

NORTH FORK PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

"...to champion stewardship of the natural resources and protection of the exceptional biodiversity of the North Fork of the Flathead River watershed in Northwest Montana."

Volume XXXVI

Summer 2018

Number 1

NFPA Annual Meeting

July 28, 2018

A Tribute to the Activism of John Frederick

Sondreson Community Hall

5:30 Potluck supper

6:45 Election of Officers and Board Members

7:30 Program: A Tribute to the Activism of John Frederick

Our Program will feature a slide show of John's life by Lois Walker, followed by speakers sharing stories about John's efforts to stop threats to the North Fork including oil drilling, coal mining, and road paving.

New NFPA t-shirts will be on sale!



Victories While Under Threat

By Debo Powers, NFPA President

We are living in an era of serious threats to our environment and the places that we love. In the past year, there have been attempts in Montana and throughout the West to transfer our public lands to private or state management. There have been roll-backs in many environmental regulations that protect our clean air and water. There is proposed legislation to reduce protections for our last remaining wild lands. Grizzly bears are facing trophy hunting after decades of protection. There has been an attack on science-based decision-making and increases in activities that contribute to climate change.

Despite these threats, we have a few victories to celebrate:

- ❖ The final Flathead Forest Plan released this spring contains 83,000 acres of recommended wilderness in the North Fork. This wild land in the northern Whitefish Range includes such jewels as Tuchuck, Nasukoin, Hefty, Thompson-Seton, and Review.
- ❖ Montana decided to not allow a trophy hunt for grizzly bears near Yellowstone this year.
- ❖ While National Monuments were slashed and diminished in many parts of the country, our Missouri Breaks National Monument remains intact because of fierce opposition throughout Montana.

These victories are important to celebrate. Join us at the NFPA annual meeting on July 28 to do so.

While it is hard to stand against the onslaught of environmental threats at this period of our history, NFPA is still working to resist, slow down, derail, or defeat these threats. Please join us for these battles by renewing your membership and responding to our periodic alerts sent by email. (See the membership form in this newsletter.)

Together, we can make a difference.

Montana's Wilderness Study Areas Are Under Attack

By Debo Powers, NFPA President

There is a new attack on Montana's wild heritage.

Senator Steve Daines introduced a bill (S. 2206) that would strip protection from almost a half million acres of our wildest public lands by eliminating five Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).

Congressman Greg Gianforte introduced a companion bill (H.R. 5148) to Senator Daines' bill. He added more insult by introducing a second bill (H.R. 5149) to do the same thing with 24 additional Wilderness Study Areas.

If these bills were to pass, it would represent the single biggest loss of protected public lands in our state's history. These wild lands would be open to human impacts and extraction activities that would ruin their wilderness values.

At a time when we see millions of visitors coming to Montana to enjoy wild places, the last thing we need is a decrease in our wild lands.

Neither Daines nor Gianforte have had a single public hearing to determine how Montanans feel about these places. A recent poll conducted by the University of Montana's Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Initiative (COCGYI), found broad support for continued protection of wilderness study areas (WSAs), designated Wilderness Areas, and collaborative legislation such as the Blackfoot

Clearwater Stewardship Act. Conducted by a bipartisan group of Republican and Democratic pollsters, the poll shows that 90% of Montanans see the protection of public lands as being an important part of “maintaining what is best about Montana,” and 87% identify conservation issues as being important in their voting decisions. A further 82% of Montanans say that public lands help our economy, and 87% say public lands have a positive impact on our overall quality of life. Specific to WSAs:

- ❖ 97% of Montanans say it’s important that “a wide range of stakeholders and local communities have the opportunity to provide their input before decisions are made.”
- ❖ 77% say that input is “very important”
- ❖ 81% favor keeping WSAs as they are now or taking a tailored approach that adds protection in some areas while removing protections from others
- ❖ Just 11% of Montanans favor blanket elimination of WSA protection

Senator Daines and Congressman Gianforte are out of step with the vast majority of Montanans. Please call their offices to complain about these bills.

Call Senator Daines at 855-297-9453 to oppose S. 2206.

Call Congressman Gianforte at 202-225-3211 to oppose H.R. 5148 and H.R. 5149.

A coalition of conservation groups has created a website to fight this attack on our WSAs called “Our Land, Our Legacy.” Please go to the website to sign the open letter at www.ourlandourlegacy.org asking the entire congressional delegation to work together on resolving our Wilderness Study Areas in a way that is balanced, inclusive, and transparent.

Watershed Currents

By Randy Kenyon, Chair of the NFPA Watershed Working Group

This winter the Flathead National Forest embarked on a multi-year project to complete a Comprehensive River Management Plan for the Wild and Scenic North, Middle and South Forks of the Flathead River. This long overdue plan will be a template for other Wild and Scenic Rivers programs across the country. The process began with a recent public meeting and will be followed up with monthly meetings focused on Outstanding River Values. North Forkers are, and will continue to be, an ongoing voice in this process.

Speaking of Wild and Scenic Rivers, this summer is the 50th anniversary of this momentous legislation. Celebrations are being planned on behalf of the Forest Service. Colter Pence of the Forest Service presented a historical perspective at the North Fork Landowners Association meeting July 8th.

Aquatic and Invasive Species continues to be a significant threat to our watershed. A consortium of federal, local and tribal agencies are working closely to prevent introduction that so far has been thwarted. Please contact appropriate agencies prior to boating in our waters to understand and comply with protective protocols.

The Forest Service is implementing a permanent move from the existing and increasingly dangerous Polebridge boat launch. A new site has been developed for at least this season and is a little downstream from the bridge. The original access area should be utilized for parking and camping as usual. No camping is allowed along the river. The pit toilet, unfortunately, will remain at its current site, for now.

Headwaters Montana and the Flathead Biological Station have made significant legal transboundary inroads regarding pollution emanating from coal mines north of border in the Kootenai River watershed.

Despite not being in our watershed, this precedent-setting action could provide us with important avenues, should we see the similar impacts.

Wonderful Wildlife

By Steve Gniadek, Chair of the NFPA Wildlife Working Group

Wildlife research in the North Fork includes studies of mule deer and Canada lynx in the Whitefish Range. Mule deer populations throughout the West have been in slow decline for decades, and lynx occur at low densities in Montana. Biologists with the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at the U of Montana and the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department deployed GPS collars on two mule deer during early 2017. Only one survived and spent much of this past winter on the Big Creek Winter Range. Another 30 mule deer were trapped and equipped with GPS collars during early 2018, most in the NW end of the Whitefish Range near Eureka. Researchers with the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station have been studying Canada lynx in the Whitefish Range for several years, with an emphasis on the effects of fire and silvicultural practices on lynx. Results of the lynx work in the Whitefish Range, plus long-term studies in the Seeley Lake and Yaak areas will be compiled this fall. No lynx field work is planned this year in the Whitefish Range, but field work will resume in 2019.

Biologists with the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department are in the 5th year of a 10-year moose study in three areas of western Montana. Moose numbers in the nearest study area to the North Fork, the Cabinet-Fisher area, have been stable to slightly increasing, while numbers have been decreasing slightly in the Big Hole area and increasing slightly in the Rocky Mountain Front study area. Causes of mortality have varied among the three areas, with disease and nutrition important factors in survival.

Montana FWP and Glacier NP biologists will continue stream surveys for harlequin ducks and lake surveys for common loons in the North Fork and other areas. If you'd like to volunteer on these or other citizen science wildlife surveys, contact the region one FWP office or the citizen science program in GNP.

NFPA board members participated in the Flathead National Forest Plan Revision and Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Amendments Objector Meetings in April. We commented on wildlife habitat management, species of conservation concern, and grizzly bear habitat management, as well as wilderness issues. We argued that designated Wilderness and roadless areas provide the best core area and secure habitat for grizzly bears and all other native wildlife, and that monitoring of wildlife habitat and populations is essential to wildlife management objectives. We joined others in expressing concerns that the forest plan would be completed before the NCDE grizzly bear conservation strategy is finalized, thus improperly relying on a draft strategy.

NFPA board members have also been participating in the Flathead National Forest Comprehensive River Management Planning meetings, where reducing recreational impacts to wildlife is a major concern. NFPA will continue to scrutinize plans to delist grizzly bears in the NCDE, the recently released habitat-based recovery criteria for the NCDE, and the NCDE grizzly bear conservation strategy.

As time allows, we are creating brief summaries, or "vignettes", of wildlife that occur in the North Fork for posting on the web page. The purpose is to inform North Fork residents, visitors, and the general public about the diversity of wildlife inhabiting the North Fork. If you have photos of wildlife to share, or want to suggest a species of wildlife for inclusion, contact me.

Wilderness Matters

By Frank Vitale, Chair of the NFPA Wilderness Working Group

Since the last newsletter, “A lot of water has flowed under the bridge.” First, the NFPA has lost two very special people – John Frederick, founder and past president, and Alan McNeil, long-time board member of NFPA. Both John and Alan were staunch wilderness supporters. We miss them dearly and it’s up to the rest of us to carry on their legacy and vision.

2018 has seen more threats to wilderness than ever before. From attempts to sell off our public lands to dismantling our Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) to trying to change the language of the 1964 Wilderness Act to allowing wheels in wilderness (i.e.: mountain bikes).

Yet, through all these threats, public opinion has favored protecting more wilderness, National Monuments, WSA, and honoring the collaborative process in managing our public lands.

This past year, several credible polls taken in Montana (one conducted by U of M) show that 81% of Montanans support public lands, protecting wilderness and WSAs, and keeping National Monuments intact. These polls also show that public lands and wilderness are a huge economic driver in local economies around the state. In economic terms, recreation and tourism is now the second most important industry, following agriculture.

I have had the good fortune to participate in the collaborative process. In our region, the collaboratives that took center stage were the Coalition to Protect the Rocky Mountain Front, The Whitefish Range Partnership, The Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition, The Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Partnership and The Badger Two Medicine and Blackfeet Nation oil and gas withdrawal. These citizen-based collaboratives have added thousands of acres to the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat areas. They have also proposed additions to the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness and recommended new wilderness in the northern Whitefish Range. Unfortunately, Congress has only acted on one – the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act. The other proposals are being held hostage with the current political circus playing out in Washington, DC.

So, it’s up to us to demand that our political leaders listen to the voice of the people. Public lands are held in trust; they belong to all of us and not the privileged few.

Huckleberry Project – Team members needed!

By Suzanne Daniell, Chair of the Huckleberry Citizen Science Project

Interested in doing more with NFPA? Like to hike? Curious about climate change? Want to learn more about our local forests and the flora and fauna that inhabit them? Join NFPA’s Huckleberry Team. The team is helping USGS scientist Tabitha Graves gather data on huckleberry productivity as it relates to climate and topography. Team members volunteer to visit experimental plots and count huckleberry plant flowers and eventually the actual berries. Currently we have three sites but with more volunteers we can do more. Huckleberries are a consistent and important part of grizzly bear diets. This is your chance to be involved in helping gather data that will aid Tabitha and other scientists in understanding and predicting ecosystem changes in a warming planet. Training provided. Email NFPA Huckleberry Coordinator Suzanne Hildner at sdhildner@icloud.com for more info.

Website: New living Quarters

By Bill Walker, NFPA Media

In a perfect storm of web hosting incompetence, the website was forced off the air for several days in late Spring. This was the first time in at least 14 years that we've had any sort of extended outage. We ultimately relocated to far better facilities, but it was a bumpy ride getting there.

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 <https://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 — 2018

NFPA Annual Meeting on July 28 at Sondreson Hall

5:30pm Potluck Supper

6:45pm Business Meeting and Elections

7:30pm Presentation: ***A Tribute to the Activism of John Frederick***

featuring a slide show of John's life by Lois Walker, followed by speakers sharing stories about John's efforts to stop threats to the North Fork including oil drilling, coal mining, and road paving.

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.

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

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

If you have paid your dues for 2018. ***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 _____

I wish to receive occasional email alerts about important issues! __

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!

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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.

New NFPA T-shirts are Here!

For the first time in many years, NFPA has a new t-shirt! The cost is \$20 and they will be on sale in all sizes at the annual meeting on July 28. Show your support for watershed, wilderness, and wildlife by wearing this great shirt!