore between glac & citizen and citizen & science) for volunteer opportunities doing surveys of nesting Common Loons, Harlequin Ducks, Mountain Goats and other wildlife in Glacier. For surveys of loons and harlequins on the Flathead Forest in the North Fork contact cassiewaters@fs.fed.us.

Wilderness Report

By Frank Vitale, Chair of the NFPA Wilderness Working Group

What a difference one year makes. In the 2016 newsletter, my report on wilderness and wilderness issues was mostly on the positive side and encouraging. Today, wilderness seems to be teetering on an uncertain future. All our public lands are being threatened by the very government that was given charge to protect them. Don't expect anything good to come from the current administration. We have been put on the defensive – not a good place to be.

There are some who want to transfer or sell off our federal lands. There are also extreme anti-wilderness mountain bike groups who want to change the language of the Wilderness Act. (Take a look at H.R. 1349 that would allow bikes in wilderness.) Then there are the anti-government types that don't pay their grazing fees and illegally occupy federal buildings and our wildlife refuges. I call this the Born-again Sagebrush Rebellion, similar to the Ronald Reagan/James Watt era, but worse.

Expect big funding cuts to the Department of Interior, Department of Agriculture, EPA, Bureau of Indian Affairs and so on.

This funding crisis puts Forest Plans, proposed new wilderness and other forest activities in jeopardy and puts the Whitefish Range Partnership, the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project and many other working collaboratives in a state of limbo, at least until the political winds begin to shift.

On a few bright spots, Federal Judge Donald Malloy overturned the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the US Forest Service approval on the Montanore Mine at the edge of the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness. Another positive note is that the last remaining oil leases in the Badger-Two Medicine have been cancelled. Two lease holders are currently challenging the cancellations. This epic battle began 35 years ago, but permanent protection has yet to be achieved. A coalition of Native American tribes led by the Blackfeet Nation in both the US and Canada, along with many conservation organizations have worked tirelessly to permanently protect the Badger-Two Medicine.

Not much to report on the Whitefish Range Partnership and the Flathead Forest Plan at this time, but I expect the worst and hope for the best. Public comment periods have ended for all the National Forests in our region, the Flathead, Kootenai, Helena – Lewis and Clark and Lolo. All these forest plans have proposed some new wilderness and some additions to the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, Scape Goat, Mission Mountain, and Cabinets.

Now it's wait and see, though I don't think this congress is capable of legislating anything. We are living through some interesting times.

Volunteers Needed for Citizen Scientist Project on the North Fork

By Suzanne Daniell, NFPA board member

Curious about huckleberries? Help USGS scientist Tabitha Graves by volunteering to monitor huckleberry productivity around the North Fork Valley. Last summer Dr. Graves teamed up with NFPA on a pilot program to monitor huckleberry production. This year, the project has expanded and more help is needed to monitor the experimental plots.

The North Fork volunteer effort is coordinated by NFPA Board member Dr. Suzanne Daniell Hildner. The experimental plots are visited weekly, and tagged plants are inventoried for buds, flowers, and as the season progresses, the development of berries (sorry, you don't get to eat the berries in your sample plot!). Cameras at each site are monitored, as are recorders which monitor temperature and other climate data. Eventually, there will be a smartphone app that will allow citizen scientists to record data at specific sites throughout Glacier National Park, as well as the region, to help gather data for the scientific team. Sites for this part of the project will be located on hiking trails so that participants can record data while they are traveling on trails.

"I have been surprised how participating in this study has changed the way I look at the forest understory," reports Suzanne. "It has been fascinating watching plants mature through the season and to compare productivity at different sites. Contemplating the variables that might be affecting the plants allows me to appreciate the local flora in a way that is more detailed and interrelated; I am more appreciative of the life cycle of the huckleberries and other forest plants."

Interested in helping? Even volunteering for a few monitoring trips will help expand this project. Contact Suzanne at sdhildner@icloud.com for more information.

Collaboration: Bringing People Together in a Divisive World

By Debo Powers, NFPA President

We have all noticed the divisiveness in our country. The electorate is divided; it is practically a miracle when Congress can agree on anything. That is one reason why Montana collaboratives are so extraordinary. They stand as a startling contradiction to the discordant tones being sounded across our nation.

Citizen Collaboratives have successfully negotiated through some of the most divisive issues in the state of Montana.....how to manage our public lands. They have become a symbol of what Montanans can accomplish when they come together to listen and learn from each other.

When snowmobilers, loggers, mountain bikers, packers and outfitters, hunters and anglers, skiers, hikers, horseback riders, and wilderness advocates come together to talk and listen to each other, fireworks sometimes occur, but the final product gives everyone something that they want.

After participating on the Whitefish Range Partnership, I learned the following things about moving things forward through collaboration rather than conflict:

1. Everyone comes to the table open to negotiation and knowing that they cannot get everything that they want, but hoping that they can get something.
2. Everyone agrees to listen to other viewpoints with respect and openness.
3. Everyone speaks from their heart about their values and concerns.
4. Everyone looks for common ground and areas of agreement.

When a group of people takes time out of their busy lives to listen to others, strange things happen. Relationships develop. Understanding emerges. Perspectives change. After many months of hard

work together, the final agreement of a Collaborative is reached by consensus (unanimous approval). This is something to celebrate—especially in these days and times!

The following Montana collaboratives have worked hard to reach agreements which have included new acres of proposed wilderness:

Whitefish Range Partnership
Kootenai Forest Stakeholders
Blackfoot Clearwater Collaborative
Ruby Valley Stakeholders
Gallatin Range Partnership

Although The Forest Jobs and Recreation Act (FJRA) narrowly missed passage in the House and Senate in 2010 and 2011, it changed the politics of conservation in Montana. According to the Montana Wilderness Association, “It proved that collaborative, landscape-scale conservation is a politically powerful approach to public land policy in a state with diverse political interests.”

The Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act which passed Congress in December 2014 was the result of citizen collaboration and protected 275,000 acres of wildlife habitat along the Front. The Montana Congressional delegation supported this legislation and it passed with bi-partisan support.

In February of 2017, Senator Tester introduced the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act in Congress to include 79,000 acres of public land in the Mission, Bob Marshall, and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas. This Act is based on the agreement made by a local Citizen Collaborative. At this point, Senator Daines has withheld support for this bill. After receiving an unsatisfactory response to the letter that I wrote to him, Randy Kenyon and I visited Daines’ office in Kalispell and talked to his staff person about this important legislation. Please write a letter to Senator Daines and Congressman Gianforte to urge that they support the Blackfoot Clearwater Act. Without bi-partisan support, there is very little chance of its passage. Our elected officials should be supporting the Citizen Collaboratives that represent diverse opinions and make Montana unique in the field of public land management.

Website Report: More Information, More Secure

By Bill Walker, NFPA Media

The newsletter editor (that’s me) tells me we’re really tight for space this issue, so here are just the basics...

We’ve continued last year’s trend of using more graphics and images and, as promised, have rolled in more organizational information and documentation. Also, the site has a new look, supported by more sophisticated and capable underpinnings. Finally, we’ve tightened security considerably, adding several features that should help keep the great unwashed at bay and enhance visitor safety and privacy.

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/>.

There is also a Twitter feed at <https://twitter.com/nfpanews>.

And a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/nfpreservationassociation>.

North Fork Preservation Association Summer Events — 2017

NFPA Annual Meeting on July 29 at Sondreson Hall

5:30pm Potluck Supper

6:45pm Business Meeting and Elections

7:30pm Speaker: Dr. Tabitha Graves

Topic: *A Search for Berry Treasure in the North Fork: Huckleberry Ecology*

Huckleberries are a keystone food source for many wildlife species and are culturally and economically important to our region. USGS Research Ecologist, Dr. Tabitha Graves will share information about current projects investigating interactions among weather and site conditions that influence huckleberry distribution, productivity, and phenology.

Other Activities

The North Fork Landowners' Association sponsors a number of hikes, river floats and bicycling events. See the "recurring events" notes near the bottom of their calendar page (<http://nflandowners.com/calendar>) for details and listings of more activities.

The Montana Wilderness Association (MWA) offers several hikes each year in Northwest Montana. See the MWA website for full details and to pre-register for any of these hikes (<http://wildmontana.org/discover-the-wild/join-a-hike/>).

The North Fork Trails Association (NFTA) has a number of trails-related activities throughout the year, some in conjunction with other organizations. See their online calendar (<http://nftrails.org/calendar/>) for details.

A Gentle Reminder: Time to Pay Your Dues!

If you have not yet paid your NFPA membership dues for 2017, 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 2017. ***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	_____

Save a tree! I wish to receive the newsletter by 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
77 Moose Creek Road
Polebridge, MT 59928
(406) 752-5935

North Fork Preservation Association

77 Moose Creek Road
Polebridge MT 59928

Please remember to pay your dues!

NFPA OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

Debo Powers, President (406) 407-0787 NFPAPresident@gravel.org
Randy Kenyon, Vice Pres., Chair of Watershed Working Grp (406) 257-4362 kenyonnorthfork@gmail.com
Suzanne Daniell, Secretary, Chair of Huckleberry Cit Science Proj (406) 862-2831 sdaniell@cyberport.net
Kelly Edwards, Treasurer (847) 990-0727 polebridgemod@yahoo.com
John Frederick, Past President (406) 888-5084 john@gravel.org
Steve Gniadek, Chair of Wildlife Working Group (406) 892-7406 grayjaybro@yahoo.com
Frank Vitale, Chair of Wilderness Working Group (406) 752-2909 sixmules@gmail.com
Bill Walker, Media/Newsletter Editor wkwalker@nvdi.com
Annemarie Harrod (615) 269-3992 amharrod@gmail.com
Alan McNeil (406) 755-5041 alanmcneil@mac.com

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

Dr. Tabitha Graves will speak at the NFPA annual meeting on July 29. Dr. Graves will speak about her huckleberry research in Glacier Park and Flathead Forest. Huckleberries are a keystone food source for many wildlife species and are culturally and economically important to our region.