

Swan View's News

Winter 2008



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

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Special Issue and Call to Action! *Securing Quiet Habitat for Fish, Wildlife, and Humans*

This issue provides a primer on our efforts to reduced the number of roads and motor vehicles on the Flathead National Forest. It then asks you to write a short email or letter to help our efforts to secure quiet habitat for fish, wildlife and humans.

Page 2 describes in layperson terms how Flathead Forest Plan standards strictly limit the number of roads and trails that can remain open to motorized use. It then uses a map on page 3 to show where the Flathead is not yet in compliance with its management standards.

Page 4 then discusses how the government is trying to sidestep its management standards and how our lawsuits aim to thwart these end-runs. The facts are both encouraging and sobering.

Nearly 600 miles of roads on the Flathead have already been decommissioned to make them impassable to motor vehicles, not just closed with a largely inef-

fective gate. Yet 300 more miles scheduled for decommissioning wait for funding, as does the planning and scheduling of many more miles of decommissioning necessary to meet Forest Plan standards.

Even under the present Bush adminis-

tration, however, some help may be on its way. We contributed to a report delivered in Washington, D.C. to help direct the spending of \$39 million to fix or decommission roads that are trashing water quality - and the plight of the Flathead was presented at the top of the list.

You can help get on-the-ground results on the Flathead by writing a short email or letter ASAP, as described on page 4.

Thank you for your help!



Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks Photo

Roads decommissioned to protect grizzly bear also protect the cold, clean water needed by bull trout and humans.

Keith

Standards Limiting Motorized Vehicles

In response to a lawsuit we won, the Flathead National Forest in 1995 issued Amendment 19 to its Forest Plan and required it be fully implemented by 2005. In order to protect grizzly bear, 40 of the Flathead's 54 non-wilderness Grizzly Bear Management Subunits must meet strict numeric limits on motorized and non-motorized route densities and meet strict minimums for grizzly bear security core habitat.

No more than 19% of a subunit can have roads and trails open to motorized use in densities exceeding 1 mile/square mile of land. Also, no more than 19% of a subunit can have total road and trail density in excess of 2 mile/square mile, motorized or not. And at least 68% of each subunit must be at least 500 meters from a road or trail open to motors or receiving very high levels of hiking use.

These A19 standards, known as 19/19/68, are derived from the South Fork Grizzly Bear Study conducted in the northern Swan Mountains. They recognize that even roads and trail closed to motorized use can displace grizzly bears from their habitat if human use levels remain too high.

Hence, A19 requires many roads be de-commissioned rather than simply gated, with the culverts removed in order to reduce human use and to also protect water quality and fish from inevitable culvert washouts. In layperson terms, humans can use grizzly bear and other wildlife habitat

on foot with less impact than by motorized vehicles, but there is still a limit to what bears can tolerate and survive.

The map on page 3 shows the Flathead's grizzly bear subunits with the subunit numbers either left alone or marked with a square, oval or circle to assist in keying the black and white version of the map. The 18 black-bordered subunits comply with the 19/19/68 standards and one can see these subunits have few or no roads.

The orange units (oval key) do not yet meet the standards due to too many roads and trails. Nor do the red (square key) subunits, which the Flathead has attempted to rule "OK" by simply relaxing the standards. Swan View is in court over these subunits.

The yellow (circle key) subunits have less than 75% Forest Service land and hence a lame "no net loss" standard that allows existing road densities to exist. Existing road and human densities like those in the Swan Valley, however, have

resulted in the death of 42% of the grizzly bears monitored there!

We have won a public review of the inadequate Swan Valley "no net loss" standards and have filed a third lawsuit to accelerate compliance with the 19/19/68 standards forest-wide. We'll keep you posted.

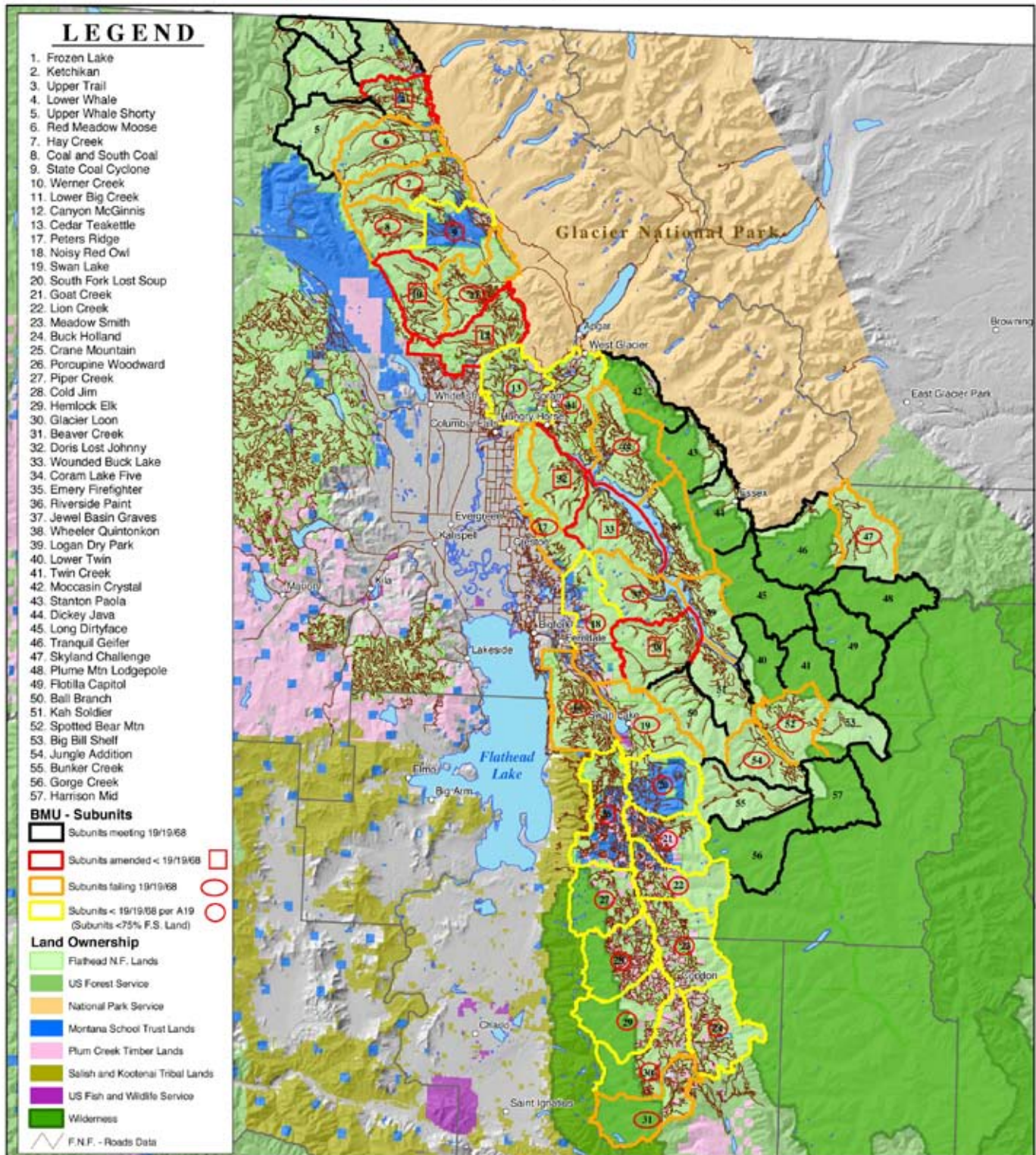
Obviously, the Flathead has a long way to go to protect fish and wildlife. Page 4 sheds a bit of light on federal foot-dragging and end-runs, but also highlights a key opportunity to write a short email or letter to help us put and end to it!



Paul Harvey photo

Water is protected by removing culverts and dirt, putting streams safely back in their native streambed.

Grizzly Bear BMU Subunits Amendment 19 Compliance - 2004 Flathead National Forest



Compliance Data Source: Flathead National Forest, December 2004, Robert-Wedge, West Side Reservoir, and Crazy Horse III Post Fire Projects...Compatibility with NFMA Requirements for Maintaining Species Viability.



Note to hard-copy b/w viewers: This newsletter can be viewed in color by locating the pdf version at www.swanview.org or by email pdf subscription (see page 5 of this newsletter).

Help Us Thwart Federal End-Runs!

The good news: our lawsuits and public pressure have decommissioned 600 miles of road on the Flathead N.F. and secured decisions to decommission 300 more, currently at a rate of 40 miles/year. Decommissioning the next 300 miles of road will not only protect habitat for fish, wildlife and humans, it will pump some \$2 million into the local economy and create 100 good-paying jobs!

The bad news is funds to accomplish this work more quickly and to plan the remaining road decommissioning needed to protect fish and wildlife are lacking or being hijacked. The Clinton administration once committed funds solely for road decommissioning and even the Bush administration has allocated \$39 million to fix and remove roads harming water quality.

We contributed to a report delivered in Washington, DC to help secure some of these funds for the Flathead. Go to www.wildlandscpr.org and follow the links to read or download the Road Reclamation and Remediation Report.

Nearly \$5 million has been spent to secure a DNA-based one-time estimate of the Northern Continental Grizzly Bear population size and last November the Forest Service contributed \$377,000 of "unused" money to study the population trend. While such studies are not bad in themselves, they are sucking up huge sums of money that is not being spent on-the-ground restoring bear habitat through work like road decommissioning!

The agencies already know from previous studies that local bear populations are declining in the northern Swan Range and in the Swan Valley. We fear they will use an ecosystem-wide population estimate to justify allowing local populations to decline or go extinct, rather than protect the habitat needed to support bears ecosystem-wide.

Indeed, that is how the Forest Service has already rationalized relaxing its management standards in the six subunits bordered in red (square key) on the map on page 3. And that is why we have two lawsuits aimed at stopping such end-runs!

You can help us by writing a short email or letter while the Flathead develops its new Motorized Vehicle Use Map for the North, South, and Middle Fork Flathead River areas - which include the six contested bear subunits and many more that remain substandard.

Please send an email ASAP to comments-northern-flathead-hungry-horse-glacier-view@fs.fed.us **or a letter** to Jimmy DeHerrera, Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger District Ranger, P.O. Box 190340, Hungry Horse, MT 59919. Tell him

you want his MVU Map to comply with Amendment 19's 19/19/68 standards in all grizzly bear management subunits. Mention this would close Alpine Trail #7 and its feeder trails in the northern Swan Range to motorized use, helping accommodate human recreation while protecting wildlife by decreasing the impact-per-person.



Keith Hammer photo

Heavy equipment operators, their families, and the folks they do business with all benefit from road decommissioning work.

What You Can Do to Help!

1. Write a short email or letter ASAP, as described on page 4!
2. . Help us secure non-motorized recreation and wilderness designations in the northern Swan Range and elsewhere to reduce impacts to water quality, fish, wildlife, and other humans. This will also conserve fossil fuels by limiting ATV use and making it so folks don't have to drive ever further to find quiet recreation opportunities.
3. Make a generous donation to Swan View Coalition today! As a member-supported non-profit, our work depends on your support. Don't forget you can donate on-line by going to www.swanview.org and clicking on the Donate Now button!
4. Save paper / trees: get this newsletter in color via email! (see below)



The choice is clear: culvert blowouts (left) or careful road decommissioning (right). *U.S. Forest Service photos*



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 the costs of my newsletters, alerts, and Swan Ranger postings.
- ☐ 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.
- ☐ 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."
- ☐ Save paper! Email my newsletters to _____

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