

Swan View's News

Holidays 2011



Swan View Coalition
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"Nature and human nature on the same path."

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The Trail Ahead: Imagine and Act!

Imagine a bike and pedestrian pathway network in Flathead County that links local communities with their schools, parks and public land trailheads. Then imagine parking your bike at one of those trailheads and enjoying a quiet hike on one of your back-country public trails protected for future generations as Wilderness.

It may take years to see that valley bottom pathway network built, but it is now a part of the Flathead County Master Plan! It may take years to get the Swan Crest protected by Congress as Wilderness, but a bill doing so has just been reintroduced in the U.S. House!

There is absolutely nothing stopping any of us from voluntarily treating the Swan Crest as Wilderness today, nor from volunteering our time and money to help build and maintain our public pathway and trail networks!

If we are physically able, we can volunteer our labor and write letters to public officials to show our appreciation of non-motorized public trails. And we can volunteer to NOT ride motorcycles and bikes on historic Swan Crest trails, where they are already banned from Jewel Basin and

would rightly be banned along the Swan Crest with Wilderness designation.

If we are not physically fit, we can make valuable contributions to the many nonprofit efforts protecting these trail networks and their surrounding fish and wildlife habitat. We can help spread the word, write letters or call public officials, and provide financial support!

Right action is always a mindful combination of what we do and don't do. Hiking the Swan Crest, rather than biking it, respects its wilderness character and helps build the case for its protection as Wilderness, as does voluntary trail work done without the use of chain saws and power tools.

This newsletter provides more detail on how you can join the hundreds of other folks working with us to insure our recreation has minimal impact on

fish, wildlife, and other people. It also details how best to preserve this legacy and ethic for future generations. Enjoy the read, imagine the future, and take mindful action today!



Historic Alpine Trail #7, Jewel Basin Hiking Area. *Keith Hammer Photo*

Keith

Voluntary Wilderness!

Every Saturday, the Swan Rangers voluntarily treat the Swan Crest as Wilderness by hiking, rather than biking or riding motorcycles. And, this fall, some Swan Rangers voluntarily followed suit by conducting trail clearing and repair work without the help of chain saws and power tools!

We have a formal volunteer agreement with Swan Lake and Hungry Horse Ranger Districts to help with trail maintenance work, putting in 34 man-hours of work this fall. Digging of trail tread has come to a halt for the season, but we'll be able to do a bit more brushing and clearing of deadfall as snow begins to pile up.

We intend to visit with Swan Lake Ranger District's Wilderness trail crews and learn some of the tricks of cutting deadfall with crosscut saws. There's far more challenge to not getting your saw "pinched" or stuck with a crosscut saw than a chain saw! What better way to promote Wilderness for the Swan Crest than to practice it?

We've started out small this fall, but would like to give serious consideration to expanding our volunteer services and skills to include the hand-cutting of the bigger deadfall encountered along Swan Range trails. The use of hand saws and hand clippers is not only quieter than chain saws, it is Wilderness-compliant and does not require the more extensive training and approval process required by the Forest Service to operate more dangerous power tools.

Contact Keith at keith@swanview.org if you are interested in helping out. There are tasks from kicking rocks off the trail to cutting brush with pruning shears to digging and chopping with Pulaskis (pictured bottom left). If you have a serviceable crosscut saw you'd like to loan or donate, or would like to learn tricks of the crosscut trade, let us know this as well!

Let's prepare this winter to have fun together next summer, giving a little back to the trails and land that bring folks great joy!



A couple Swan Rangers do volunteer trail repair on the Peters Ridge Trail (center). Before (l) and after (r) photos of repairs made to the Strawberry Lake Trail! *Keith Hammer Photos*

Support for Roadless Lands Protection Strong! NREPA Reintroduced in U.S. House!

Both local opinion and a decision by the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals this fall support the protection of public roadless lands from development. And the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act has been reintroduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to continue building support nationally.

Asked in September about legislation to immediately release Wilderness Study Areas and other roadless lands to development, readers of the Flathead Beacon overwhelmingly opposed the measure in a public opinion poll! (See poll at right).

In other good news, the Clinton Roadless Conservation Rule in October won a favorable decision from the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Roadless Rule was issued by President Clinton in 2001 to protect public roadless lands managed by the Forest Service from roadbuilding. It was immediately repealed, however, when George W. Bush took office - and has been in litigation ever since. Though the Rule is not perfect (it still allows motorized vehicles and development not requiring roads in roadless lands) the Appeals Court rul-

ing gives a new boost to the overwhelming public opinion that called for such legal protection in the first place.

While some conservation groups are allowing roads and logging in public roadless lands through "collaborative" projects and legislation, others are standing firm on scientific findings that we simply cannot con-

tinue to fragment fish and wildlife habitat through social compromises. To this end, the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act was reintroduced in the U.S. House on November 4.

HR 3334 would designate 23 million acres of roadless lands in Montana, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho as Wilderness and calls for the reclamation of some developed lands to restore connectivity for wildlife.

It would do both in the Swan Range, designating all roadless lands as Wilderness and removing damaging roads, including those identified for removal by the Wildlife Conservation Society's John Weaver.

To learn more and support NRE-

PA, click on the Northern Rockies Wilderness Bill link in the What's New sidebar at:

<http://www.wildwestinstitute.org>

Should Congress Pass the 'Wilderness and Roadless Areas Release Act?'

Total Votes: 266

Yes

18% (49)

No

82% (217)

Flathead Beacon Reader Poll

9/15/11

"For example, I recommended that almost all of the Swan Range be protected as big 'W' wilderness."

- John Weaver, senior conservation scientist with the Wildlife Conservation Society, speaking to Glacier National Park employees

Missoulian

10/12/11

Swan Crest Unprotected and Threatened!

Only a small fraction of the 89,000 acre Swan Crest is protected from motorcycles, snowmobiles and bicycles - in the 15,000 acre Jewel Basin Hiking Area - but only on Forest Service letterhead, not through an act of Congress. Though the Forest Service proposed in 1998 to further protect Jewel Basin by banning mountain bikes from trails leading directly into Jewel Basin, it never did so. Bike tracks were reported widely in Jewel Basin this summer!

The Forest Service also recommended Wilderness designation for a double-size Jewel Basin in its 1985 Forest Plan, but is backing away from that proposal as it prepares to write a new Plan. And the Forest Service not only allows snowmobiling along the Swan Crest, it has extended the season both north and south of Jewel Basin to allow springtime snowmobiling when grizzly bear have already emerged from their winter dens and need extra habitat security, not less!

Nor has the Forest Service removed the number of roads and amount of motorized use that its Forest Plan required for wildlife security in the Swan Range. If it had, it would now be a much smaller step to full Wilderness protection.

Though it has taken some steps to curb motorized use, the Forest Service has unfortunately allowed those impacts to simply be replaced by mountain biking and trail running - at times in the form of organized

races - in the Swan Range! In short, the Forest Service is proving untrustworthy to manage recreation in a sustainable manner in the Swan Range or to stand by its prior commitments.

While grizzly bear research is showing an increasing population for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, it has shown a declining population in the northern Swan Range and Swan Valley. As we reported in our last newsletter and on the previous page, a report by the Wildlife Conservation Society emphasizes the im-

portance of protecting and restoring the Swan Range for fish and wildlife.

We have made considerable progress for fish, wildlife and quiet recreation in the Swan Range, but plenty more remains to be done. As we work to improve conditions watershed by watershed, we work for long-term protection via the recently

reintroduced Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (see page 3).

We continue to challenge ill-conceived logging projects that would harm habitat for fish, lynx, grizzly bear, wolverine, big game, and other wildlife. And we are working to rein in thrill-seeking "wreckreation" that also threatens the health of our native ecosystems (see page 5).

We hope you'll help us spread the word, adopt sound recreation ethics, and join us in treating the Swan Range as Wilderness until Congress designates it as such!



Looking south out of Jewel Basin along the Swan Crest. Keith Hammer Photo

Gross Failure to "Tread Lightly" and "Leave no Trace" Puts Public Lands and the Public at Risk

The Forest Service and other public land management agencies spent decades teaching the public to follow the ethics of "Tread Lightly" and "Leave no Trace" when recreating. Now they are largely turning their backs on these ethics and allowing breakneck mountain bikers to construct and leave unauthorized trails and "stunts" (jumps and ramps) on public land.

The Forest Service specifically instructs the public in its "Leave no Trace" postings to NOT "build structures, dig trenches, or alter natural features." Yet the Swan Lake Ranger District writes of the bike ramp pictured on this page: "This bit of work was not authorized by the Forest Service and occurred sometime approximately three years ago."

In spite of previously promising it would "be removing the older, unauthorized structures"

along Beardance Trail, a few of these ramps remain! We've gotten a number of jumps and ramps removed there and will keep working on getting the rest removed.

In an area near Whitefish called Spencer Mountain, bikers have constructed a system of downhill bike trails, jumps and elaborate ramps on State Lands without authorization from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. Since then, injuries include a broken neck in September that has left the biker a quadriple-

gic. Now, of course, there are discussions going around about who might be liable if a lawsuit is filed.

When we first photographed unauthorized downhill bike trails on Crane Mountain last June, we also watched the promotional video for those trails (search for "Crane Mountain Special" on [YouTube](#)).

It shows a biker crashing head over heels on a marked yet unauthorized trail, giving rise to the term "breakneck biking" and our urging the Forest Service to close down these trails before someone gets injured - and perhaps sues the Forest Service.

These trails are not only a liability to taxpayers, their leading proponent admits they are "game trails that downfall has been removed out of." We think wildlife should be allowed to use its game trails, rather than being run off

by bikers. The Forest Service has thus far refused to close these unauthorized trails, but we will keep pushing.

Recreation ethics and laws prohibiting the construction of unauthorized structures on public lands were written to keep public lands from being trashed and to protect the next person's right to enjoy them unmarred. Land management agencies need to recommit themselves to following their own "Tread Lightly" and "Leave no Trace" guidelines, as well as the law!



Unauthorized bike ramp on Beardance Trail. Keith Hammer Photo

Recent Praise for our Work and Community Efforts

It is always nice to hear good things about our work and community initiatives. We really appreciate it when folks take the time to let us know what they think! Here is a sampling of your comments:

"I just want to thank you for your unwavering commitment to protecting our natural environment."
Tom P.

"You've done an outstanding job in creating and guiding an organization that provides education and enjoyment for so many."
Peter M.

"Thanks. I always take action on your alerts."
George A.

"Thanks for your hard work in getting this [road decommissioning] done."
Steve G.

"Great job with the new Swanview website. I have a much better understanding and appreciation of what the organization is doing."
Lloyd J.

"Thanks for your weekly update ... I appreciate all that you do for 'community.'"
Chuck W.

"Much thanks to the Swan Rangers for doing trail crew work."
Cindie J.

"We want to thank you for the best belly laughs we've had this weekend!"
Tom and Mary M.

"Thanks for all your hard work. I'll wear my [Swan Ranger] patch proudly, even if I have never hiked with you guys."
Fran W.



Swan Rangers atop the Swan Crest.
Keith Hammer photo.

Won't You Join Others in Supporting our Work?

Our office space and car use are donated, but we have plenty of expenses involved in conducting our research, issuing the findings in reports, and paying for postage, paper, phone, Internet access, web site work, computer software, and the like. Please join the following folks who, among others, have made recent contributions. Simply see the next page to make your contribution today!

Many thanks to Andy, Anita, Ann, Barbara, Bill, Bob, Carol, Cheryl, Chris, Craig,

Daniel, David, Debi, Dennise, Don, Donald, Edd, Elaine, Fawn, Fay, Fran, Frank, Gail, George, Hans, Inger, Jane, Janet, Jeff, Jill, James, Jerry, Jim, Joe, Joel, Johanna, Jon, Julie, Karen, Kathy, Ken, Kevin, Laurie, Leiana, Lex, Linda, Lisa, Lise, Liz, Lloyd, Lou, Margaret, Margie, Maria, Mary, Maureen, MB, Pam, Patricia, Peggy, Peter, Phillip, Rebekah, Richard, Riley, Robert, Robin, Rod, Roger, Rosanne, Scott, Shawn, Stephen, Steve, Stuart, Sukey, Tad, Thomas, Tim, Tom, Tony, Val, and Warren!

Help us Raise \$20,000 to Meet our Year-End Budget!

Swan View Coalition relies in large part on member donations to fund its work protecting habitat for fish, wildlife and people. Your donation this Holiday Season will help insure we meet our budget by year-end! You can also help us broaden our membership base by giving Gift Memberships at \$25 each, either on-line or using the donation form below!

1. Send a check to Swan View Coalition at 3165 Foothill Road, Kalispell, MT 59901 - or -
2. Use your credit card securely on-line at www.swanview.org or www.swanrange.org, by clicking on the Donate Now button!



Groundspring/ Network for Good handles your transaction for us and informs us immediately via email of your donation by credit card. If you have other info you want to get to us, such as the names, addresses and greetings you choose for your Gift Memberships, simply email them to keith@swanview.org or mail them to the address in #1, above.

Annual Membership Meeting and Elections, November 20! *4pm Meeting, 5pm Potluck, 6pm Music Jam Session* *Mountain Brook Community Library, 2353 Foothill Road*



If there is pink on your mailing label, it means you haven't donated in nearly a year or more. Please make a donation so we can keep sending you our newsletter and continue our work!

- [] Here's \$25 to cover my minimum dues, newsletters, alerts, and Swan Ranger Reports.
- [] Here's \$50 to help restore a bit of peace and quiet to America's public lands.
- [] Here's \$100 to help keep forest roads from ending up in America's bull trout streams.
- [] Here's \$_____ to help secure grizzly, lynx and wolverine habitat for future generations.
- [] Here's \$_____ for _____ Gift Memberships at a minimum of \$25 each. I've included each recipient's name, mailing address, email address, and my greeting on separate paper.
- [] As a gift of appreciation for my donation, please send me [] the Swan/Flathead history booklet "The Lineage of Chief Aeneas: A History of People and Place" and/or [] a Swan Ranger patch (circle "hang-loop" or "sew-on").
- [] Save paper! Email my newsletters to _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

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