

# Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex 2023 Newsletter

VOLUME 32



Sidebar photo credit:  
Employees of the  
Spotted Bear RD

## Invitation from your Lead Ranger

We look forward to visiting with you at our annual Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) public meeting and information-share this spring! This year, the meeting will take place in person at the Lincoln Community Hall, located at **404 Main Street in Lincoln, MT**. The meeting will be held **Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>** from **10:00am to 3:00pm**. I hope you can join us to share news and exchange ideas. We value your continued engagement in managing this wonderful resource.

**SATURDAY, April 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**10:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m.**

**Lincoln Community Hall**

**Scott Snelson,**  
*2023 BMWC Lead Ranger*  
Spotted Bear RD,  
Flathead NF





## Introduction *from your Lead Ranger, Scott Snelson*

My father-in-law, Dave Owen, crossed over the big river just before the holidays at the ripe age of 93. Dave had been the District Ranger at Spotted Bear, Big Prairie, Superior, and Ninemile as well as a smokejumper, pea picker, packer, and soldier. He grew up in a sometimes unstable household in Wisconsin. Dave found his peace and anchor as a boy in the woods and farms of that sand country in and around Madison.

The tale goes, my father-in-law came west after WWII. He worked with the Forest Service as he went to the School of Forestry in Missoula on the GI Bill. Dave became a packer as a result of the regular packer being too drunk to work and somebody needed to do it. He also decided that it'd be an interesting adventure to extend his firefighting skills by jumping out of airplanes to help extinguish fires in the backcountry. Dave had fallen even more in love with the peace he found in the backcountry, building on the peace and sometime escape he found hiking, fishing, and hunting in rural Wisconsin.

I'll be there when they scatter the burned remains of my father-in-law at his place just over the hill from the Wilderness down the Swan side this spring. I hope to be joined by my newest and oldest grandsons in the shadow of the Swan Range. I have a notion that Dave might just be lurking in the larch trees watching us with a smile. Free from his failed body, I can see him whistling his way through the woods.

I don't wonder that Dave will be glad to see the new great-grandson and be pleased to know that just over the divide, those boys will be able to march over the largely unchanged landscape that he managed and now I oversee. A place that young and old find refuge, filling the soul, an anchor, largely free.

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As you just read, I am happy to report I have a new grandson as of a little over a week ago. My oldest daughter and baby are doing good. I drove down to Santa Fe from Montana to meet the newest family member last week and then on to Topeka, Kansas for some family business. That's a lot of time behind the wheel. Driving across eastern New Mexico, Oklahoma and western Kansas gives a guy a lot of time to contemplate.

Hundreds of miles of solid farm fields, plowed and planted to feed the nation and the world. There is little remaining of what I picture of the wide prairie that provided for the indigenous peoples of this area. Rural it is, wild it is not. There is a part of me that feels missing as I travel across this new landscape for me, this being my first time across this part of the country.

I am not from Kansas, but I do hale from the border of prairie country where it transitions to boreal forest. Land manipulated at a vast scale to conform to our needs for wealth and comfort. Little is left of its native condition. I think if I were to be from Kansas, I might feel a little more whole if I was confident that there might be some wild to be found somewhere nearby. For that daughter of the prairie who seeks more adventure than her pocket wild can provide, the big canvas awaits you. Wilderness travel is not everyone's cup of tea, but many of us really appreciate knowing it is there if we ever needed it.

*(Continued on next page...)*



## Introduction *from your Lead Ranger, Scott Snelson*

The namesake for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex wrote eloquently about the value of wilderness for the entirety of the population in his essay "The Problem of the Wilderness in 1930". In this essay Marshall examines the trade-offs between the minority rights of those wanting the fulfillment and freedom to embrace the ever-shrinking ability to experience the mental (spiritual), physical, and esthetic wonders that Wilderness provides with those values of leisure travelers and those wanting to achieve material wealth of the resources.

My job as District Ranger of the Spotted Bear Ranger District requires of me to balance competing interests on the regular. My guiding principles reflect the first chief of the Forest Service's axiom, the greatest good for the greatest number over the long haul... or as written in the stated mission of the US Forest Service, "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." While this serves as an important guideline, it turns out it rarely gives a formulaic conclusion.

It's been pretty good over the decades to be part of a band of public servants doing our best to deliver the greatest good, for the greatest number for the long haul. Dave Owen and I offset work lives over a generation. In chats over coffee, dinner, whisky and over decades, Dave and I often reflected on leadership, the good ones, the ones you wouldn't trust to tote a pale of water, the ring kissers and movers, and those ones you'd be proud if they remembered you.

We also talked about how wilderness management has been funded and supported over the decades from those leaders that understand how essential our Wilderness system remains. The current figures tell that we are experiencing some of the best budget support we have seen in decades, due to improved funding for recreational infrastructure, the Great American Outdoors Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act as well as improved funding through regular appropriations from Congress.

There is a lot of work to be done and the field season is upon us. We look forward to continuing our valued, long-standing partnerships across the complex and we look forward to hearing from you at our upcoming in-person public meeting (all of the details on the first page of this newsletter). Please attend if you are able so that your voice can be heard by our Complex Managers.

We hope to see you in April to continue the conversation. Cheers to another great year, we hope to see you on the trail.

Scott Snelson

# Meet Your New BMWC Managers

## Helena - Lewis and Clark National Forest

### Molly Ryan, *Deputy Forest Supervisor*



Molly is a third generation Forest Service employee from Dillon, Montana. Growing up, most free moments were spent outdoors playing competitive sports, hiking, and fishing.

She studied Western US History and Rangeland Management at Montana State University, graduating in 2007. In 2009, she graduated with her MS in Recreation Management from the University of Montana.

While at school in Missoula, and for two years after graduating, she worked for the USFS Region 1 Historic Preservation Team. The crew traveled all over the Northern Region and county rehabbing historic Forest Service structures in front and backcountry situations.

January 2012 found Molly moving to north eastern Utah where she spent five years on the Flaming Gorge Ranger District (Ashley National Forest) working as the Special Use Permit Administrator, District Recreation Program Manager, and finally Deputy District Ranger. She moved back home to Montana in January 2017 as the Wisdom District Ranger on the Beaverhead – Deerlodge NF.

As of August 2022, Molly has embarked on her latest adventure as the Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. Outside of work, she enjoys cooking, reading, hiking and cross-country skiing. Welcome to the BMWC, Molly!!

# Managers continued ...

## Lincoln Ranger District

### Jim Yarbrough, *District Ranger*

Jim is the new District Ranger on the Lincoln Ranger District as of March 2023. Prior to this position, he spent 2 years on the Swan Lake Ranger district as the roads manager before moving to Dillon, Montana, as the B-D Transportation Planner.

For the past 12 years Jim has served primarily as a transportation engineer, but also had the opportunity to spend time in various roles as Forest Engineer, Staff Officer and District Ranger.

Jim used to enjoy leading a pack string into various wilderness areas, including the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, but with his work load he found that he wasn't keeping the stock or himself tuned-up and chose to sell the stock.

He enjoys hard workouts, wilderness trips, motorcycles and filling his hunting tags each year. Welcome to the BMWC, Jim!!



# Managers continued ...

## Rocky Mountain Ranger District

### Denny Marschner, *Forestry Technician Wilderness/Trails*

Denny has worked on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District as a seasonal staffer since 2008. This March, he has accepted a permanent position as the new Forestry Tech/Wilderness Trails. Please read the following interview to learn a bit more about Denny.



#### **Where did you grow up?**

Around the Northern Kentucky / Greater Cincinnati area.

#### **When did you start your career with the FS and in what capacity?**

In 2008 as a member of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Trail Crew

#### **What drew you to the FS?**

I worked with the Montana Conservation Corps in 06 and 07 and really enjoyed the work and also seeing lots of amazing places (including a little bit of the Bob). The Forest Service, especially RMRD, seemed like a great way to come back for more.

#### **What is one thing you find the most challenging about your work?**

Just keeping up with all the surprises. Between the weather, equipment malfunctions, personality clashes (human or animal), and random radio calls, etc.... It seems like anything can happen at any time.

#### **What is the most rewarding?**

Working with both new stock and new people. It's a lot of fun witnessing them learning and improving. And In the process I end up learning a lot from them, too.

#### **What message would you like to give to folks who come to the forest?**

Learn about and love your public lands.



# Managers continued ...

## Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District

Two permanent positions have recently been added to the Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District organizational chart: River Ranger (filled by Echo Miller-Barnes) and Wilderness Ranger (filled by Benjamin Turcea). Echo has worked on the River Crew at HHGV since 2020, and Ben is new to HHGV after six seasons in the Upper Middle Fork region of the Spotted Bear Ranger District.

Along with Krista Kaarre, the district's Trails Specialist, these permanent positions will increase capacity of many aspects of recreation management and wilderness stewardship, including infrastructure maintenance, wilderness character monitoring, river management planning, and general contacts with the growing numbers of visitors to the district.

Krista Kaarre, *Trails Specialist*



These mid-level permanent positions will also augment the values of Interdependence and Conservation: increased cooperation among various arms of the recreation program, and a more nuanced execution of management plans to preserve and conserve the land for present and future generations.



Echo Miller-Barnes, *River Ranger*

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## Managers continued ...

# Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District

### On the docket for Krista, Echo, and Ben this season:

- Training, working, and performing wilderness stewardship shoulder-to-shoulder with partners like the BMWF, MCC, and BCH
- Continuing the Limits of Acceptable Change monitoring of social encounters on the trails and river systems, and inventorying campsite conditions
- Supporting key partnerships, such as the Artist Wilderness Connection program with the Hockaday Museum of Art and river ambassadors mobilized through Flathead Rivers Alliance
- Providing on-the-job training for conservation corps interns who are building their skills for future careers in trails, wilderness, and river stewardship
- Increasing physical presence in the wilderness
- Planning for future deferred maintenance work on the trails system and corrals at Granite and Spruce Park Cabins



Benjamin Turcea,  
Wilderness Ranger

*Hopefully, you'll get to run into them on the trail or the river this season!*





# Connecting the Forest Service's Core Values with the BMWC

By Colter Pence, Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District

The Forest Service has a range of core values:  
**SERVICE, INTERDEPENDENCE, CONSERVATION, DIVERSITY, and SAFETY.**

*These values are not just "ours;" they are often shared by the people and communities we serve. They connect us to each other and ground us in what we have in common, and in this case it's a love for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. We can see these core values showing up in wilderness stewardship work we do together in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and how we experience this special resource. Below is a little brainstorm of ways the FS core values "show up" in the BMWC community.*

*In what ways do you see these core values expressed in the BMWC community?*

**SERVICE.** *To each other. To the American people. To the planet.*

Protection of ecosystem services such as healthy fish and wildlife populations and sources of drinking water for local communities; Trail maintenance which provides access to wilderness visitors; Preserving wilderness character, the primary mandate of the 1964 Wilderness Act, while setting an example for other wilderness areas.

**INTERDEPENDENCE.** *Of all things. People and nature. Communities and colleagues. The past, present, and future.*

3 National Forests managing 3 wilderness areas as one vast unified wilderness; permitted outfitter and guides who provide specialized services to visitors; preserving the primitive characteristics of wilderness that tie us directly to the natural world in a time where disconnectedness to the land and natural world is prolific.

**CONSERVATION.** *Protection when necessary. Preservation when appropriate. Restoration, when needed, and wise management for multiple use and enjoyment always.*

The population source for a number of keystone species in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem – grizzly bears, Bull trout, etc.; the preservation of wilderness skills and traditional tools, ways of life; wilderness fire as a natural, restorative ecological function.

**DIVERSITY.** *People and cultures. Perspectives and ideas. Experiences and ecosystems.*

Partnerships with a wide range of people and groups (MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, Backcountry Horsemen, Montana Conservation Corps, and so many others); diversity of landscapes – from the steep, forested canyons of the Great Bear to the flat, dry escarpments of the Scapegoat to the broad valleys of the South Fork of the Flathead River and the North Fork of the Sun River; wilderness visitors enjoying the wilderness in different ways – backpacking, river rafting, hunting/fishing, skiing, stock use; mountain climbing, and more.

**SAFETY.** *In every way: physical, psychological, and social.*

Trail condition reporting and fire information so that visitors can plan visits; providing unconfined recreation opportunities allows for challenging orienteering and primitive navigational skill development; Psychological-spiritual renewal from wilderness experiences that can provide a measure of relief from the travails of our interconnected world.



# 2022 Season Reflection & Welcoming New Faces to the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation

By Allison Siems, *Operations Director*

In 2022 the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation celebrated our 25th anniversary of trail work in the Bob – and what a year it turned out to be! We had some major wins, including receiving the USFS Bob Marshall Award for Group Champion of Wilderness Stewardship, and a few big losses as well – in particular, losing our good friend and fellow co-worker, Sue Johnson, in October.

Through it all we had another fantastic summer getting work done in the Bob. We organized and led 61 projects, joined forces with 17 partners and affinity groups, and hosted 11 interns, two Packer Apprentices, and two Artist Wilderness Connection residencies. Our volunteers maintained 451 miles of trail, clearing 3,145 trees and improving 1,092 yards of tread. We treated 68.5 acres of invasive weeds, including treating 40 acres with biocontrol insects released to fight spotted knapweed in Little Salmon Park.



**One of our volunteers clearing trail up Bear Creek in 2022**

A total of 369 volunteers joined us on these projects for the opportunity to connect and experience the Bob in a unique and meaningful way. We provided wilderness education and outreach at 24 public community events. We hosted our largest-ever Voices of the Wilderness in November at Snowline Acres – thank you to those of you who joined us to celebrate!

One of our biggest wins included landing our most substantial grant ever, thanks to the America the Beautiful Challenge grant program. Over the next five years this funding will support the expansion of our invasive species program, broadening our fight against noxious weeds and taking on aquatic invasive species as well.

**BMWF Volunteers on our 2022 Gateway Pass Project**



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## BMWF Update, continued...



**Zack Schlanger (left)**  
**Invasive Species Coordinator**

As we welcomed new faces, we also said bittersweet goodbyes to two of our staff in 2022. First, Stewardship Coordinator Meg Killen decided to hang up the crosscut after many years and many hats with the Foundation. Then at the end of the year, Executive Director Bill Hodge moved on to accept the Montana State Director position with the Wilderness Society. Both of these folks contributed so much to the Foundation and the Complex, and they will truly be missed! We're grateful to still have them as part of our broader community of vibrant volunteers who love the Bob.

We're looking forward to another stellar season in the Bob – we have the most projects planned for this summer than we ever have before! We hope you'll check them out and share the opportunity to volunteer and give back to this place that gives us so much. [bmwf.org/volunteer](https://www.bmwf.org/volunteer)

Thanks to this funding, we were able to hire our full-time, permanent Invasive Species Coordinator, Zack Schlanger! Some of you may have crossed paths with Zack this summer as he led our volunteer weeds projects and mapped infestations around the Complex, and we're very happy to have him on board year-round.

We were also happy to have Ian Bartling join our staff as our new Field Coordinator in December. You may recognize Ian as one of our Crew Leaders from 2019 and 2020, and from the SBRD trail crew out of Big Prairie last summer. We're glad to have his passion, expertise and organizational skills behind the many logistics for our Volunteer Adventures and supporting our seasonal Crew Leaders and Interns during their field season.



**Ian Bartling,**  
**Field Coordinator**

# Remembering Suzie Ranger

In January 2023, Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation's Program Director Rebecca Powell sat down with retired Spotted Bear Wilderness Ranger Al Koss to swap stories and remember our dear friend Suzie "Ranger" who passed away in late October of 2022. Sue Johnson was a 30+ year Spotted Bear Ranger District employee who worked her way up starting as a GS-3 clerk typist to eventually becoming a Forestry Technician. After her retirement from the USFS, Sue joined the Foundation staff as their part-time Program Coordinator for another ten years.

These excerpts were taken from a longer interview. Listen to the full discussion at [bmwf.org/stories](http://bmwf.org/stories)

## Do you remember your first impression of Sue?

**(Al)** I just remember how friendly she was. After that, she always knew who I was and remembered me. I remember her smile and her laugh. As you said, once a person met Sue, they were always a friend.

**(Rebecca)** She was kind of the glue that held the social life together of everybody else. She was already working at the Foundation when I started, and I remember her being very friendly, and like, "Ok, who are you, what's your story, tell me all about you." She was always just such a positive force. She always had her earrings matching her shirt, very coordinated.

**(Al)** Earrings were always a big part of her life. When we would travel, we would find different earrings from different places. And all of her shirts [would match them], particularly during the holidays.



Rebecca and Sue at Voices of the Wilderness in 2015



Sue on Hunter Patrol while working for the Spotted Bear RD

## Do you have any favorite jokes Sue used to tell, or funny stories?

**(Al)** One year Sue had a day calendar on her desk, and every day was a lyric from a country western song. And one of them was, "You better be better to me." And she would always bring that up – something would come up, I would say we gotta do this... and she would say, "You better be better to me."

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## Remembering Suzie Ranger, continued...



*Al and Sue on Pivot Mountain in the 1990's*

### **Continued...**

One story that I think is pretty memorable of who Suzie was... We had an employee fund at the ranger district...and Suzie always brought up that we should be doing something for the employees with that. So at the end of orientation she came up with the idea of a barn dance. It started out in the cook house, we'd push all the tables back and people would come in and dance. One year when the cook house was damaged, we said "Where are we gonna have it?" "Well it's a barn dance, let's go to the barn!" So we cleaned out the barn and from there on, it became the Spotted Bear barn dance, and it's still going on to this day. Suzie was the instigator of the barn dance.

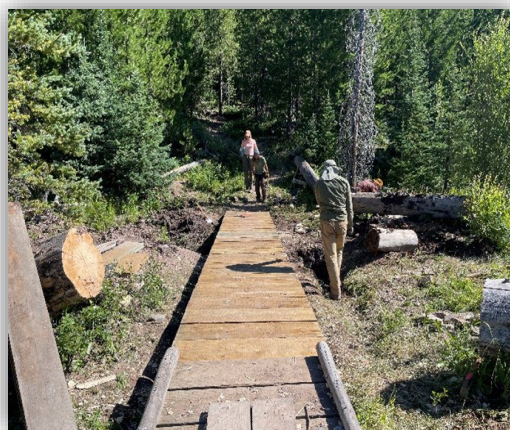
### **What do you miss most about her?**

**(Al)** I think just being able to pick up the phone and talk. Catch up on what's going on, what's been happening, what she's been doing. There were always different activities, different people, things that she knew, different stories, catching up on her family and our family... I hope that as people listen to this, it will spark memories for them of their time with Suzie, because she touched so many people's lives.

# 2022 Season Updates from the Lincoln Ranger District's Trails and Wilderness Crews

By Forest Moulton, *Lincoln Ranger District*

The Lincoln Ranger District Trails and Wilderness crews had another great season in Scapegoat Wilderness in 2022. Despite heavier than usual blowdown, the crews still managed to clear all the trails at least once and do some major work projects on a few trails as well. One of the major projects was to replace a turnpike that flooded and had the fill washed out with a puncheon on the Mineral Creek Trail # 484. A Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation crew completed the project under guidance of the Lincoln Ranger District's Trails Manager.



**Construction of a puncheon on the Mineral Creek Trail**

A large, two-year deferred maintenance project was also started on the upper end of the Landers Fork Trail #438.

Forest Service and Montana Conservation Corps Crew finished about 3 miles of the 5-mile project, completing large amounts of retread, brushing, and drainage work. This large project was made possible by the extra funds available from the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA).



## Lincoln Ranger District, continued...



*These three photos show the conditions of the Landers Trail #438 before, during, and after FS employees and MCC crew members completed retreat, brushing, and drainage work on the trail.*

On the wilderness side of things, our Rangers will once again have a heavy focus on treating known infestations of invasive weeds as well as focusing on LNT with public contacts and education. They will also assist the trail crew with trail opening and project work. Lastly, they will fully implement our updated solitude and campsite impact monitoring that is consistent with our Limits of Acceptable Change guidelines.

This will be the first year that the Complex will collect most of our data with mobile devices that will sync seamlessly with our new database in ArcPro...more on this ahead in the following article.

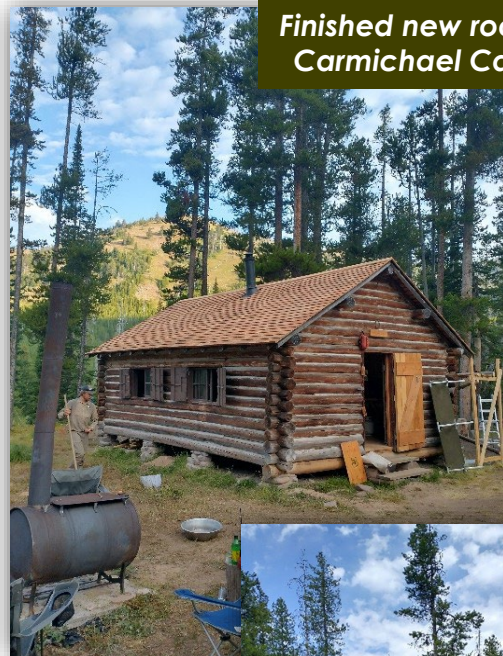


# Seeley Lake Ranger District Update

By Jeremy Watkins, Seeley Lake Ranger District

Hello, Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex community, greetings from the Seeley Lake Ranger District. Summer of 2022 finally gave us a bit of a breather compared to the last few seasons of challenges. Drought conditions and the associated wildfire issues were not a problem on our District in 2021. Debris slides in the Monture Creek drainage were not as significant. We did have some early season flooding in the Monture Creek Campground, due to changes in the Spread Creek channel, but it was short lived. Although the water system at Monture Creek Campground is still not functioning as it did before the slides, Forest Service Packer Keith Guschausky and Trent Osburn with the Bob Marshall Wilderness Outfitters were able to get a new gravity fed system operational.

Seeley Lake had a seasonal Trail Crew consisting of six people, as well as one dedicated Wilderness Ranger. We also partnered with Wild Montana and Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation for volunteer projects and hosted a Montana Conservation Corps crew for three hitches of deferred maintenance. In all we maintained about 245 miles of trail, with about 10 miles of deferred maintenance accomplished. Heavier deferred maintenance in the Scapegoat included a new 100' turnpike on the Dry Fork #31, heavy brushing and retread on Falls Point #436, and brushing on Cabin Creek #80. The trail crew also put a new cedar shingle roof on Carmichael Cabin, once again with the assistance of Kibb Mills from the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. They also spent three days cutting and piling in the Middle Fork of Monture Creek campsite. That camp was hit by a significant wind event during 2021, making it pretty much unusable for the public and the designated outfitter.



**Finished new roof on Carmichael Cabin**



**Saw work at Middle Fork Monture camp**



## Seeley Lake Ranger District, continued...



**Trail Crew and Kibb Mills starting the first course of shingles on Carmichael Cabin**

So, what will the 2023 season have on hand for the Seeley Lake Ranger District? We are currently looking at a trail crew of five seasonal Trail Crew members (lost one late in hiring to Helitack), one seasonal packer, as well as one Wilderness Ranger. One of these positions will act as a partner group liaison (funded through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA)). We are planning on our normal volunteer and partner group projects to include: Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation volunteer and WCC, Back Country Horsemen, Wild Montana, and several hitches of Montana Conservation Corps.

Plans are to continue our deferred maintenance on Falls Point, Cabin Creek, and Fenn Mountain. We will also be looking at repairing the daubing on the Carmichael Cabin as well as log oiling Carmichael and North Fork Cabins.

Geoff Bogie has accepted a new position as Seeley's Backcountry Recreation Management Specialist. His duties will include oversight of the Wilderness/Trails Program, administering Seeley Outfitter Guide Permits, and Winter Recreation. Bogie returned to Seeley after being deployed for a year assignment in the Middle East. Having been on the district for over a decade – his experience will greatly assist Seeley's Recreation Program.

Well that pretty much catches folks up on what we have going on here. As always, we encourage people to call us with any questions, inquiries about current conditions, AND information regarding conditions that we may not be aware of. We hope you all have a great spring, and maybe we'll see you out on the trail.



**Geoff Bogie**

# A History of Coordinated Fire Management in the BMWC

By Jim Flint, Spotted Bear Ranger District

Oh, what a difference a few decades make. And a bit of fire history helps too.

When I arrived on the Spotted Bear Ranger District in 2002, Steve Wirt — the Wilderness Fire Specialist at the time — had me review the brand-new “Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex Guidebook on Wildland Fire Use to Meet Wilderness Resources Objectives.” Not only was that a mouthful of a title, but it was also itself a revision of a series of documents begotten of the granddaddy of them all: the “Scapegoat-Danaher Fire Plan.” To say that I was “encouraged” to read all of these is perhaps putting it a bit lightly (by the way, I’ve lost track of my copy of the Scapegoat-Danaher Fire Plan...so if anybody has one, let me know).



The Ursus fire as seen from Prairie Reef Lookout on September 5, 2023

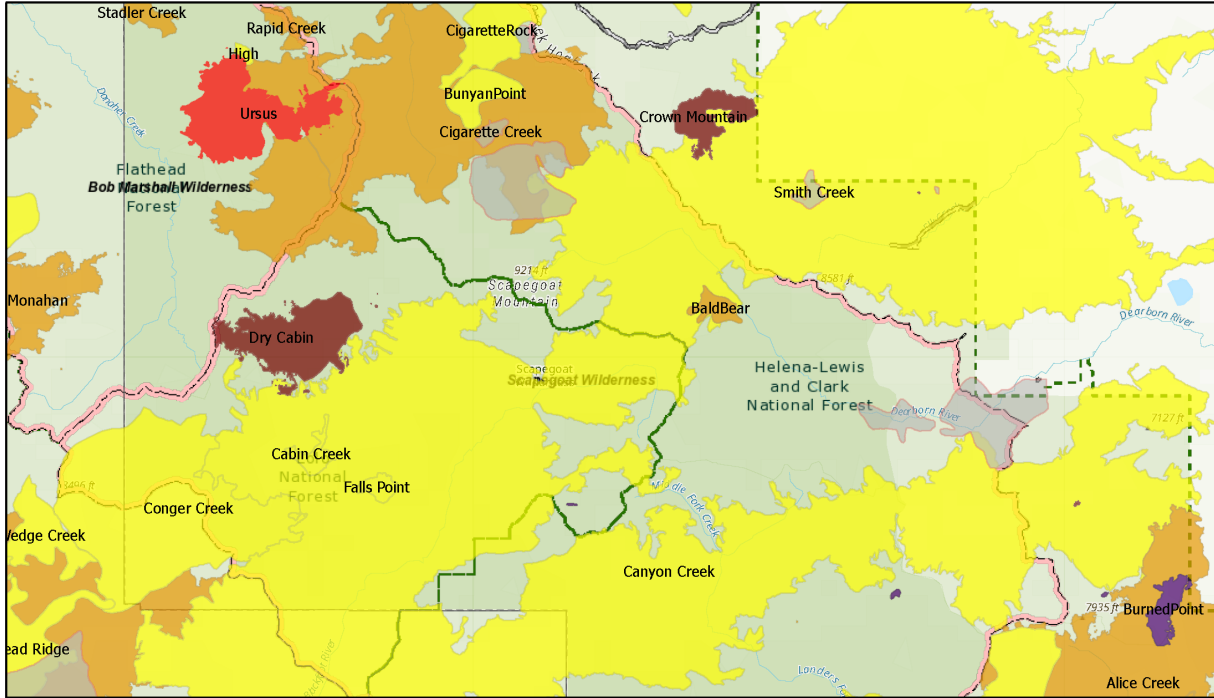
One thing that stood out was this: the problem of limited opportunities in the Danaher and Youngs Creek drainages from at least 1990 onward — especially compared to the rest of the Spotted Bear Ranger District. The answer, of course, was found in the Canyon Creek fire footprint — or more specifically to the east, where the Rocky Mountain District Ranger was waiting patiently for the right window to pull off the South Fork Sun River Prescribed Fire Project. I can’t name everybody who deserves credit for planning and conducting the prescribed burns, though I’m sure that Kamrud, McBratney, Buhl, and Munoz had a part in it.

I will say that driving the golden spike on all the Sun River Prescribed Fire phases in 2011 came in right handy in 2012. Just when the RMRD fire folks were working to keep the Elbow Pass fire tucked into the edges of the South Fork Sun River Prescribed Fire, up popped the Rapid Creek fire (Note: although not labeled, the map on the following page shows the Elbow Pass Complex in orange directly adjacent to the Ursus Fire [in red]. The map does not reflect prescribed burns so the South Fork Sun River Prescribed Fire is not represented visually). I wasn’t on the district at the time (I was stuck in staging purgatory in South Dakota), but it seemed to me that nobody was all that happy about the new start...and nobody had any real options to change that fact. The upshot: despite the angst it created the South Fork Sun River Prescribed Fire Project largely did its job. The several fires that became known as the Elbow Pass Complex didn’t quite stop in their tracks but became something manageable in an otherwise very busy year.

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# A History of Coordinated Fire Management, continued...

Fire History within the Northern Region (R1)



3/22/2023, 10:20:07 AM

- R01 Fire Perimeter
- 2010-2020
- 2021
- 2010-2020
- 2010-2020
- 2010-2020
- 2000-2009
- 2000-2009
- 2000-2009
- 2000-2009
- 1990-1999
- 1990-1999
- 1990-1999
- 1870-1989
- Congressional Districts
- FS revised 2020 Census

1:288,895  
 0 1.5 3 6 mi  
 0 2.5 5 10 km  
 County of Lewis and Clark, East, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, METI/NASA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, USDA, The USDA Forest Service makes no warranty, expressed or implied, including the warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose, nor assumes any legal liability for the use of the information.

The Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. These geospatial data and related maps or graphics are not legal documents and are not intended to be used as such. The data and maps may not be used to determine title, ownership, legal descriptions or boundaries, legal

To learn more, click [here](#) for access to Region 1's Fire History Map

So far, this has been a Spotted Bear Fire Management Officer telling a story about the Rocky Mountain Ranger District's fires, but let's fast forward to 2022. Last summer, we had numerous reports of a fire around the mouth of Fiction Creek; despite several flights and the vantage from Jumbo Lookout a few miles away, it took managers about ten days to actually pinpoint and confirm the fire.

This is the stark difference: back in the old days when I was a slim-and-trim (a relative measure) firefighting machine (who didn't know any better), Steve Wirt and Seth Carbonari (the FMOs at the time) probably would have loaded a few of us in a helicopter and sent us down to find the fire and snuff it out, precise location not required. They would have wept bitter tears in their fire-use-loving hearts. Prior to completion of the South Fork Sun River Rx fire, even Deb Mucklow and Mike Munoz would have been on board with such a decision.

However, last year...I slept well, if somewhat fitfully, for a week before we managed to confirm the Ursus fire's existence.

## A History of Coordinated Fire Management, continued...



*(Left) The Ursus fire during a period of significant growth on 9/5/2022, photo is taken from Rapid Creek looking south. (Right) The Ursus fire as seen burning on the southern side of Ursus Hill – photo taken from Danaher Cabin on 9/7/2022*

Why did I — a DFMO — get such restful sleep in August? Because more than thirty years of coordinated fire management had paved the way to allow significantly increased tolerance of wildfire in the Danaher Creek drainage.

In the end, we saw the Ursus fire grow to about 4200 acres, including reburning about 1500 acres of the 2012 fire footprint. I won't get started on how excited I am about the second fire entry but suffice it to say: quite a bit of blowdown isn't blocking access to mid-elevation south aspects (a.k.a. winter range) and there should be scattered, surviving 10-year-old saplings no longer in a death squeeze with their neighbors. And don't get Scott Snelson started on how the 10-fold increase in black carbon (a.k.a. biochar) will manifestly change soil water holding capacity or let Mike Munoz parlay that into a discussion of snowpack accumulation and retention, as well as streamflow recharge.

Now it wasn't all beer and Skittles (I'm not sure what that really means, but I think it's British) — we still had to coordinate impacts to wilderness users, ensure public safety, protect historic infrastructure, and the rest. But we had an opportunity to do all of that according to our plans and processes.

We had the opportunity.

And we look forward to passing it on.

To the folks I've had the pleasure to work with, and to those who came before them:

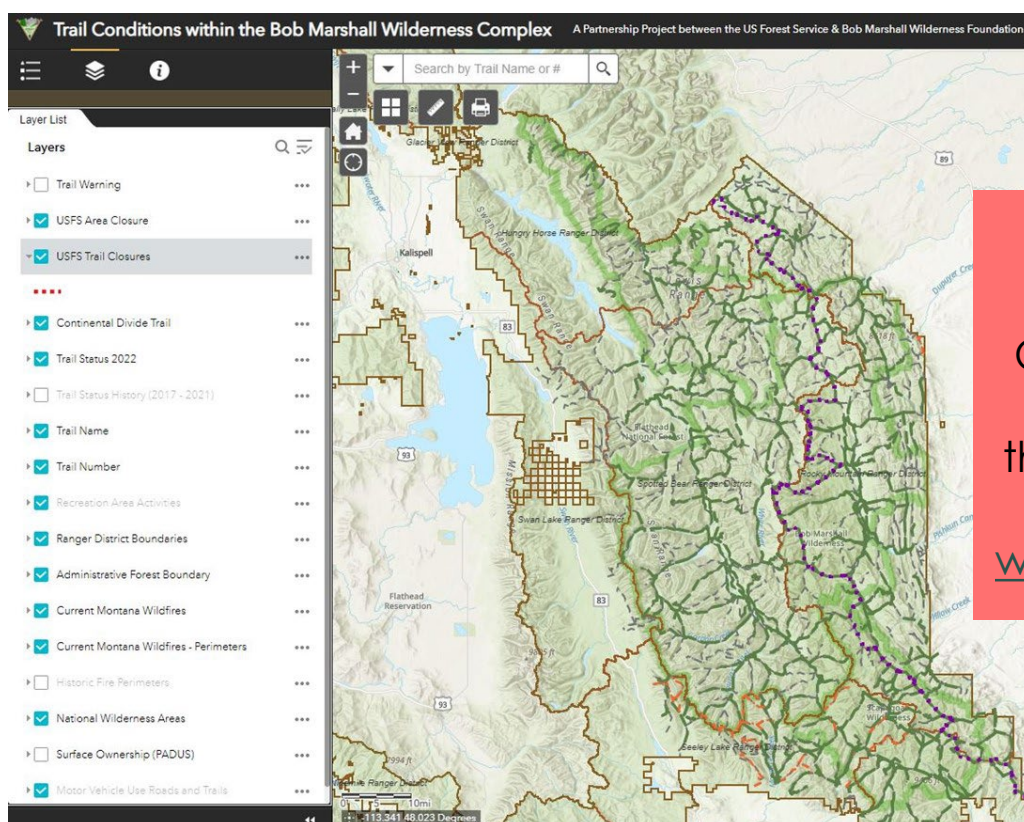
Thanks for a good night's sleep.

# Interactive Trail Conditions Map

By Benjamin Turcea, *Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District*

Districts managing the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex can now feature updated information regarding trail clearing, hazards, and active fire perimeters on the BMWC Interactive Map.

Typically updated biweekly from June to October of each season, the map allows users to toggle in and out of various layers including different administrative boundaries and closures due to fire activity. Users can also display a layer of historic fire perimeters throughout the Complex, gaining a wide perspective on the mosaic pattern of fire activity on the land.



The map and associated Trails Conditions Reports can be accessed through the BMWF's webpage: [www.bmwf.org/trails](http://www.bmwf.org/trails)

A tabular display of status updates broken down by district and trail number (with short narratives) accompanies the interactive map on the BMWF website. Taken together, these tools will help visitors with long-term trip planning, safety management, and evaluating risk during travel in the backcountry of the Complex. These maps will help to augment the value of Service that district representatives can provide to visitors and the general public.

*As a disclaimer: While these tools are useful for planning, the data displayed represent trail status, area closures, and fire perimeters at a single point in time; the information presented could be up to two weeks old. Conditions in the wilderness can change drastically over short time intervals; contact local ranger districts and speak with representatives for more up-to-date information, especially during fire season.*

# Ownership to Stewardship: *A River System at a Crossroads*

By Rich Owens, *Spotted Bear Ranger District*



The Forks of the Flathead is one of the most iconic river systems in the country. It is comprised of the North, Middle and South Forks of the Flathead. All told there are 219 miles in this system and runs in a spectrum that includes pristine Wilderness and along a federal highway. It offers a great variety of recreational opportunities from a slow meandering fish hole to fish hole experience to anxiety producing class 4/5 rapids. The remote sections of the South Fork and Middle Fork offer habitat to Grizzly Bear, wolf, mountain lion, wolverine, mountain goats and Bull trout. It is truly a unique system.

This is perhaps one of the biggest reasons the forest has had a hard time finishing the newest River Plan. There are lots of people in this valley and all over the country that are passionate about this river system and the recreational opportunities it affords as well as the Wildlife sanctuary it provides for some of the most iconic wildlife in North America. Much of the public land we enjoy today is thanks to people who adopted a sense of ownership and had a desire to steward these lands. The downside to ownership is the feeling that one's own connection to a place is stronger or more important than another person's connection.

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## Ownership to Stewardship, continued...

While there are some fish and wildlife concerns on the Forks the social impacts and the numbers of people floating the rivers is where the biggest rub seems to lie. It is a very natural and human reaction to feel that there are too many people on the river without fully recognizing that you are one of the people on the river. We all want that complete solitude feeling particularly in the Wilderness portions of the river system. Sometimes you experience it and sometimes you don't. From a manager's perspective it is our responsibility to protect that opportunity for solitude. We are charged by congress through the Wilderness Act of 1964 to protect that opportunity.



How we manage for that solitude is where it gets sticky because we are also charged by congress to provide unfettered recreational opportunities. It is also here that I've seen the uglier side of ownership. This battle for who should be restricted has been hard to witness. There are some in our community that think locals should be given preference or that outfitters should be further restricted. On the first point, granting special privileges or treating some people different based on where they live or were born is perhaps the most unamerican idea I can think of. These are National Resources that belong to all of the American public. As it pertains to outfitters they are simply a vehicle for those members of the public that do not have the skills or equipment to float themselves so in essence professional outfitters are simply servicing the general public and are currently under limits and restrictions.

*(Continued on next page...)*

## Ownership to Stewardship, continued...



There is an easier solution to this other than fighting over who deserves more access to public lands. Simply put we all need to change our ownership to stewardship. The social carrying capacity of all our rivers would be greater if we were mindful of our impacts to each other and our impacts to the resource.

When on the river be as discreet as possible when you know there are others in close vicinity. Choose campsites that are hidden from view from others and keep your noise level down. Don't poach or monopolize fishing holes. To protect the resource pack out your trash. Every patrol my river rangers take on the South Fork they fill at least one full size trash bag with garbage. Fire rings are not garbage receptacles and no matter how hot your fire is glass and foil does not burn. If you are not on a section that requires packing out of human waste bury it well outside of the camping area and at least 200 ft. from the river. We all learned at an early age where it is appropriate to leave our human waste. On a rock bar or under a rock in the middle of a campsite is not one of those places. For responsible adults this should be common sense.

So as the Forest Service grapples with the best approach to these complicated, sometimes opposing management objectives you all have the power to improve conditions on the Forks of the Flathead with common sense stewardship and living by the golden rule.







# Monitoring Wilderness Character in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

By Colter Pence, *Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District*

Wilderness Character Monitoring (WCM) is an interagency framework to monitor and track the condition of all the qualities of wilderness — Untrammeled, Natural, Undeveloped, Solitude or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation, and Other Features of Value — in designated wildernesses across the country. The primary mandate of the Wilderness Act, given in Section 4(b) and stating that “each agency administering any area designated as wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area,” grounds the WCM framework. Together, monitoring these five qualities will help wilderness stewards understand how stewardship actions, modernization impacts, and other changes inside and outside of a given wilderness area affect the unit over time.

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex recently completed its Wilderness Character Monitoring Baseline Assessment Report, which established the specific and customized ways in which WCM will occur in the BMWC, ensuring that the monitoring methods are well-suited for this wilderness. The baseline also completed a first run of data collection, establishing a baseline condition of the various qualities of wilderness. Selected monitoring methods include using the time-tested Limits of Acceptable Change already in place in the BMWC, as well as other monitoring programs that the Forest Service uses (like weeds inventories, air quality monitoring, and watershed condition classification).

Learn more about the specific ways the Forest Service will be monitoring Wilderness Character in the BMWC in the report:

[https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1093584.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1093584.pdf)

And learn more about the interagency WCM approach:

<https://wilderness.net/practitioners/toolboxes/wilderness-character/default.php>

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## Monitoring Wilderness Character, continued...

### **UNTRAMMELED**

Wilderness is "...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammed by man". Wilderness ecological systems are essentially unhindered and free from the actions of modern human control or manipulation when the untrammed quality is preserved.

### **NATURAL**

Wilderness "...is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions". Wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization when the natural quality is preserved.

### **UNDEVELOPED**

Wilderness is "...an area of undeveloped Federal land ... without permanent improvements or human habitation". Wilderness retains its primeval character and influence, and is essentially without permanent improvement or modern human occupation, when the undeveloped quality is preserved.

### **SOLITUDE**

*Or Primitive and Unconfined Recreation*

Wilderness "...has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation". Wilderness provides unique opportunities for recreation when the quality of solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation is preserved.

### **OTHER FEATURES OF VALUE**

Wilderness "...may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value". Other tangible features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value in wilderness preserve wilderness character when they are prese

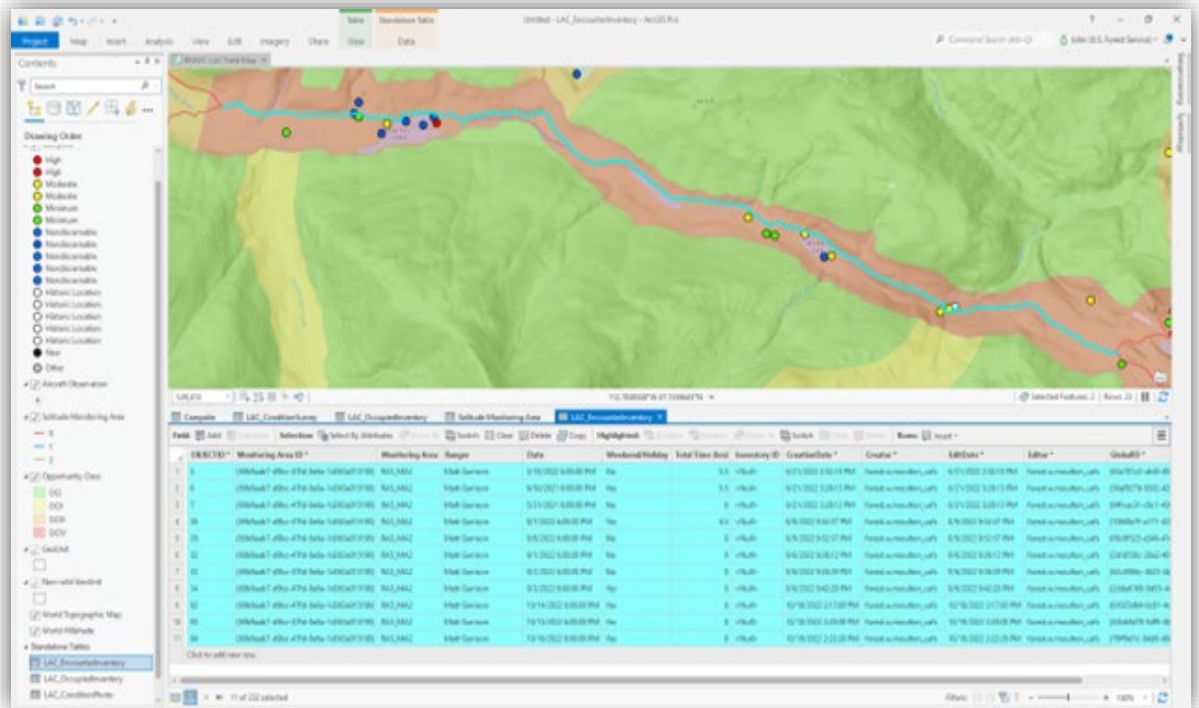
# Modernization of LAC in the BMWC

By Forest Moulton, *Lincoln Ranger District*

Starting early in 2020, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex Managers embarked on an endeavor to modernize our Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) database as well as our data collection process by utilizing apps on mobile devices. As we approach the finish line of that journey, we figured it would be a good time to relay all the changes that have been made.

We started by enlisting the help of a Forest Service Enterprise team to handle the technical details of database migration and mobile app development. The team has almost completed all the migration of all the legacy LAC data from the old Oracle database into the new ArcGIS Pro environment. The new database will be much easier to see both the spatial data and associated tabular (survey) data. Reports will also be much easier to pull for our 5-year LAC reviews or whenever managers would like to have a recent snapshot of how conditions are in certain areas.

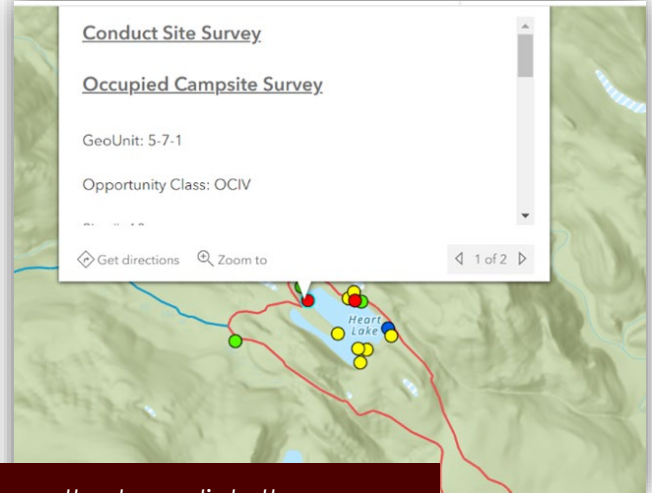
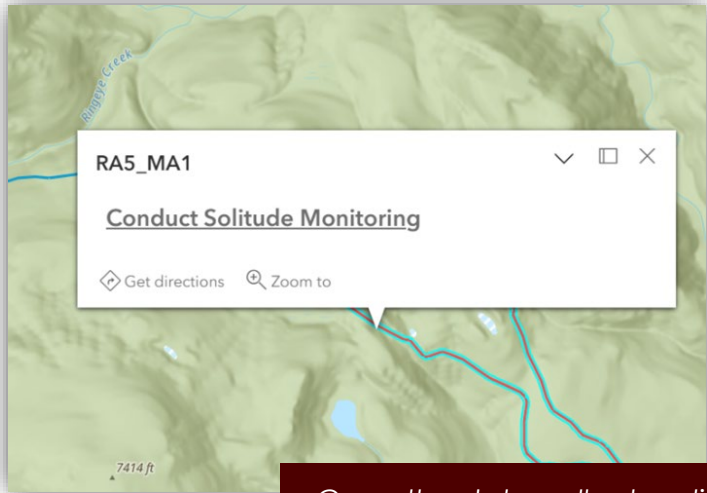
New LAC Database displaying spatial data (campsites and monitoring areas) and associated survey data.



On the data collection side of things, the Enterprise Team has done a fantastic job at creating an overall collection map in the Esri FieldMaps app that links to the survey forms in the Survey123 app. Data collectors can now complete the surveys in the field on mobile devices (smart phones or tablets) with all the GIS data preloaded. Once a campsite or monitoring area is clicked on in FieldMaps, the option to open the Survey is given, and the data collector can open whichever survey they need to complete.

(Continued on next page...)

# Modernization of LAC continued...



Once the data collector clicks on the hyperlink, the survey opens in Survey123 and they can start data collection.

ArcGIS Survey123

BMWC Traveling Encounters

Social Encounters Form

Monitoring Area: RA5\_MA1

Opportunity Class:

Ranger Name \*

Date: \* Thursday, Febru...

The day is a **Weekday**

Total Time (in hours):\*

Slide circle to desired value (0.5 - 8 hrs, increments of 0.5 hours)

Total Time Instructions

Enter total time in hours when leaving current monitoring area and going into new monitoring area for a day. Will need to click publish when leaving monitoring area. Note - As long as you plan to spend at least 4 hours in a monitoring area in a given day, start collecting trail encounter data for that

Once back in cell service with data or on wifi, field staff can just sync all the surveys they completed in the field into the database.

Despite the seemingly antithetical notion of modernizing LAC and wilderness management, these advances will significantly decrease the Complex managers workload for data entry and analysis, and they will allow the field staff to collect more data, and more accurate data. Aside from seamless data entry, this mobile app data collection offers the advantage of the data collector being able to know exactly where they are or which site they are at due to the gps capabilities of the mobile devices. The surveys also have many fail-safes and accuracy checks built in to ensure that the survey collector enters all the required information. We look forward to being able to fully implement the new process and collect some great data for the next 5-year review.



# A New Resource Area for LAC in the Bob

*By Mike Munoz, Rocky Mountain Ranger District*

In reviewing authorized outfitter-guide permit trips, the Rocky Mountain Ranger District (RMRD) recognized a substantial increase for requests to the area known as the Chinese Wall. As a result of the administrative review, along with concerns related to Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) monitoring, District personnel carved out a new Resource Area (RA) from the existing RA-4, which is the entire Wilderness designated on the RMRD. The new RA-4a will encompass both the North and South Chinese Wall areas. The remainder of designated Wilderness will remain as RA-4 (see map). Starting in 2020, permit holders not directly administered by the RMRD that demonstrated historic use, according to their authorized permits, of the Wall areas were limited to two trips annually, and have now been assigned authorized priority-use service days in RA-4a that reflect the opportunity for two trips annually.

In the last two five-year (2013-2017; 2018-2022) LAC monitoring periods, Social monitoring indicated an increasing trend of encounters between visitors, from late-June through early-September, as visitors hiked or rode stock to the Wall area. The Opportunity Class (OC) for the Wall areas is already in the highest acceptable levels of Social encounters which are OC4 and OC3. As a reference, OC1 is the lowest.

Another LAC monitoring category, Resource monitoring, showed an increase as well, with the number of campsites and impact ratings at campsites increasing. Noting the discussion regarding increases above, and potential impact to Wilderness Character, in 2020 the RMRD began a new monitoring program of plant species diversity in the subalpine campsite locations to help inform any future stewardship of the Wilderness. Our concerns regarding campsites are primarily related to the fragile soil, short growing season, and long recovery time from ground impacts. Essentially, we're addressing the very same reasons a camp closure exists along the Wall, between the head of the Moose Creek and Cliff Mountain areas.

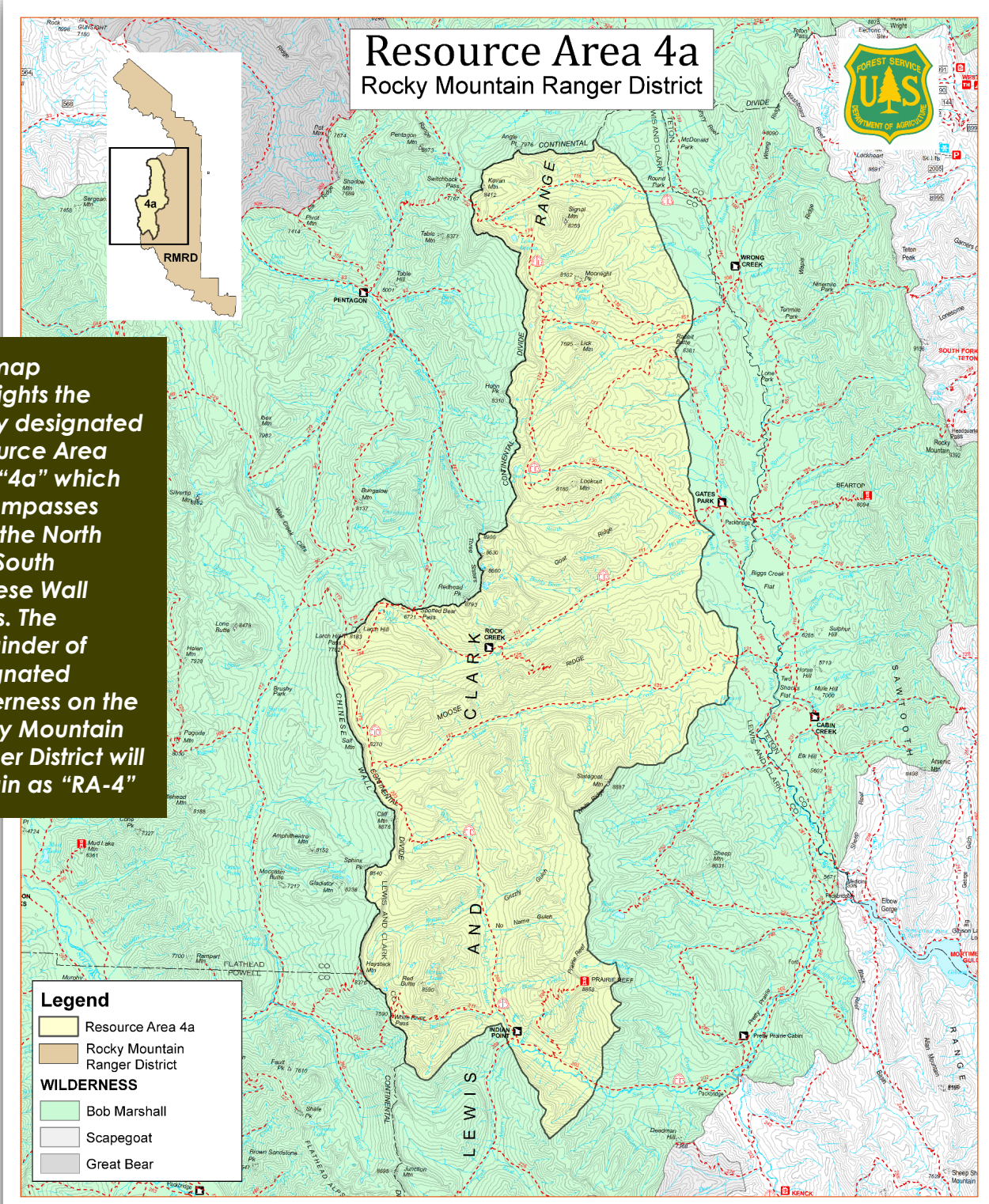
Although we don't anticipate further changes in the near-term to outfitter-guide permits in RA-4a, in both the North and South Chinese Wall areas, we do feel documenting LAC monitoring for continued social encounters, number of campsites, and campsite impacts, as well as plant species diversity will prove valuable. And will provide future managers with meaningful information, along with other considerations, to guide their decisions regarding visitor use and permit activity related to Wilderness Character and overall Wilderness Value.

Many folks think that management of Wilderness is not a real thing. However, our LAC monitoring and permit administration, and a willingness to address concerns for the long-term are indeed active management measures known as stewardship. Fortunately, that's something we in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) take to heart for both present and future generations.

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# A New Resource Area continued...

This map highlights the newly designated Resource Area (RA) "4a" which encompasses both the North and South Chinese Wall areas. The remainder of designated Wilderness on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District will remain as "RA-4"



## An Interview with Lego from the Rocky Mountain RD

By Yvonne Geisel, Rocky Mountain Ranger District

### **Where did you grow up?**

I grew up... well, actually, I'm still working on it.

### **When did you start your career with the FS and in what capacity?**

I have really only been with the Forest for a short time, but I'm enjoying it a great deal, and this is really where I see myself working all the way up to my retirement.

### **What drew you to the FS?**

I just love working in the wilderness and especially with the youngsters who come to work on the backcountry crew in summer. They're very energetic and fun to be around.

### **What is one thing you find the most challenging about your work?**

There have been rare occasions when one of my four legged colleagues gets hurt or needs to get some dental work done. It's hard when we're far from Dr. Lee, our Choteau vet, and they have to wait to be treated. But these guys are a hearty lot, so they tough it out till we get back to town. There are occasions when stock get treated in the field. The crews do a pretty good job in their own right.



*Lego the mule*

### **What is the most rewarding?**

I really like it when I get to help with special projects. The day in, day out is great, hauling the tools and equipment the crew needs to clear miles of trail, but when I get to haul in bridge planking to help rebuild a bridge crossing, or bring in materials to help restore an historic cabin, I feel like I've put my stamp (no pun intended) on history.

### **Where is your favorite spot to settle in for the night on the Forest?**

I'm happy wherever my people and other workmates are. That said, I can't help but enjoy it when the trails crew picks a particularly nice grassy area, somewhere near fresh running water. Who could argue with that?!

### **What message would you like to give to folks who come to the forest?**

Don't believe every rumor you hear about mules being stubborn. We just have our opinions and aren't afraid to make our needs known. Also, keep your dogs in check if we run into you on the trail. I don't mind them so much, but some of the horses have a hard take remaining calm with an excitable pooch.

# Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

## NATIONAL FORESTS

### Helena - Lewis and Clark NF

Helena, MT 59602  
(406) 449-5201  
Forest Supervisor: Emily Platt  
Deputy Forest Supervisor:  
Molly Ryan

### Flathead NF

Kalispell, MT  
(406) 758-5208  
Forest Supervisor:  
Kurt Steele  
Deputy Forest Supervisor:  
Tami Mackenzie

### Lolo NF

Missoula MT  
406-329-3750  
Forest Supervisor:  
Carolyn Upton

## DISTRICTS

### Rocky Mountain RD

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Mike Munoz  
[michael.munoz@usda.gov](mailto:michael.munoz@usda.gov)

### Hungry Horse-Glacier View RD

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District Ranger:  
Rob Davies  
[robert.davies@usda.gov](mailto:robert.davies@usda.gov)

### Seeley Lake RD

(406) 677-2233  
District Ranger:  
Quinn Carver  
[quinn.carver@usda.gov](mailto:quinn.carver@usda.gov)

### Lincoln RD

(406) 362-7000  
District Ranger:  
Jim Yarbrough  
[james.yarbrough@usda.gov](mailto:james.yarbrough@usda.gov)

### Spotted Bear RD

(406) 758-5376 (summer)  
(406) 387-3800 (winter)  
District Ranger:  
Scott Snelson  
[scott.snelson@usda.gov](mailto:scott.snelson@usda.gov)

## Website

<https://go.usa.gov/xd6pU>



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[www.bmwf.org/conditions-map/](http://www.bmwf.org/conditions-map/)





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