

Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

2016 NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 26

You're Invited...

...to the **annual public meeting** for the **Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex**. Some may recognize this as the "LAC" (Limits of Acceptable Change) meeting or task force. Please come to share why you are engaged with this wilderness complex—input and suggestions are wanted and welcome!

SATURDAY, APRIL 2nd

10:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Stage Stop Inn, Choteau, MT

The Stage Stop Inn meeting room is located on 1005 Main Ave N in Choteau. Lunch is on your own.



Deb Mucklow

Lead BMWC Ranger for 2016

... A few highlights ...

- ♦ Meet New BMWC Staff, pg 4-6
- ♦ BMWC Partnerships, pg. 8-13
- ♦ Uninvited Ecological Guests, pg. 14-15
- ♦ 2015 Fires and Trail Rehab, pg. 16-19



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A District Ranger's Perspective

By Deb Mucklow—*Lead BMWC Ranger 2016*

You are invited to the annual public meeting for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (see front page). This annual meeting is for all interested parties to talk about the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat and Great Bear Wilderness Areas. As the wilderness stewards and managers, we need to hear about what you think is working, what is not, and other areas of concern. **Please contact me at** (406-387-3851) **or email** (dmucklow@fs.fed.us) to share any specific topics that you'd like addressed. Both Forest Service and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks managers will be presenting and listening. I'm very proud to be involved with such a dedicated group, one that has come together and been engaged for such a long period of time — over *thirty-five* years! Our agency reps have a wide range of experience — from joining us for their first season as part of the Complex, to having been active in the Complex for over twenty-five years. Collaboration and partnership continue to be important in accomplishing our work, and this group is truly the best example I can share of interested folks that continue to stay engaged. No one seems to have a challenge sharing a concern, and while we may not have all of the funds or resources needed for solutions, I hope that we will continue to model the brainstorming and commitment that we have practiced thus far. For those that can't attend — your input and suggestions are still wanted and welcome!!

One of the changes we'll see this year is that we'll likely have less BCH participation as the state convention will be meeting in Great Falls — please know we'll still value and want the input of ALL that are not able join. Another face that has long been in the group that will be missed is Jim Bogger. Jim attended last year's meeting; he passed away in June 2015. Jim brought experience both personally and through BCH, sharing his skills and knowledge of the wilderness. We wish Jim "Happy Trails" on his new journey as he watches over us and helps us keep our stock in line (as the joke goes). I'm sure thoughts and stories about Jim will continue to come to many and be shared.

We have lots of information to share at this upcoming meeting. Topics include:

- The Rocky Mountain Heritage Act — implementation
- 2015 fires!
- Expected conditions in 2016 — access, trails work, weeds, restoration, monitoring — general info within the complex
- Sharing specific project information and ongoing or concurrent scoping actions
- Forest Plan revision updates
- Winter snow surveys — info and conditions to date
- Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation opportunities for 2016
- Monitoring updates from LAC data — or answering of questions
- Wildlife and fish updates
- Special Orders — are you prepared and know the changes that have occurred?
- Wilderness Stewardship Performance Measures — how are we going to implement and monitor? How does it align with LAC?
- Reduced funding coming at us in the region with trails at 10 % per year for the next three years. Some say that services and funding should be shifted towards population bases and not necessarily towards wilderness or backcountry locations.

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- Can we do anything different (staying within our allowed sideboards!) to generate more partnership funds and folks on the ground? Looking for brainstorming suggestions. How do we continue to keep the wilderness we have, do more with less and less, and keep the standard of wilderness within the BMWC that we as a group expect and have been very proud of – is this a realistic goal? If yes, then How?
- One-on-one time with complex managers.

Please come to share why you are engaged with this wilderness complex. My next challenge is for you to ask yourself, “How am I going to make a difference?” The allocated funds and available grants are declining or are becoming more competitive. No, I’m not complaining — just sharing the reality of the situation.

The 2015 fire season caused temporary closures in many parts of the BMWC. On Spotted Bear Ranger District, specifically, we had all of the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wilderness portions closed at one point. THANK YOU all for the calls, the coordination and the support as we worked through the situation. Many had trips interrupted, re-routed, or cancelled. You were gracious and understanding. The Bear Creek Fire consumed some personal gear, outfitter gear and feed at the Meadow Creek Trailhead on August 20th. So many of you came to the aid to help all that were impacted — it was very humbling to be part of such a compassionate group of folks. I know these circumstances bring additional challenges inside and outside of the wilderness. I think you will be pleased with the restoration work we’ve accomplished to date and that will be completed this coming season.

I’d like to close with a special **Thank You** to all the partners, volunteers, outfitters, employees, individuals and groups that continue to bring their own passion for wilderness and management into each experience (both work projects and in visiting the Bob Marshall, Great Bear and Scapegoat Wildernesses) — your help in clearing down fall, trail rocking, brushing, campsite clean up, respecting other wilderness users, weed inventory, weed eradication, other special projects (phone line and airstrip maintenance), they all make a difference! **Thanks for the continued caring — I appreciate that we get to work hard and that we get to work with such dedicated individuals, and enjoy the wilderness. Note — If you had interest in helping but have not known how to engage or let us know — please call or contact me! I can get you connected — know that we do have to match physical abilities and skills.**

I’m looking forward to seeing you in 2016! Please contact me or any of the District Rangers in the complex if we can help on an issue. Hope to see you at the annual public meeting April 2nd, 2016 in Choteau, Montana!

~~Deb Mucklow, Lead BMWC Ranger 2016~~

P.S. The BMWC moose picture is sent from Minnesota courtesy of Eugene Persha – there are many means to enjoy and appreciate the wilderness!



BMWC wilderness champions come in all shapes, forms and sizes

MEET YOUR NEW BMWC MANAGERS

Lincoln Ranger District Update - New Personnel Look to Build on 2015 Successes

By Forest Moulton—*Trails Program Leader, Lincoln Ranger District*

The Lincoln Ranger District Recreation staff has undergone a full transition within the last year and a half. District Ranger, Michael Stansberry, started working for the district in April of 2015. He came from Yosemite National Park, where he was the Deputy Chief Ranger. Josh Lattin, the Recreation Program Lead, came to Lincoln in June of 2014. He had previously worked as the Trail Crew Lead for the Missoula Ranger District, and more recently as Trails Specialist on the Nez Perce-Clearwater, stationed out of the Slate Creek Ranger District in White Bird, ID. Forest Moulton, the Trails Program Leader, started working for the district in June of 2015. He previously worked in trails, wilderness, and recreation for the Spotted Bear and Swan Lake districts of the Flathead National Forest. Although new to the district, the recreation staff has a deep respect for the valuable partnerships that have helped maintain our wilderness recreation program. We saw firsthand how much work these partnerships can accomplish in 2015, and we have even higher expectations for the 2016 field season.



From left to right: Josh Lattin, Recreation Program Lead; Forest Moulton, Trails Program Leader; Michael Stansberry, District Ranger

2015

While many other BMWC districts suffered setbacks to their wilderness recreation programs project work due to wildfire, the Lincoln Ranger District was fortunate to not have any wilderness fires in 2015. As a result, we didn't have to cancel any Forest Service or partner projects, and were able to realize a very successful field season.

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With a larger trail crew than in years past, and help from many partner groups, we were able to clear all our trails, complete several light maintenance projects, and complete two heavy maintenance projects. The highest profile of these was the Upper Landers Project. This project included converting several dilapidated puncheon bridges to turnpikes and constructing two large reroutes around several other failing puncheons. Partner groups that helped with the project included the Montana Conservation Corps, Montana Wilderness Association, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, and the Ninemile Packstring. This work will allow stock parties to now safely access the Upper Landers Fork area via the Mainline # 481 Trail, which is a popular area for the early rifle hunt.



Converting puncheon bridges to turnpikes on the Upper Landers Project



2016

The 2016 field season is shaping up to be very busy. The following are a few of the more prominent projects and events:

- We are once again planning to partner with the **Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation** to host a volunteer day on **National Trails Day (June 4th)**. This will take place at the Indian Meadows Trailhead and there will be an opportunity to volunteer on a variety of trails/recreation related tasks including trail clearing, brushing, drainage, and sign installation.
- We are working with the **State Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen** to organize a volunteer workday at the Webb Lake Administrative Cabin in July. Work will involve corral and cabin maintenance, and possibly packing in supplies working on the cabin foundation.
- The Upper Landers trail project will continue for a second and final year. With most of the heavy lifting done last season, **MCC** and Forest Service crews will do touch up work on the reroutes, retread a few sections of out-sloped tread, replace several dozen failing water bars, and improve several stream crossings.
- The Mainline Project will be a new construction project started this year. Work will be focused on the Mainline Trail #481 between the Indian Meadows trailhead and the district boundary near the North Fork of the Blackfoot River. This is one of the more heavily used sections of trail on the District and it will be great to return many problem areas to standard in order to improve the trail's structural integrity and safety for users. This will involve replacing failing water bars and other drainage features, retreading out-sloped sections of trail, falling pack-bump trees, and fixing some failing portions of turnpikes. Also lumped into the project is a small reroute and bridge construction project near the Indian Meadow Trailhead on the Landers Fork Trail #438 that will relocate the trail out of a seasonal boggy area that is a root and mud mess at certain times of the year.



MEET YOUR NEW BMWC MANAGERS

NATIVE SPECIES CONSERVATION IN THE SOUTH FORK OF THE FLATHEAD

By Sam Bourret—*MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks*

Robert “Bob” Marshall was a scientist, forester, and wilderness activist that promoted conservation and civil liberties throughout his life and career. Dr. Marshall wrote essays and books about his explorations and travels throughout the western United States in the 1930s including *The People’s Forests* (1933) and *Alaska Wilderness, Exploring the Central Brooks Range* (1956). His largest legacy is likely the formation of the Wilderness Society in 1934, during which he was simultaneously working on initiatives to extend national forest recreation opportunities to families with low incomes and fighting discrimination against minority groups. Bob Marshall sought adventure by hiking and climbing in wilderness areas, and was the first person (accompanied by his brother George) to climb all 46 Adirondack mountain high peaks. As a newly hired Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks fisheries biologist conducting research aimed at native species conservation in the South Fork of the Flathead drainage, I found the work of Bob Marshall thought provoking and inspiring. That said, I am looking forward to meeting and working with the folks whose tireless efforts are aimed at protecting the character and natural resources of “The Bob”.

I started my science career at the University of Connecticut in the college of Natural Resources and the Environment, where I graduated in 2006. I completed an undergraduate research project exploring Flathead Catfish bioenergetics, which helped me earn the designation of University Scholar. Inspired by open spaces and wilderness, I moved to Wyoming to gain valuable fisheries experience and explore the Rocky Mountains. I worked on various projects that sought to conserve native

species in and around Grand Teton National Park and the Teton Wilderness, while learning how to fly fish in the Snake River and to climb and backcountry ski in the majestic Teton range.

In 2011, I started a Master’s of Science degree at the University Idaho studying the effects of hydropower development on juvenile Chinook salmon life history and growth. My research focused on native species conservation in an ecosystem altered by human disturbance. I became the president of the American Fisheries Society student chapter which helped engage undergraduates in hands-on fisheries conservation work and develop connections with community. In 2014, I started work on a National Science Foundation project in Ecuador that was conducted to understand the impacts of introduced Rainbow trout

on Andean lakes. The research implications are to preserve a large tract of land on the Andean crest as an UNESCO world heritage site.

The Hungry Horse mitigation program supports scientific research to inform adaptive management actions designed to perpetuate self-sustaining fisheries, emphasizing preservation of native fisheries assemblages and their habitats. Ongoing projects offset impacts to native fish caused by dam operations by improving fish passage, protecting and restoring habitat, and mitigating the harmful effects of non-native species on native ecosystems. I am greatly honored to be conducting research in the incredible Bob Marshall wilderness complex, and will use my education and experience to conserve native species and uphold the values of Dr. Robert Marshall.



Sam on the summit of Owen during the Cathedral traverse, Teton Range



Introducing Wilderness Stewardship Performance

Contributed by Colter Pence—*Hungry Horse-Glacier View Ranger District*

Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) is a framework to track how well the U.S. Forest Service is meeting our primary responsibility under the Wilderness Act — which is to preserve wilderness character. This new performance measure improves upon previous measures through

linkages to wilderness character monitoring by allowing flexibility in the selection of individual elements to reflect local wilderness stewardship priorities. WSP will track how the BMWC is meeting baseline performance for preserving wilderness character.

To ensure that the BMWC stays the wild Bob that we all love, we have identified key elements that help define successful wilderness stewardship. These elements consider many of the essential qualities of the Bob's wild character:

Invasive Species	Natural Role of Fire	Fish and Wildlife
Recreation Sites	Agency Management Actions	Opportunities for Solitude
Cultural Resources	Workforce Capacity	Education
Wilderness Character Baseline	Outfitter and Guides	

We will annually evaluate how well we are performing wilderness stewardship work in these elements. We invite you to learn more about Wilderness Stewardship Performance along with us. Contact your local wilderness Ranger District for more information.

BOOK A VOLUNTEER VACATION IN THE WILDERNESS THIS SUMMER

**PLAN ALMOST NOTHING
PAY HARDLY ANYTHING**



We provide the food, group gear, pack support, a skilled humorous crew leader and adventure. You bring your personal camping gear and a willingness to work! Visit

WWW.BMWF.ORG or call 406-387-3808 for a calendar of projects, frequently asked questions, and registration information.

GIVE BACK TO THE BOB. GIVE BACK TO YOURSELF. UNPLUG. RECHARGE

20 years of Partnership

By Carol Treadwell—Executive Director, *Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation*



The idea for a volunteer trails stewardship came from a group of citizens who were concerned about the deteriorating state of trails and campsites in The Bob. With federal budgets declining 25-45% in the 80s and 90s, there was a backlog of closed trails and little federal funding to do anything about it. BMWF was born on May 24, 1996, and the first organized volunteer projects took place in the summer of 1997, with the mission of delivering cost effective trail maintenance. Twenty years later, BMWF still delivers quality projects fueled by volunteers and led by well-trained leaders. The Foundation has grown from a half-time seasonal staff to three full time staff and five seasonal crew leaders. 350 volunteers participate in 40 projects each year and contribute labor valued at \$400,000 to public land within the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and surrounding wild country. As it grows, the BMWF adapts to the changing priorities of the Forest Service.



A Boy Scout Troup from Kalispell, MT, digs re-tread on the Spotted Bear Lookout Trail.

In 2009, a new threat arose and BMWF shifted one crew leader to lead a charge against invasive weeds. “More Kids in the Woods” became a mantra in the new millennium and BMWF grew its volunteer participation to include 25% youth. The Forest Service then beckoned, “Help us raise the next generation of Conservation leaders,” so BMWF added a fifth crew composed



A BMWF volunteer group collects bags full of invasive weeds to remove from the wilderness.

of college youth engaged in trail and weeds projects that produced tangible conservation outcomes while building their career skills. This coming field season BMWF will initiate another new program that will help perpetuate The Bob’s rich heritage of pack stock use. This program will provide a unique opportunity for aspiring packers to train with some of the most respected packers in Montana in order to pursue future careers packing with outfitters or government agencies.

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The story written twenty years ago is repeated today with the Northern Region facing deep budget cuts. BMWF continues to grow and serve our Forest Service partners. Foundation donors and grantors contribute over a ¼ million dollars annually to help keep trails open and provide on-the-ground conservation stewardship of The Bob.

Provide good leadership, good food, sunshine (most times) and a beautiful landscape, and volunteers will deliver. “Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has.” — Margaret Mead.



BMWF and the Forest Service have formed a strong partnership that for the past twenty years has provided wilderness stewardship opportunities for volunteers in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

In our 20th year we'd love to hear your story of volunteerism with the Foundation. Please mail them to exec@bmwf.org or P.O. Box 190688, Hungry Horse MT 59919. The Foundation will be celebrating the completion of its 20th field season on November 4, 2016 at our annual Voices of the Wilderness event, in which we'll be highlighting the tales, photos, and accomplishments of the Foundation's proud history.

Seeley Lake Ranger District - Collaboration with Partners

By Geoff Bogie—Wilderness Ranger, Seeley Lake Ranger District

Continuing with the current fiscal trend of reduced recreation, trail and wilderness budgets, Seeley Lake considers our partnerships as a vital component to meeting and exceeding the public's expectation of stewardship in the Scapegoat Wilderness. This 2016 field season, Seeley Lake Ranger District will rely heavily on collaboration with partners to assist with

achieving district goals in the Scapegoat Wilderness. Seeley Lake Ranger District ("Seeley Lake") has long worked closely with several partners interested in wilderness stewardship, from the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation volunteer crews and Montana Conservation Corps to the Blackfoot Challenge. Together with these fantastic partners the trails and wilderness staff look to exceed goals in trail clearing, trail

improvements and reduction in invasive species populations. There will also be emphasis on the new 10 year Wilderness Stewardship Performance Monitoring with regard to invasive species and recreation sites across the Scapegoat Wilderness.

This upcoming 2016 field season, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation will provide four volunteer crew trips into the Scapegoat conducting trail clearing and maintenance on the Pyramid Pass Trail #416,

Limestone Pass Trail #402 and McCabe Creek Trail #61 along with invasive weed pulling around the North Fork Cabin. Seeley Lake will have a dedicated Montana Conservation Corps trail crew and for the first time, a dedicated wilderness crew. To assist with both MCC crews, Seeley Lake has partnered with the

Blackfoot Challenge to provide a Trails/Invasive Liaison to conduct coordination, logistics and project implementation over the course of the field season. In addition to regular trail clearing and improvements, the MCC trail crew will assist with two large projects up Dobrota Creek (Trail #32) and Cave Creek (Trail #33) near Carmichael Cabin. Both Dobrota and Cave Creek trails



2015 MCC Crew Member at a Common Toadflax Patch

require extensive reconstruction and rerouting to fix erosion problems with the current trail routes. The MCC wilderness crew will be concentrating on the Scapegoat's wilderness performance monitoring for Seeley Lake. The MCC wilderness crew emphasis will be on updating Seeley Lake's current Limits of Acceptable Change ("LAC") maps and database regarding campsite locations and conditions up the North Fork and Dry Fork drainages.

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The MCC wilderness crew will also continue Seeley Lake's invasive species program concentrating on reducing populations of new invaders along the main

travel corridors, especially common toadflax, orange hawkweed and leafy spurge.

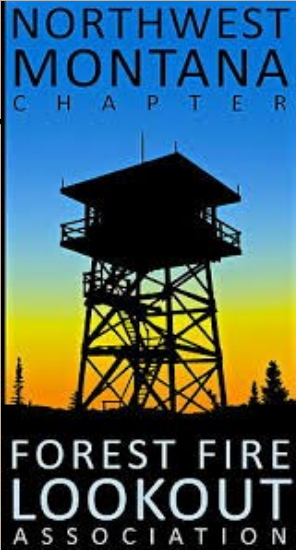


MCC Crew - Dwight Creek Trail Reconstruction

Seeley Lake currently has a small wilderness program headed by Katie Knotek, Resource Specialist; Jake Long, Trails Program Manager, and; a Wilderness/Invasives Program Manager (myself), along with a dedicated seasonal packer (Keith Guschausky) and a small trail crew. With such a small program, the need for collaborative partners with the skills and skill sets focused on wilderness stewardship is vital for maintaining the Scapegoat Wilderness's untrammeled character for the current and future generations.

Author with Tig (pack mule), Dry Fork Divide 2015





It's All About Lookouts! - 2015 in Review

By Cathy Calloway — *Board Member, NWMT-FFLA*

Northwest Montana Chapter – Forest Fire Lookout Association

2015 was an exciting and successful year for our Northwest Montana Chapter of the Forest Fire Lookout Association. Thanks to the enthusiasm and support of our volunteers, members, partners and donors, we completed 6 projects, with 1000 volunteer hours valued at \$22,513. Indispensable partners Backcountry Horsemen and Salmon Forks Outfitters supported our efforts with time valued at \$15,281, for a total combined value of \$37,794 work contributed to partner Agencies this last summer.

The scope of our work continued to grow as projects were completed in Glacier National Park and the Flathead and Kootenai National Forests this year. We also saw our membership and donor ranks increase. In addition, 2015 saw us receiving our first grant from the National Environmental Education Foundation, which allowed us to complete a 5-year Strategic Plan to guide our efforts into the future.

Project work in the BMWC in 2015 included:

Jumbo Lookout

In early August, NWMT-FFLA Volunteers Zoe Zander, Nancy Cronin, and Mark Manning spent three days in the Bob Marshall Wilderness on Jumbo Lookout above the confluence of Youngs Creek, Danaher Creek and the South Fork of the Flathead River. Pack support was provided through Northwest Montana Backcountry Horsemen, including Andy Brelund, Chuck Allen, Robert Eversole, Tina Mae Weber and Tim Weber. Zoe, Nancy and Mark joined up with Spotted Bear Ranger District's Backcountry Facilities Manager Andy Nelson to work on a number of maintenance and improvement projects including digging a new privy hole, constructing a new hitching rail, cutting firewood, rebuilding a stone wall, painting trim and shutters, and patching the roof. We thank all the volunteers who participated in this remote project and Amy Pearson, who staffed Jumbo Lookout, for her hospitality.



**Volunteers paint trim on Jumbo Lookout (left);
A view of Jumbo Lookout from the ridge (right)**

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Mud Lake Lookout

This restoration project was 23 miles into the heart of the Bob Marshall Wilderness on Mud Lake Lookout, built in 1932. It required a rock-solid partnership between the USFS, Back Country Horseman, Salmon Forks Outfitters, and volunteers from the NWMT-FFLA. We repaired the cab, hung new shutters, scraped and painted the structure, installed a wood stove and generally dialed-in the interior to make Mud Lake Lookout a more viable tool for forest fire management in the Bob. Back Country Horsemen volunteers Chip Beck and John Peine packed supplies and materials into the Salmon Forks cabin. Janis and Mark Moss along with Gordon Gibbs of Salmon Forks Outfitters “bumped up” the food and materials from the South Fork of the Flathead to the worksite. Congratulations to volunteers Malcom & Cole Brooks, Doug Morehouse, Zan Deery, and Rick Davis for a job safely and well done!



Volunteers restore Mud Lake Lookout, located along the South Fork Flathead River drainage near Salmon Forks Cabin



Plans for 2016 are being firmed up now, and will include continued work at Mud Lake Lookout to address the settled foundation, rebuild the west wall, and reinforce the window headers to support the roof loading on the windows. The lookout is being restored to its original use for fire detection with hopes it will be included in the Flathead National Forest Backcountry Administrative Facilities National Historical District, designated in 2015. Other lookout restoration projects are planned elsewhere on the Flathead and Kootenai National Forests, Glacier National Park, and Swan River State Forest next summer.

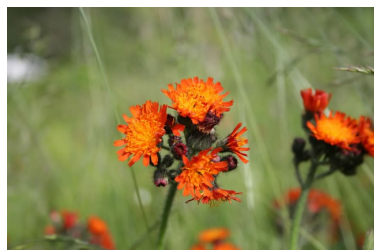
For up-to-date information regarding NWMT-FFLA, please check out our website: <http://www.nwmt-ffla.org/> or follow us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/northwestmontanalookouts>

A Management and Eviction Strategy for Uninvited Ecological Guests

By Casey Johnson—*Invasive Plants Coordinator,
Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest*

In 1941, Aldo Leopold stated that “Just as there is no honor among thieves, so there is solidarity and cooperation among plant and animal pests. Where one pest is stopped by natural barriers, another arrives to breach the same wall by a new approach. In the end every region and every resource get their quota of uninvited ecological guests”.

Our understanding of invasive species has expanded tremendously since 1941. We know that we cannot rely on natural barriers alone to fend off invasive species and must be actively engaged in managing them. Following a related but often times more important vein is the increase in awareness and interest in managing invasive species. This increased awareness is a culmination of many factors that I won't dissect here but it is safe to say are exemplified by many examples of recent local and national legislation. One such example is the passage of the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act. In addition to designating five new wilderness additions, the act contains



provisions requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to prepare a comprehensive management strategy for preventing, controlling and eradicating noxious weeds not only within the wilderness areas but the entire Rocky Mountain Ranger District. In response to the act, the district completed an Invasive Plant Management Strategy in December of 2015.



Like Aldo recognized so many years ago, invasive species are not sedentary. They are dynamic, adaptable and challenge ecosystems and those charged with managing them. As a result, the strategy describes a dynamic and adaptive approach to invasive plant management, focusing on the use of best available science. It recognizes that invasive plants will continue their march and that repeated challenges by existing and new species will be encountered. The strategy addresses this by identifying the value of integrated pest management strategies with a priority focus on education, prevention and early detection and rapid response. The

importance of identifying weed free areas is highlighted in order to further communicate that prevention is key and that there is a far greater chance for eradication and equally lower costs associated with management when infestations are detected and treated early. It states the importance of identifying causal factors and vectors for invasive plant introduction in order to prevent reinvasion and spread.

Often times there are more invasive plant challenges than there are resources to address them. As such, the strategy frames a systematic approach to invasive plant management that guides the prioritization of survey, inventory, treatment and monitoring activities to ensure invasive plant management actions taken are both fiscally responsible and ecologically effective. The selection of management strategies should be a conscious decision.



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Management decisions should take into account the various characteristics (environment, fiscal and social) surrounding the target area or infestation. In some instances, invasive plants are too widespread to be feasibly controlled, except in select situations where the impact is determined to be significant and control costs acceptable. In some cases we may find that, despite our best efforts, invasive plant management may not be successful in all situations where it is attempted. In these cases we may need to learn to live with a particular species and mitigate its effects the best we can. Though it is apparent that additional resources are needed to enhance current invasive plant management efforts and fully address the challenges on the district, the strategy is designed to make the best use of the resources available both presently and in the future.



The underlying philosophy of the strategy is the importance of building effective cooperative relationships and broadly using on-the-ground operational techniques

focused at a watershed or landscape level for the purpose of combining expertise, energy and resources to deal with common invasive plant problems. The intent of the philosophy is to expand resources and capacity for invasive plant management in order to address resource shortages but more importantly to facilitate invasive plant management at a landscape scale.



The strategy has been given a lot of support both internally and externally. During its development many individuals provided input through thoughtful review and recommendations (98 comments in all). A significant level of interest in assisting with implementation has been expressed as well. As is described within the strategy, this level of interest and cooperation will be paramount to its success.

The Rocky Mountain Ranger District is big country and management of its uninvited ecological guests is a big job. Invasive plants exhibit no respect for land ownership or ad-

ministrative boundaries. By their very nature they are a landscape management issue. This issue spans administrative boundaries as well as the many resources, programs and uses on National Forest System and neighboring lands. We must remember to be strategic and cooperative in our management. We must decide what quota we will tolerate for what species and be vigilant in their management. More importantly we must commit to being ardent observers in order to prevent the introduction and spread of any new uninvited ecological guests in the first place.



If you have questions or would like to request a hard copy of the strategy, please contact **Casey Johnson**, Invasive Plants Coordinator for the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest at **(406) 466-5341 ext. 125**.

Post Fire Trail Rehab Very Impressive

**By Rich Owens—Lead Wilderness Ranger, Spotted Bear
Ranger District**

The 2016 field season began with much apprehension as our normal “wet season” was not very wet. It was very dry and very hot — in fact, it was the hottest and driest Spring in Montana history. As the summer moved along and the hot and dry trend continued, we somehow dodged the lightning. However, all that changed on the morning of Aug. 12th when a relatively small system moved across the Bunker creek area, Spotted Bear River and the Upper Middle Fork country. That system deposited two to three dozen down strikes that resulted in more fire than we could stay on top of. Spotted Bear Ranger station soon became a major hub of activity for engines, crew, and equipment as the Trail Creek and Bear Creek Fires chunked their way toward the station.



**Bear Creek Fire 2015, near Spotted Bear Ranger
Station on the South Fork Flathead River**

Accurately placed check lines and a significant wetting rain that hit the Spotted Bear area Sept. 4th really slowed down the fires’ advances and started us on the road to thinking about rehab. All told, the Trail and Bear creek fires affected 115 miles of trail on the District. Unfortunately, part of that 115 miles was the heavily used section of the main East Side South Fork Trail between Meadow Creek Trailhead and Hodag Creek Trail. Another part was the six-mile chunk of trail that cut-off Spotted Bear’s access to Schafer Meadows Guard Station in the Middle Fork Flathead drainage. The damage on these two critical sections alone was substantial, and initial estimates were a full season of work to get the trails safe and close to standard. Damage included hundreds of hazard trees, trail sloughing, burnt turnpikes and countless miles of tread destabilization.

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**Shannon
Connolly
surveys post-
fire damage
to the East
Side South
Fork Trail
(#80)**



Thankfully, the Spotted Bear Ranger District has an experienced and skilled set of trail crews and was ready for the task. Help from other crews on the Forest, combined with very cooperative weather, enabled the crews to make remarkable progress. The first task was to fell the hazardous trees that posed the most immediate danger. Then came the arduous task of putting the trail back on the hillside where it had slipped off. Crib walls were built to help keep it in place and to slow the rate of erosion. Rough estimates put the amount of retread dug at 30,000 feet. In addition, it is estimated that 10,000 feet of crib logs, 900 feet of crib wall, a minor bridge, and a 1,000-foot reroute was completed in just over a month's time. All in all, it was a remarkable achievement and a testament to great coordination between the various Districts on the Forest, the Spotted Bear Fire cadre, District Ranger Deb Mucklow and the highly skilled and experienced trail crews on the Spotted Bear Ranger District.



**Rehab trail crew proudly displays a
crib wall constructed on the East Side
South Fork Trail (#80).**

2015 Fire Season in the BMWC

By Jim Flint — *AFMO, Spotted Bear Ranger District*

The 2015 fire season proved to be intense and extensive in the BMWC. It started out extremely dry and then just got drier. By the time thunderstorms in August brought ignitions, resources were scarce across the country. Fire managers were forced to prioritize new starts and allocate resources carefully as the dry conditions created fire behavior not often seen. Fire activity and impacts lasted late into October.

The number and size of the fires across the complex provided a challenge for wilderness managers and users alike. Most every trailhead was impacted at some point in the season, and some main travel corridors were closed until it snowed. Public, outfitters, partners and the managers worked together to develop solutions that allowed as much access as possible while keeping everyone safe. Unfortunately, that meant extensive closures that had a profound effect on all.

The extensive acres and areas that were burned will also mean trail impacts that last into 2016 and seasons to come. Trail crews were in the burns opening and repairing trails while the trees were still smoking. Despite a very impressive late fall effort, many of the damaged trails have yet to be addressed.

On the Spotted Bear Ranger District, most of the resources were centered on two fires that started outside of the wilderness and moved in. The Trail Creek Fire and Bear Creek Fire were both ignited by lightning on August 12 and escaped initial attack. The Bear Creek Fire grew unexpectedly fast on August 20, causing the hasty evacuation of the Gorge Creek and Meadow Creek Trailheads and the unfortunate loss of some private vehicles and equipment. Together these two fires covered over 86,000 acres, more than half of which was in wilderness, and forced structure protection to be set up at the Spotted Bear Ranger Station and the adjacent lodges as well as at backcountry facilities and the Black Bear Pack Bridge.

For the most part, the other fires in the wilderness required little on the ground management, but still blackened over 5,000 acres and changed available travel routes.

The Hungry Horse Ranger District had three fires in the Great Bear Wilderness. The Spruce Fire was successfully suppressed at 2 acres; the Granite Fire grew to 913 acres and the Sheep Fire 2,495 acres. All the fires were kept within the Wilderness; however, activity on the Sheep Fire did cause the town of Essex to be evacuated and extensive preparation work to be done along the Highway 2 and railroad corridor.

The Rocky Mountain Ranger District had fires covering a perimeter of 67,000 acres this past year. The majority of acres were outside of designated Wilderness, with about 15,500 acres burning in the Rocky Mountain District's portion of the Bob Marshall. The Family Peak Complex burned around 40,000 acres in the southern Badger—Two Medicine area, and covered another 14,000+ acres of Tribal and private lands to the east. The Moose Ridge Fire burned almost 10,000 acres including good portions of the 1988 Gates Park, 2001 Biggs Flat, and 2005 Hazard Lake Fires. The Sheep Mountain Fire made active runs well into October, covering nearly 3,000 acres and pushing the wilderness boundary near the head of Gibson Reservoir. Many trailheads on the Front were impacted this summer and fall by fire activity.

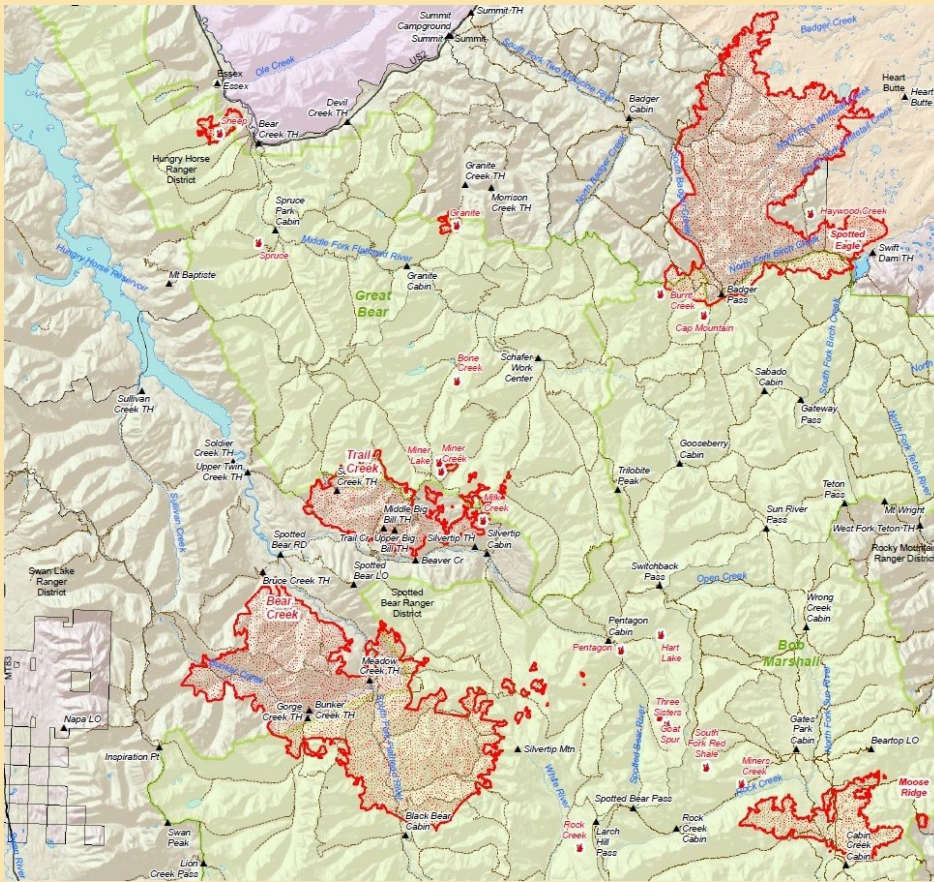
The Lincoln District on the Helena National Forest had their hands full outside of the wilderness, but didn't have any fires within the wilderness.

The Seeley Lake District on the Lolo National Forest had the Morrell Complex just outside the wilderness boundary that closed the Pyramid Trailhead for an extended amount of time.

On the following page, you will find a map of 2015 fire activity within the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

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