

NORTH FORK PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION



“...to champion the exceptional biodiversity and wildness of the North Fork of the Flathead River watershed in Northwest Montana.”

Volume XLII

Summer 2024

Number 1

NFPA Annual Meeting

July 27, 2024, at Sondreson Community Hall
Whale Creek Bridge & North Fork Road

For this year’s annual meeting we’ve invited **John Fraley**, a well-known local writer, to make a presentation on his recent book *My Wilderness Life*.

John has explored the three forks of the Flathead for more than 45 years. He served as a fisheries biologist for the state and is an avid wildlife enthusiast. He holds wildlife degrees, both from Montana universities. John has written five books about outdoor adventures in the backcountry. His latest book, *My Wilderness Life*, published in 2022, features special lore about the westslope cutthroat trout and other wilderness species. John's wife, Dana, and his children Kevin, Heather, and Troy have accompanied John on many wilderness treks.

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

5:30pm: Potluck supper

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.

From the President . . .

By Flannery Freund, NFPA President

The mission of the North Fork Preservation Association is *to champion the exceptional biodiversity and wildness of the North Fork*. In the third year of our strategic plan, we continue to work toward our three goals: to ensure minimal damage to the North Fork ecosystem, to educate visitors and residents about the North Fork ecosystem, and to build a powerful movement to protect the North Fork ecosystem. The first two, as you will read in this newsletter, we're working on. It's the third goal where we could use your help. Movement building enthusiastically occurs when there is an eminent threat to rally against: The foundation of our organization against Coal Creek gas and oil development threatening the North Fork Valley 43 years ago, for example. Becoming a Bear Smart community after the loss of four resident female grizzly bears in 2022, for another. Today, threats loom and loiter around us in the form of increased use, outdated management plans and lack of plans altogether, but these threats don't evoke the same sense of urgency to get organized. The question is: how do we build a successful, long-term movement against the lingering threats whose cumulative impacts will prevent us from achieving our goal to preserve the North Fork ecosystem for future generations?

The North Fork is undeniably one of the most special places on the planet. Those of us who are lucky enough to call this place home can identify with the solitude and wildness that called us here in the first place. Visitors will be forever touched by these same values. There are fewer and fewer intact places on this planet and that reason alone should be enough to get us excited to work hard to keep it untouched. It's an election year, yes. Political views divide us, sure. But we only get one North Fork! Bring your ideas to our annual meeting on July 27th or email them to: nfpapresident@gravel.org. Thanks for reading, and enjoy this year's newsletter!

What Happened to SB442?

By Debo Powers, NFPA Vice President

The Montana Legislature passed SB 442 last year with overwhelming bipartisan support...an amazing 80% of legislators voted for this bill that would allocate marijuana revenue for conservation, country roads, and other programs. This bill brought together many groups in support of this measure. Strangely, Governor Gianforte vetoed the bill and mumbled a reason that was unintelligible. Since the Governor vetoed the bill in the last few hours before the Legislature adjourned, he declared that they had had their chance to vote on a veto. Legislators angrily demanded a mail-in vote, but Secretary of State Jacobsen refused to send out the override ballots to Legislators.

In the litigation that followed, Montana Association of Counties joined with Wild Montana to successfully oppose the Governor's illegal tactic to avoid an integral part of our system of checks and balances. The Legislature has the constitutional right to override a veto with a two-thirds majority vote. Governor Gianforte circumvented the Constitution.

As a result of delay tactics, political maneuvering, and an absurd argument about judicial interference, many Republican lawmakers declined to submit their ballots and the override failed to have enough

votes. It is unfortunate that politics rather than good sense prevailed and a bill that was originally supported by 130 legislators, over 100 organizations, and tens of thousands of Montanans failed to pass. Wild Montana and other groups will continue to work on similar legislation in the next session.

A Woman Among Wolves

By Diane Boyd, Chair of the NFPA Wildlife Working Group

This will be my last article for the NFPA newsletter, as I'm stepping down as a board member at the end of my term this July. Thank you for the opportunity to serve this passionate organization and to help protect our beloved North Fork.

Lots of North Forkers are seeing bears, early wildflowers, and the snow is giving way to the summer sun. I've been asked to write a short article for this newsletter about my upcoming book which will be released this fall but is available for pre-order now. Please forgive this shameless self-promotion, but my memoir involves many North Fork places, people, and wildlife, and I think you will enjoy reading it. It is titled *A Woman Among Wolves: My Forty Year Journey Through Wolf Recovery* with a foreword written by another long-time North Forker, Doug Chadwick. My memoir is written from the heart, for readers who enjoy a good story about determination, conservation, and persistence, that will explain wolf ecology/recovery through stories of wolves and people; it will cause you to think, laugh, and shed a few tears along the way.

The book begins with the first recolonizing wolf (Kishinena) walking south from Banff National Park, Alberta, to set up her territory in the North Fork. The book progresses through those difficult early North Fork years to present times. To borrow from the description on Amazon: "In this captivating book, Boyd takes the reader on a wild ride from the early days of wolf research to the present-day challenges of wolf management across the globe, highlighting her interactions with an apex predator that captured her heart and her undying admiration. Her writing resonates with her indomitable spirit as she explores the intricate balance of human and wolf coexistence." If you're interested in learning more, go to Amazon and type in my name or the title, or click on the link: <https://www.amazon.com/Woman-Among-Wolves-Journey-Recovery/dp/1778401139>. Thank you!

Polebridge Bear Smart Report Spring 2024

By Suzanne Hildner, PBBS Chair

Spring is here and summer is on the way!! The bears are out and about throughout northwest Montana. In anticipation of their arrival Polebridge Bear Smart (PBBS) has been busy over the winter preparing for spring and summer. Here is a list of our activities for 2024.

- PBBS was asked to provide Bear Smart training for Montana Conservation Corp (MCC) in Kalispell this spring. Approximately 60 leaders and members of MCC crews were trained.

We have expert help providing this training from People and Carnivores. Additionally, we have lots of fun doing it!

- PBBS will continue to provide Bear Smart training to seasonal employees in and around Polebridge. This will be our third year offering this training.
- PBBS, along with Justine Vallieres from FWP and Ryan Wilbur with People and Carnivores, offered the opportunity to practice with inert bear spray ahead of the June 9th NFLA General Meeting. Following bear spray practice, Justine gave a thorough bear update. People and Carnivores provided a remote-controlled grizzly bear to add reality to the practice session.
- We will continue our Initial Response Program whereby PBBS can rapidly provide trail cameras and scare devices to property owners who have had a bear incident and who wish to identify and/or deter their visitor. This program is offered in conjunction with Montana FWP; landowners must agree to notify FWP they have had an incident. This program enjoyed a successful start in 2023.
- Finally, NFPA/PBBS is again offering Kodiak brand 96-gallon bear resistant garbage containers for loan or purchase at a reduced price. This opportunity is being made to the Polebridge community at below market cost with the help of grants and private donations. Purchase price per canister is \$300. Cans are available now! Please contact Suzanne Hildner – sdhildner@icloud.com or (406) 253-3263 – to purchase or rent.

Feel free to contact Suzanne with any comments, questions or suggestions. Here's looking forward to a fun-filled and safe summer for both humans and bears.

Notes from Upstream

By Randy Kenyon, Chair of the NFPA Watershed Working Group

Big news on the Wild and Scenic River plan! Well, sort of. In a recent press release the Flathead National Forest announced that they, in collaboration with Glacier National Park, are reengaging efforts in the development of the Comprehensive River Management Plan. In addition, they have brought in a new project leader with a wealth of knowledge and experience in Wild and Scenic River planning. This updated plan began in 2018 with delays in 2020 and 2023. As the Forest Service and GNP now get under way with this plan update, they must account for and reflect on changes that occurred since the original 1986 plan, including increased visitor use patterns, Endangered Species Act listing, environmental conditions and other laws affecting resources in the Wild and Scenic corridor. North Forkers are wary of changes that could impact locals in the form of limited river access, although permitting seems highly unlikely at this time in light of the mind-boggling administrative requirements to initiate such a program. The keys to this plan are maintaining desired conditions and monitoring indicators, triggers and thresholds in adjusting the plan in the future. The team anticipates a draft plan becoming available in the

Fall of this year. Your input is crucial. Remember, the current plan is 38 years old, and this new plan will dictate the future of our river for many years to come. Check out <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/flathead/?project=56536> and become involved!

Flathead Rivers Alliance continues education and stewardship programs ensuring the three forks of the Flathead River system maintain their resource integrity. With resource management agencies chronically underfunded, the Alliance's collaboration is critical in keeping up with the challenges of increased threats. A list of the alliance's activities is a tribute to their mission: a river ambassador program, public outreach, volunteer opportunities, water quality monitoring, citizen science, youth river programs, digital maps, planning information, and newsletters, to name a few. This summer will see a wealth of river activities for all to contribute and enjoy! Visit flatheadrivers.org to learn more and become an active participant!

Tidbits from Downstream

By Randy Kenyon

The North Fork Road

Good news from the County Road Department! With a grant from the Forest Service Resource Allocation Committee (affectionately known as RAC) the road section from Camas to Polebridge will see Mag Chloride treatment again this Summer. When RAC meets again the County will propose another grant to continue this valuable surface saving treatment in the future. In addition, the Forest Service and the State Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) have secured funding for the same treatment from Camas south to the pavement for the next three years. Another note: last Fall the County was unsuccessful in securing a federal grant to study potential improvement options to the North Fork Road. This setback precludes further consideration of improvements in the foreseeable future.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Although vigilance has paid off in preventing invasion of our watershed, this cautious approach must be sustained. Therefore, all watercraft must be inspected. Inspection stations are available at Apgar and the Polebridge Ranger Station for those boating on the river or Bowman and Kintla Lakes.

The "John Frederick Memorial Unpaved Highway" Sign

Our board of directors authorized the replacement of this sign located at Square Peg Ranch. Not aware of the sign? No wonder, it's old and weathered, needing replacement. This endeavor is now underway.

The Flathead Rivers Alliance

By "LJ" McClellan

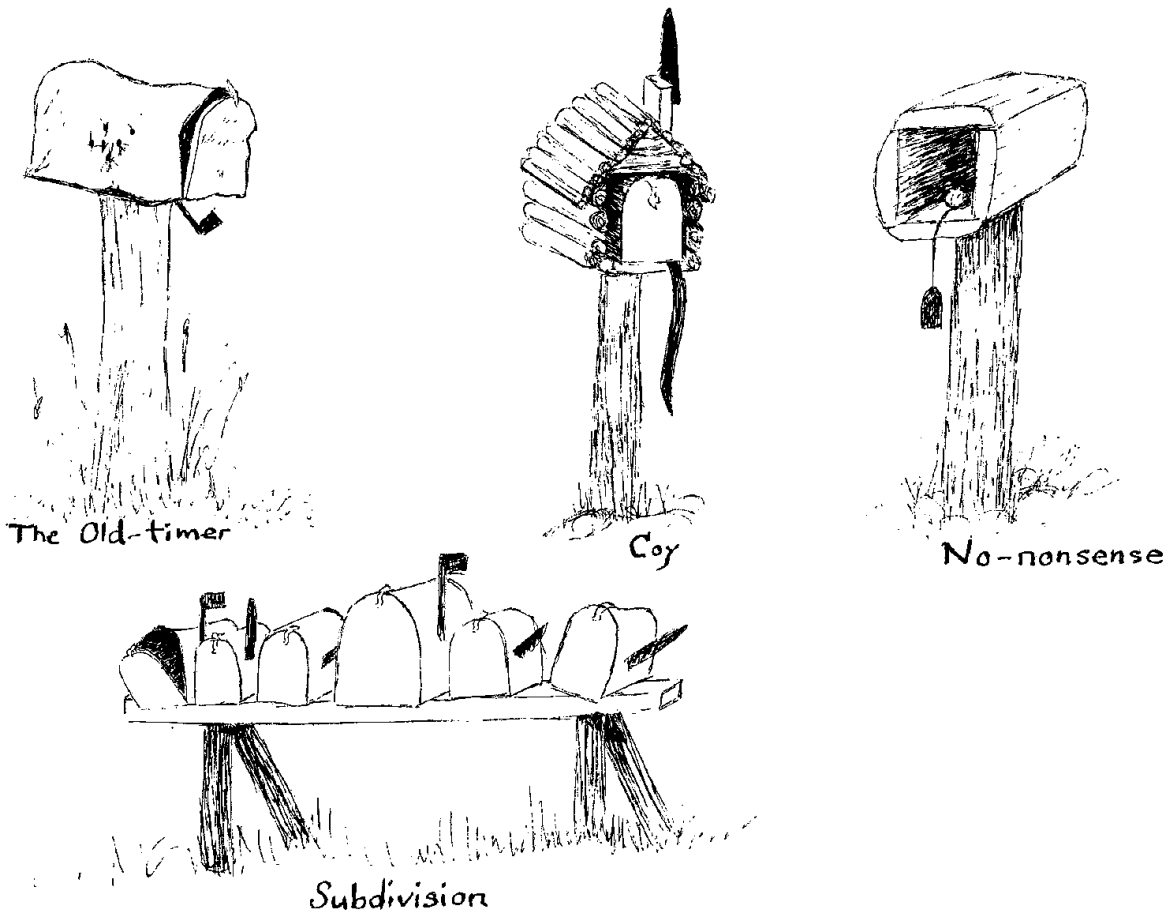
I am the newest NFPA board member and am excited to join this fine group of passionate leaders of the North Fork. This will be my third summer as a volunteer river ambassador for the non-profit Flathead Rivers Alliance. It has been a rewarding experience to educate recreationalists on river safety and

stewardship, provide loaner life jackets, and gather data on river users at key access points on the North Fork and Middle Fork of the Wild & Scenic Flathead River System. And this year, FRA's program is expanding to the South Fork, as well as instituting a new "River Youth" program. Celebrating its 5th anniversary, the FRA's positive impacts are numerous, including removing barriers for ADA accessibility, a digital interactive map/trip planning tool, Recreate Responsibly outreach tools, partnering on the Comprehensive River Management Plan, and more.

There are several opportunities for North Forkers to participate in the Flathead Rivers Alliance, including the River Citizen Science Program, the River Ambassador Program, helping the River Weed Rodeo, and by making an annual donation.

For more information and to sign up for their weekly river and weather forecast emails, go to flatheadrivers.org, or contact Executive Director Sheena Pate at 406-407-0421 or info@flatheadrivers.org.

In Memory of Cecily McNeil ...



From *The North Fork File* by Cecily McNeil, page 49

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 2024. **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

North Fork Preservation Association

PO Box 1602

Columbia Falls, MT 59912

<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.

NFPA OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

Flannery Coats, President & Chair of Outreach Committee (406) 407-3863 nfpapresident@gravel.org

Debo Powers, Vice President (406) 407-0787 debopowers@gmail.com

Randy Kenyon, Treasurer, Chair of Watershed Working Grp (406) 890-4460 kenyonnorthfork@gmail.com

Suzanne Hildner, Secretary, Chair of Scholarship and Award Com., Polebridge Bear Smart Program Coord.
(406) 862-2831 sdhildner@icloud.com

Diane Boyd, Chair of Wildlife Working Group (406) 470-2832 dianekboyd@gmail.com

Julie Zeigler, *Bear News* Editor (503) 999-9744 julienelson406@gmail.com

Bill Walker, Media/Newsletter Editor wkwalker@nvdi.com

Robin Chopus, Events coordinator sweetlorettas@gmail.com

Roger Sullivan, Chair of Transportation Committee (406) 250-1472 rsullivanmt@gmail.com

Lisa Jones ("LJ") McClellan ljsnowbunny@gmail.com

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, the Polebridge Mercantile and at our annual meeting. Show your support for the exceptional biodiversity and wildness of the North Fork by wearing this great shirt!