

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 XXXX

Summer 2022

Number 1

NFPA Annual Meeting & 40th Anniversary!

July 23, 2022, at Sondreson Community Hall
Whale Creek Bridge & North Fork Road

Our speaker this year is **Sally Thompson** who co-wrote **People Before the Park: The Kootenai and Blackfeet before Glacier National Park**, *a detailed review of the indigenous peoples that inhabited the Glacier area before it became a National Park*

We would love for you to be among our honored guests.

- 5:30pm: Delicious indigenous meal catered by Qene's Catering
- 6:45pm: Short business meeting to elect officers and members of the Board of Directors and report on the work of NFPA
- 7:30pm: Speaker

We are excited to spend an evening with all of you, share with you what we've been up to, and look forward to a great presentation.

Approaching Our 40th Year

By Flannery Coats, NFPA President

As we approach our 40th year as the local non-profit organization that champions the exceptional biodiversity and wildness of the North Fork, it is my pleasure to share with you, dear friends and readers, that our spirit remains just as invigorated as the day we were founded. There is no doubt that our community would look much different today if it weren't for the galvanized efforts of our many dedicated members and colleagues over the last 4 decades. Our fisheries, now intact and home to endangered species, and the pristine river, our local playground, were under direct threat when the

Cabin Creek coal mine was proposed at our headwaters just 18 miles north of the border 40 years ago. A close call that ended in the favor of future generations thanks to the swift action of many, but specifically our founder, John Frederick. Today, too, our valley skies remain dark, our solitude abounds, and it's not uncommon to see a lynx or grizzly on the road. Let us not forget that this was not just by chance or happenstance.

The hard work and passion (and many trips to town as Pat Cole will remind us) of a handful of dedicated North Forkers resulted in a neighborhood plan that preserves one of the last intact ecosystems in the lower 48 as our "neighborhoods" grow, maintaining the shared values that brought us all here.

Today, as we seek to understand how our work as an organization, founded on preservation, can be most effective in a changing world and, inarguably, a changing North Fork, we have found some answers. This spring, after two years of pandemic-related postponements we finally attended an in-house strategic planning retreat at the beautiful property of Ray Hart. As snow flurries consistently paused for sunshine-filled breaks, we let our minds massage the mission of NFPA. For starters, you will notice we now have programming and will be initiating our new "Polebridge Bear Smart" program as human-bear conflicts increase locally. Cumulative impacts are at the root of every discussion as aged management plans sit stale and use skyrockets. More education, more engagement. Our next 40 years has just begun.

Save, don't pave. And remember, don't be an asphalt.

First Strategic Plan in 40 Years!

Since NFPA is getting more involved than ever in lots of projects, the board decided that it was time to write a Strategic Plan. Debo took on the task of planning and facilitating the Strategic Planning process with the help of the Planning Committee (Flannery, Suzanne, and Randy).

Board members met for a full day retreat in early April to discuss 3 strategic questions (90 minutes on each topic):

--What needs to be done to ensure that people live, work, travel, and recreate in the North Fork with minimal damage to the ecosystem?

--What needs to be done to educate residents and visitors about protecting the North Fork ecosystem?

--What needs to be done to inspire and mobilize people to build a powerful movement to protect the North Fork ecosystem?

Hundreds of ideas were generated. These ideas were used to write the first Strategic Plan in the 40-year history of the organization. The final Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Directors in late April.

Proposed New Mission Statement!

The Board of Directors is proposing the following new mission statement for NFPA. You can vote on this by attending the annual meeting and 40th anniversary celebration on July 23!

Here it is:

To champion the exceptional biodiversity and wildness of the North Fork.

Announcing the Polebridge Bear Smart Program!

The North Fork Preservation Association is excited to announce the creation of the Polebridge Bear Smart (PBBS) Program in response to the tragic loss of four female grizzly bears (Monica and her triplet cubs) late last summer. This bear family became habituated to unsecured garbage and food rewards. Ultimately, bear managers had to euthanize all four bears. The goal of this program is to prevent future human bear conflict in The North Fork by launching several initiatives this spring and summer. They include:

- ❖ Bear resistant garbage containers for purchase or loan to property owners.
- ❖ Free, Bear Smart Training for Polebridge businesses' seasonal employees.
- ❖ Family oriented presentation in conjunction with Humanities MT; "The Inconvenient Grizzly" July 4th, 3 pm at Home Ranch Bottoms.
- ❖ An educational Bear Fair, scheduled for with presentations, educational booths and fun for the whole family. Home Ranch Bottoms, 12 to 4 pm, July 30th.
- ❖ Community presentation on living with bears in conjunction with North Fork Landowners Association (NFLA); August 14th NFLA meeting, 7:00 pm.

PBBS has been funded by a grant and through generous donations from North Forkers. The NFLA Board has been supporting PBBS by appointing a NFLA liaison, Suzanne Hildner, to the program. If you have questions, would like to donate to the program, are interested in purchasing or renting a bear resistant garbage container, or would like to volunteer to help at the Bear Fair please contact Suzanne Hildner <sdhildner@icloud.com>.

Upcoming Polebridge Bear Smart Events

May/June - Bear Smart Training for Polebridge businesses' seasonal employees.

Exact dates/times TBA.

July 4th - Family oriented presentation in conjunction with Humanities MT; "The Inconvenient Grizzly" 3:00 pm at Home Ranch Bottoms.

July 30th - An educational Bear Fair with presentations, educational booths, and fun for the whole family. Home Ranch Bottoms, noon to 4 pm.

August 14th - Community presentation on living with bears in conjunction with North Fork Landowner's Association (NFLA) August meeting. 7:00 pm.

Notes from Upstream

By Randy Kenyon, Chair of the NFPA Watershed Working Group

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) remains an ongoing threat, with state and federal agencies expending efforts in protecting our precious watershed. Locally, Glacier National Park is continuing to monitor watercraft closely. The good news is they have expanded their inspection sites to the Polebridge Ranger

Station. The rest of the story? Unfortunately for locals, in addition to the “one in and one out” policy for Bowman and Kintla Lakes, the entrance at Polebridge this season will require a ticket, the same as the West Glacier entrance. Contact the Park for ticketing information.

The Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP) continues to languish. The Glacier View Ranger Station meets weekly and hopes to complete the scoping stage and release a draft for public review and input this summer. This crucial document will be guiding and regulating activities on all three forks of the Flathead River for the next generation. The key is to establish and protect outstanding remarkable river values. Your participation in this process is critical. Please visit the ranger station site to become involved.

The Flathead River Alliance is up and running full speed! This local nonprofit is likewise committed to enhancing and supporting those same remarkable values by utilizing education, stewardship, and community involvement. One of their exciting program concerns guiding agency and citizen water quality monitoring to ensure CRMP compliance and a better understanding of nonpoint source pollution. We encourage one and all to learn more of this organization and become involved!

Finally, the Flathead Lake Biological Station is developing fascinating research regarding stoneflies and other floodplain aquatic insects based on their amazing adaptations to low oxygen. This important research will lead to a greater understanding of both tolerance and adaption in our warming temperatures. Other studies are utilizing genetics to garner increased insight into environmental adaptations in our ever-changing world.

Wildlife Corner

By Diane Boyd, Chair of the NFPA Wildlife Working Group

The swallows arrived at Trail Creek on May 4, having flown north from wintering grounds in Central and South America. So glad to see them back! Scruffy, skinny whitetails are everywhere feeding on green succulent shoots to replace the fat reserves they lost over winter. I’ve often wondered how starving deer and elk can nurture a growing fetus during the month of May to pop out a robust healthy baby in early June. Another of Mother Nature’s miracles. Rain, rain, more rain. Normal spring in the North Fork.

A total of 273 wolves were killed in Montana this past winter, with zero wolves harvested in the North Fork HD 110.

Grizzly bears are out and hungry, so be bear aware around your home and when you’re hiking. NFPA may help provide bear-proof trash bins, please contact us for more info.

Justine Vallieres is the new Wildlife Conflict Specialist for the North Fork, and we’re ecstatic to have her here filling the big shoes of recently retired Tim Manley!

Working Together for Wilderness

By Amy Robinson, Chair of the Wilderness Working Group

As a new board member, I am learning more about NFPA and the amazing people who work for this very special place. About ten years ago, when I first moved to the Flathead Valley, I dove into getting to know the land and the community that lives between Glacier Park and the quiet, unknown corners of the Whitefish Range. After hiking trails and spending time in backyard BBQs I knew this place was special.

When I first landed in the valley, I worked for Montana Wilderness Association and there were a lot of nuanced opinions and stereotypes associated with the label. I came on board at an incredible time, and I met John Frederick and others, and we joined together to participate in a group of about 30 folks called the Whitefish Range Partnership. We worked hard and crafted a recommendation that we presented to the Forest Service, and we asked that they consider including it in the new land management plan. The land management plan (or Forest Plan) presented an awesome opportunity to protect wilderness in the Whitefish Range without necessarily needing to lean on our elected politicians.

My time was spent building relationships, finding common ground, and working to build consensus to protect over 80,000 acres of wilderness in the northern range. This included Nasukoin, Mt Thompson-Seton, Tuchuck, Mt Hefty and Thoma areas. At the same time, we were also talking about other topics such as how to manage timber and maintaining and enhancing forms of recreation such as motorized use and mountain biking.

At the end of the process, the Forest Service adopted many of the recommendations made by the Whitefish Range Partnership, and that included 80,000 acres of recommended wilderness protection for the northern range. This was a huge success(!), however, the site specific implementation of those decisions were not going to happen until a travel plan was conducted.

So, this winter, three years after the signing of the land management plan, the Forest Service released a proposed action for the travel plan. Among other things, the proposed action supports managing recommended wilderness just like Wilderness and analyzing snowmobiling areas in the southern range. This effort is important because it sets the stage for Wilderness designation in the future when the time is right. Stay tuned. There will be more opportunities to participate in this process in the coming months!

I'm honored to play a part in continuing the important work of NFPA that started 40 years ago this year! Standing up with all of you, for this special place, is the perfect place to be.

Scholarship and Award Committee Report, Spring 2022

By Suzanne Hildner, Chair of the Scholarship and Award Committee

Now that Spring is here (finally) the Awards/Scholarship Committee is busy once again soliciting applications for the Kreck/Fields Scholarship. The scholarship is offered annually for a graduate student attending a Montana based university and who is engaged in a field of study that will enhance their ability to advocate for and promote wilderness protection and preservation. Specific fields of study can be, but are not limited to wildlife biology, ecology, environmental studies, environmental law, journalism, or the expressive arts. If you are aware of a student who might be a candidate for this

opportunity, please direct them to our website <https://www.gravel.org/nfpaarchives/loren-kreck-edwin-fields-wilderness-scholarship/>.

The NFPA Board recently selected the 2022 recipient of the Glacier National Park Stewardship Award. This award is given most years to an individual who has demonstrated “vigorous defense and advocacy of the Park’s natural resources, sometimes in opposition to forces looking to be expedient or financial rather than custodial”. This award, originally given in honor of Jack Potter, retired Chief of Science and Resources for Glacier National Park was renamed last year at Jack’s request. This year’s recipient will be announced at the NFPA Annual Meeting scheduled for Saturday, July 23rd.

Other Activities Around the North Fork

The North Fork Landowners Association sponsors a number of hikes, river floats and bicycling events. Check their calendar page (<https://nflandowners.com/calendar>) for details and listings of more activities.

Wild Montana (formerly Montana Wilderness Association) offers several hikes each year in Northwest Montana. They have both a summer and winter schedule. See their website for full details: <https://wildmontana.org/> (click the “discover” link near the top[of the home page.]

The North Fork Trails Association (NFTA) has quite a few trails-related activities throughout the year, some in conjunction with other organizations. See their web site (<https://nftrails.org/>) for more information.

Flathead Rivers Alliance (FRA) launched a River Ambassador Program this summer and is usually seeking volunteers to join the team. To learn more visit: <https://www.flatheadrivers.org/>.

NFPA Begins Online Support Upgrades

By Bill Walker, NFPA Media

NFPA has quietly begun making improvements to our online presence.

The website now incorporates a “Donate” button, allowing visitors to donate money to support our good works. It also enables members to pay their dues without recourse to snail mail. Alas, we do not yet have this integrated with an online version of our membership form. For now, new members, or existing members who need to change their profile information, have a couple of choices:

- ❖ Do it “old school”: Fill out a membership form (see next page or get it from our website at [https://www.gravel.org/files/NFPA Membership Form.pdf](https://www.gravel.org/files/NFPA%20Membership%20Form.pdf)), stuff it in an envelope along with a check, and mail it to our treasurer at NFPA, PO Box 1601, Columbia Falls, MT 59912.
- ❖ Use the “Donate” button and then follow up with an email to treasurer@gravel.org letting us know what you just did. If you are a new member or an existing member with changes to your contact details, include that information in the email. Or just fill out the membership form, scan it in, and attach it to the email.

A nuisance, I know. We’ll try to get it fixed Real Soon Now.

And finally, for those of you who are small screen aficionados, you’ll start to notice increased use of QR codes in our publications – should save you some web address entry hassle here and there.

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

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

If it's been more than a couple of years since you last paid dues, this may be your last newsletter.

If you *have* paid your dues for 2022. **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
PO Box 1602
Columbia Falls, MT 59912



Visit us & support our work
at gravel.org

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<https://gravel.org/>

Please remember to pay your dues!

If it's been more than a couple of years since you did so, this may be your last newsletter.

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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.

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 Home Ranch Store (and at our annual meeting). Show your support for the exceptional biodiversity and wildness of the North Fork by wearing this great shirt!