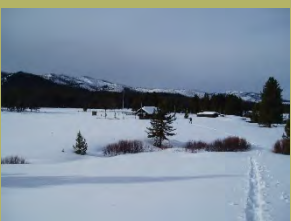


Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

2020 Newsletter

VOLUME 29

A Note from your lead Ranger



2020 Limits of Acceptable Change Meeting Canceled

At the USDA Forest Service, the health and well-being of our employees and the people we serve are our top priority. The LAC (Limits of Acceptable Change) Meeting scheduled for April 4, 2020 has been canceled at this time. We remain committed to public involvement in forest management. Information about the status of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex will be provided through our website and social media.

Every one of you interested in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex remains key for us as wilderness stewards in staying current on both land and social concerns, wilderness resource issues, and simply general observations. Your feedback on areas of interest remains appreciated! As such, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex managers, Forest Service representatives from the Helena-Lewis and Clark, Lolo, and Flathead National Forests, and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks representatives still look forward to hearing from you in other formats or future events. Lastly, we do plan to hold our managers meeting, albeit virtually. Good days to you.



-Michael Muñoz, Ranger
Rocky Mountain Ranger
District,
Helena-Lewis and Clark NF



Introduction

The Bob Marshall Wilderness complex is comprised of the Bob Marshall, Great Bear and Scapegoat designated wildernesses and also has ties with adjacent wildlands that provide the access and trailheads to the wilderness. We the managers or stewards, if you will, really value the opportunity to meet and talk with wilderness users, supporters and advocates.

2019/2020– Although we again, on the RMRD, experienced flooding events that damaged roads on NFS lands, as well as county roads, much of the remaining season was relatively quiet. Many folks have pointed out that the roads damaged the past two spring seasons (2018 & 2019) were overwhelmingly in drainages or watersheds that **had not** experienced fire events for the past 30 to 100 years.

Nevertheless, on the backside of September 2019, we did experience a bit of an anomaly, receiving nearly four feet of snow on the north part of the District, mainly in the Birch Creek country that flows into Swift Dam reservoir. The snow event created quite a survival scene for several back-country travelers, primarily hunters.

As a result of canceling the BMWWC LAC Public Meeting, we will round up additional items to share for the general public and post them on both the Helena—Lewis and Clark, and Flathead National Forest Web pages under Special Places and we will welcome further discussion and/or follow-up.

Topics we have lined up at this time include:

- ◇ Updates on changes in personnel, relevant to permit holders, user groups and volunteers.
- ◇ Fish, Wildlife & Parks representatives' updates and ongoing projects.
- ◇ Information on Wilderness Stewardship Performance and what is going on this coming season and how it ties to the original LAC monitoring.
- ◇ Snow surveys' data from around the complex, for February and March, 2020.
- ◇ Planned projects and priorities for 2020 (Forest Service and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks)
- ◇ Break out time with representatives from each Ranger District regarding issues., concerns and/or appreciations. (Now a phone call, perhaps...)

Although I won't have the privilege to facilitate our upcoming meeting, this newsletter has several items of special interest to many, that will still allow us to celebrate accomplishments, recognize challenges, and plan on future accomplishments in 2020. We'll miss gathering with you, most importantly because it allow us to come to know one another and the shared passion we share for all wildlands. Your public lands. On behalf of the complex managers and partners, we look forward to the continued dialog and challenging discussions surrounding all things Wilderness. And will look all-the-more forward to 2021!

We look forward to hearing what you have to share. You're welcome to contact me by phone at 406-466-5341, ext. 555.1121 and/or by email, michael.munoz@usda.gov. Or talk with my fellow Rangers and/or Wilderness stewards. Travel well and good day.

Meet Your New BMWC Managers

Flathead National Forest Supervisor's Office



Kurt Steele – Forest Supervisor

Kurt Steele arrived at Flathead National Forest in February of 2020. He came from a deputy forest supervisor role at Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forests in Idaho, where he served for three years. Prior to that, he spent time as a district ranger at Superior National Forest in Minnesota. He's had experience managing wilderness areas including Selway-Bitterroot, Frank Church-River of no Return, and Boundary Waters. With a background in forest ecology, one of the things he values most about wilderness is the opportunity to allow natural processes to play out over time, and the overall solitude that wilderness can provide.

Kurt began his Forest Service career as a firefighter and then became a certified silviculturist, filling forestry and planning roles prior to becoming a line officer. Kurt was raised in Oregon and holds a B.S. in Natural Resources from Oregon State. He enjoys most outdoor activities, and often finds himself on public lands. He lives with his wife Melissa and five-year-old son Jack in Kalispell.



Managers continued ...

Seeley Lake Ranger District

**Quinn Carver
District Ranger**

Quinn Carver has been the Seeley Lake Ranger for about a year now. He was born and raised in Dillon, MT and is a 4th generation Montana native. He started his FS career as a Wildlife Biologist in Townsend, MT. Most recently he worked as the Natural Resources and Planning Staff Officer for the Kootenai in Libby, MT for 13 years. Prior to that he was the Krassel District Ranger on the Payette NF in Idaho for 5 and a half years (This is where he “cut his Wilderness management teeth” in the Frank Church River of No Return: Wilderness ethic, knowledge of backcountry outfitters, pack strings, backcountry aviation, and fire management). He is married to Susan Monahan and has two boys (ages 15 and 17) from a previous marriage that live in Stanfield, Oregon. He is very happy to be back in the District Ranger role particularly on a district as diverse as Seeley Lake, and is very much looking forward to getting back into the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat.

**Matt Walter
Recreation Manager**

Matt Walter started his Forest Service journey in 2000 on Pike-San Isabell National Forest’s Leadville Ranger District. He served as a Wilderness /Trails Technician during his summer vacations off from teaching fourth grade. While in Colorado he worked in multiple Wildernesses: Holy Cross, Mt. Massive, Collegiate Peaks, Buffalo Peaks, Hunter Fryingpan, James Peak, and Indian Peaks.

After Colorado he worked a couple seasons in Idaho with the Sawtooth National Forest and experienced the Boulder White Cloud and Sawtooth Wildernesses. He then accepted a permanent position on the Shoshone National Forest in Lander, Wyoming in 2009. There he worked in the Popo Agie, Fitzpatrick and Washakie Wildernesses. His next assignment was on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest’s Dillon Ranger District. Dillon’s Wilderness study areas and proposed Wildernesses are uniquely beautiful. Finally, during 2019 he accepted his current assignment on the Lolo National Forest and has been the Recreation Manager on the Seeley Lake Ranger District for roughly one year.



Managers continued ...

Rocky Mountain Ranger District

Personnel (and Personality) Changes at RMRD

By Yvonne Geisel, Administrative Clerk

If you hearken back to January 2018, you might recall there was a flurry of personnel movement at the Rocky Mountain Ranger District (RMRD), Choteau office. Kraig Lang left his position in the Wilderness/outfitter guide program, leaving Ian Bardwell to pick up the duties for that position as well as keep the trails operation smoothly running. Ian was doing such a fine job at both positions, that, rather than replacing Kraig's position, Ian took a promotion and now is in charge of both programs. We couldn't have imagined anyone more capable.

The other key position which required refilling was the Recreation and Special Uses permit administrator behind Karen Horn, who retired at the end of March 2019. It took just under one year, with a couple of detailers coming in (as well as a little contribution on my part) and filling in temporarily before the position was advertised. Several qualified applicants interviewed for the position. In the end, Ivy Baker succeeded in impressing the hiring panel and officially started of March 16th this year.

The RMRD's recreation, trails and wilderness programs previously had three individuals managing these areas, but for now, Ian and Ivy will take on those duties together. To assist them, the RMRD will pursue filling behind Jim Forrest, who retired as a Wilderness Ranger in June 2019.

In addition, the staffing streamlining not only occurred at the supervisory level, but the District also figured out a better plan for several of its seasonal positions. Trails crew seasonals (among others) must apply each year they want to return to work and are not necessarily able to count on those positions being open to them season after season. From the District's perspective, you couldn't always count on returning, talented staff reapplying each year since they sought permanent employment. It was decided that the seasonal applicants as well as the district would benefit greatly by hiring some of those folks as permanent, part time staff. Along with a trails position, a wilderness position and a developed recreation position were added to the District staffing. The personnel hired in those positions are to work half a year but would no longer need to reapply year after year. Additionally, they would receive benefits for the period of time they work. That seemed like a win-win for the RMRD as well as the potential new hires.

We're excited about all of the personnel actions taken on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. If you don't know some of us, stop by the office. We'd love to see you.

Managers continued ...

Spotted Bear Ranger District



Scott Snelson – District Ranger

Scott Snelson began his tenure as the Spotted Bear District Ranger in December of 2017. Prior to this, Snelson served as the Deputy Forest Supervisor for the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest in Dillon, MT, and as the District Ranger for the Laurentian District of the Superior NF in northeastern Minnesota – where, as a big believer in collaboration, he helped catalyze the formation of the Laurentian Divide Collaborative to help guide management among multiple districts of the Forest. Prior to the Laurentian District, Snelson was the District Ranger for the Aspen and Sopris District on the White River NF of Colorado. There he oversaw a complex mix of wilderness, restoration, vegetation management, mining, gas and oil permitting and several high-profile ski hill operations for one of the Nation's most visited Districts. He has also served as the Forest Staff Officer for Fish, Wildlife, Watershed and Soils and Subsistence on the Tongass National Forest, the nation's largest National Forest.

Snelson spent 16 years in Montana, where he earned both his Bachelor and Master of Science degrees from Montana State University in Biological Sciences. Early in his FS career, he worked as a US Forest Service trail crew foreman in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, out of Spotted Bear and Big Prairie, and as a fire fighter.

Snelson's wife Heidi is a Montana native, having grown up the daughter of a District Ranger in northwest Montana. Heidi is an avid hiker and outdoor enthusiast and served special needs children as a para-professional with the Sitka School District as well as working as a botany technician for the Forest Service in Colorado. The couple has two adult daughters, the oldest is a Forestry graduate from the University of Montana in Missoula, and the youngest currently works in Virginia City for the Montana Heritage Commission.

Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation Welcomes New Staff

We're gearing up for another great season at the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation! In 2019 we completed the highest number of projects ever – leading 73 projects into the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex to open trails and restore habitat. 318 volunteers, seven wilderness interns and two packer apprentices helped us maintain 750 miles of trail and treat weeds on 102 acres – adding \$401,858.00 in wilderness stewardship value to The Bob.

In 2019, BMWF welcomed two new staff members to our year-round team:



Bill Hodge,
Executive Director

In April, **Bill Hodge** stepped in as our new Executive Director from the same position at Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards, an organization he led for nine years. Bill's passion for wild places is linked to a lifetime of exploring public lands across the country and his desire to see our National Wilderness Preservation System as relevant today as it was in 1964.

Bill is a co-founder of the Wilderness Skills Institute, and the 2013 recipient of the Bob Marshall Award as external champion of Wilderness by the United States Forest Service. In 2014 Bill was recognized at the White House as a 'Champion of Change' for his worked to connect a new generation to their public lands, and in 2018 received the Connie G. Myers Award for Wilderness Education with his fellow co-founders of the Wilderness Skills Institute. Bill and his wife Laura love to explore on foot, and in kayaks, all the incredible public lands Montana and the country has to offer, often with their dogs in tow and way too much camera gear

Allison Siems started as our Operations Director in November. Allison first moved to Montana to work at Pine Butte Guest Ranch on the edge of The Bob outside of Choteau in 2011. After two summers at the ranch, she stayed in Montana to complete two service terms for AmeriCorps in Helena, including working as a Crew Leader for Montana Conservation Corps. As the designated wilderness crew, Allison became well versed in crosscut saws and backcountry trail maintenance in the Frank Church Wilderness in Idaho.

Allison moved to Kalispell in 2015 to work as the Program and Outreach Coordinator for Citizens for a Better Flathead until joining our team in 2019. She loves living near such spectacular public lands to explore on her weekends and is passionate about protecting our wilderness heritage for generations to come. You can usually find her hiking, kayaking, camping, cross-country skiing, and enjoying a local beer afterwards.



Allison Siems,
Operations Director



BMWF continued...

This year must include a huge THANK YOU to Rebecca Powell, Meg Killen and Sue Johnson from our team. This trio kept the work rolling throughout the search for new leadership both on the Board and in the Executive Director chair. We can't thank them enough for their dedication to the organization and keeping the ship afloat in this transitional time.

2020 marks a significant anniversary for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. In 1940 the United States Forest Service, recognizing Bob Marshall's contributions to the wilderness idea and ethic, first administratively designated the area we call 'The Bob' as the Bob Marshall Wilderness. (This followed Bob's untimely death in 1939.) We plan to spend the year celebrating the man, his legacy and the special place named in his honor.

We will also spend the next year recognizing that this special landscape, long before it was named for Bob, was the homeland of the Salish, Kootenai and Blackfeet people. We hope to honor that connection by further engaging the tribes in our work, and by supporting their efforts.

Our Volunteer Adventures are live now! There's no more intimate way to explore the Wilderness of Montana than by helping to build and maintain trails here. We have a wide variety of trip lengths and difficulty levels, so there's an opportunity for everyone. BMWF projects are free, and we provide all of your meals and pack support for your gear – in exchange for your hard work! Sign up to get outside and give back to the Wilderness that gives us so much.

Visit bmf.org/volunteer to see our 2020 Project List and learn more about volunteering. Thank you for loving The Bob!



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 crew leader and adventure.

You bring your personal camping gear and a willingness to work!

Visit BMWf.ORG to learn more.

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

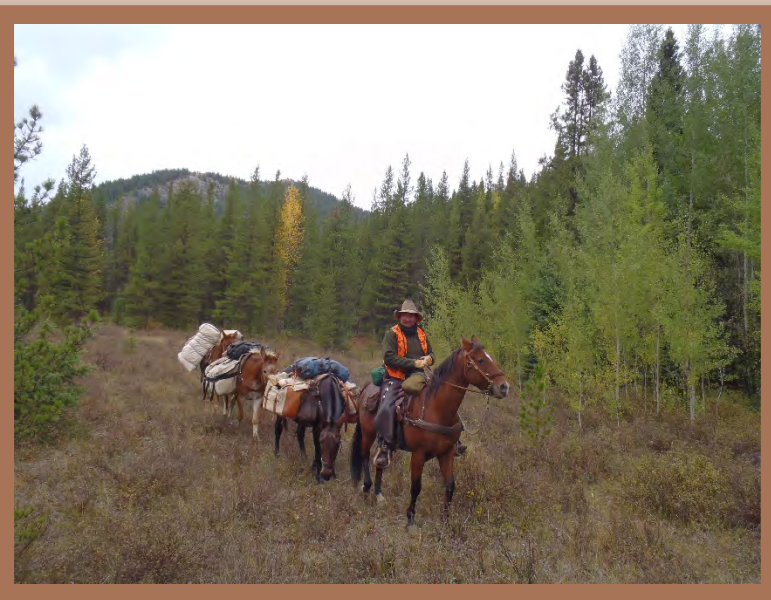
FWP Game Warden Perry Brown Retires after 31 Years

By Lee Anderson, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Perry spent the last 26 years of his career as the Columbia Falls area game warden where he regularly patrolled the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. Perry was an ambassador for FWP and his service in "The Bob" will not soon be forgotten. The countless contacts he made with hikers, floaters, hunters, anglers, outfitters and other recreationists contributed immensely to the preservation of the fish and wildlife resources in the backcountry.



Perry was known throughout "The Bob" as someone to respect, not fear. He earned that respect through his professional demeanor and overall good nature. Whether it was assisting a stranger in gathering a lost horse, leaving extra feed behind at the cabin or sharing a "sociable sip" with the packers that just got in after a long dusty trail ride, he was always there to help others.



Perry's willingness to patrol under adverse conditions in remote places has led to many surprised unlicensed anglers, unlicensed guides and unlicensed hunters. I can only imagine that people will be telling stories around the campfire for many years to come how Game Warden Perry Brown came out of nowhere and caught them fishing without a license yet was kind enough to part with handshake!

Happy trails, my friend!

Seeley Lake Ranger District: Some Catching Up To Do

By Jeremy Watkins, Seeley Lake Ranger District

First off, it seems like we missed getting an article into the 2019 BMWC newsletter, so we have a little catching up to do on behalf of the Seeley Lake Ranger District. We have two important new faces working on the SLRD. One is the new District Ranger Quinn Carver, who is filling in behind Rachel Feigley. The other is Matt Walter, the new District Recreation Manager, filling in behind Katie Knotek. Please see the "Meet Your New BMWC Managers" section on PAGE 4 for a little about the two of them.

As far as work on the ground, 2018 and 2019 found us putting our trails back together after the 2017 Rice Ridge Fire. Thankfully, we were able to have more boots on the ground through additional hiring and additional partnership involvement. Both were a direct result of emergency BAER funding and Disaster Relief funding. Thank you to all our partners and interested parties in making your voices heard and helping us secure that funding!



District Trail crew working on a blowout of Yellow Jacket Creek on the Monture Creek Trail #27. (2019)



Finished crib wall on Monture Creek Trail #27. (2018)

Much of the trail work was outside of the Scapegoat Wilderness, but inside of the roadless areas which constitute much of the proposed Wilderness in the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act, as well as mainline trails such as Monture Creek and Pyramid Pass.

(continued on next page...)

Some Catching Up To Do continued ...



The new North Fork Cabin bridge. (2019)

North Fork Bridges

As many of you might already be aware of, the replacement of the two bridges across the North Fork of the Blackfoot along the Hobnail Tom Trail #32 are half-way completed. The bridge at the North Fork Cabin was completed in 2019, and was open for business by early September. 2020 will see the Smoke's Cabin Bridge replacement. The bridge could be closed July 1-September 15, however we won't know the exact dates until the contractor submits their schedule of work. While the bridge will be closed to all traffic, the Hobnail Tom trail will remain open, but will require a ford of the North Fork just below the bridge and a short re-route around the work/camping site.

Dunham Creek Road Closure

The Dunham Creek Road #4388, which leads up to the Lodgepole Creek Trailhead will be closed

for the majority of the 2020 season. The closure is due to the replacement of a large culvert and two bridges at Spruce Creek. The culvert was removed last October after the majority of the early hunting season. Folks planning a trip through Lodgepole Pass should consider Pyramid Pass #416 or Monture Creek #27 to access Youngs Creek.

2020 Field Season

2020 will find the trail crew back to more "normal" staffing levels, and of course continuing to partner with groups such as the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, Montana Conservation Corp, Backcountry Horsemen, and the Montana Wilderness Association. If I were a betting man (which I'm not), I'd bet on the blowdown being higher than normal on the district this year due to fall and winter wind storms. The area has also been under considerable avalanche danger this winter, so we could find some slides out on the trails. Users are always encouraged to contact the Ranger Station with any updates of conditions as they are found.

Aside from our normal annual maintenance, we are looking to continue working on our deferred maintenance backlog, and rising to whatever challenges Mother Nature throws our way. We are also planning on some needed backcountry facilities work this summer. We are pleased to have Kibb Mills on loan from the RMRD to assist us with putting a new roof on Carmichael Cabin, and we'll hopefully be working on the corrals at Burnt Cabin as well.

***Well, that's about it for us.
See you all out on the trails...***

Beartop Lookout Shutter Replacement

By Russ Owen, *Rocky Mountain Ranger District*

Final work on shutter replacement was completed this past summer on Beartop Lookout. Lookout packer Joe Woodhead led the project and was assisted by Jeff Sherer and Patrick Gallaher. The shutters were replaced in-kind, with the exception that they were reinforced, as was the structure of the cab that provides support to the shutters through their struts. The project progressed over two seasons and was completed with several objectives in mind. First, the shutters were showing age and were due for replacement. Also, a slightly modified configuration now allows the solar panel, mounted to a shutter, to be lifted by one person (before it was a bit of a struggle for two people). The reinforced shutters also give an added measure of safety for anyone working on the roof. The Lookout has been wrapped several times since the Gates Park fire burned right up to the cab in 1988. Most recently, it was wrapped in 2015 for the Moose Ridge Fire.

Besides the new shutters, the Rocky Mountain Ranger District plans to install two roof anchors on the Lookout this coming season. These will allow for the quick installation of a Fall Protection System for anyone working on the Lookout roof or on its east side. All these projects are completed with the intention of sending the venerable old L-4 to its 100th birthday in 2033 and to many subsequent birthdays.



Photo credit: Joe Woodhead



Beartop Lookout
prior to shutter work

Beartop Lookout
after shutter work

Agency Blasting

Rocky Mountain Ranger District, 2019

By Russ Owen, *Rocky Mountain Ranger District*

In the near future, the use of qualified agency blasters to accomplish work on our Nation's Forests may come to an end. Current direction from the National level indicates that 2020 will be the last year that agency blasters will be authorized to store and use explosives in the lower 48 states.

Despite the loud report sometimes produced by blasting, it is an activity that often goes unnoticed by the public and agency personnel. For this reason, it seems appropriate to highlight the Rocky Mountain Ranger District's use of blasting, as it pertained to Wilderness management, during the 2019 field season.

- Three horse and mule carcasses were disposed using explosives on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District in 2019, after District personnel completed *Carcass Report and Assessment Forms*. One of these carcasses was located within Wilderness, while two were located along trails providing direct access to the Bob Marshall Wilderness. All three carcasses were located in areas characterized by concentrated human activity (system trail junctions, popular campsites). All three were removed to minimize the potential of conflicts between bears and humans. Disposing of livestock carcasses using this method has been an important component of Grizzly Bear and Travel Management in the Bob Marshall Complex for close to forty years, and provides managers a tool to mitigate against Grizzly Bear mortality and provide for human safety.

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Blasting provides a tool for disposing of livestock carcasses in otherwise difficult areas. This reduces attractants and allows managers to better provide for grizzly bear and human safety.



Agency Blasting continued ...

- One hazard tree was removed from the Patrol Mountain trail in the Bob Marshall Wilderness using blasting. The tree was a lodgepole pine of approximately 16" dbh, precariously supported by a green spring pole, and leaning directly over the trail. A small charge of explosive placed at the base of the spring pole brought both trees to the ground where they could be removed safely using traditional tools.
- Abandoned explosive/incendiary device. A small cartridge with two wires, marked "SIMU BLAST" was discovered and photographed at an abandoned campsite by a member of the public near Indian Point in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. A subject matter expert was consulted who indicated the device was likely of military origin for use in training to simulate a blast. The subject matter expert recommended the device be destroyed in-place with explosives. Agency blasters followed this recommendation shortly after the device was reported, following the Northern Region Unattended, Lost, or Stolen Explosives Safety Action Protocol.
- Rock slide at Devil's Glen over Dearborn River Trail. This rockslide occurred in early November, blocking outfitter and public access to—and egress from—the upper Dearborn River in the Scapegoat Wilderness. An outfitter reported the slide after taking three hours to navigate around the hazard, at significant risk to stock and riders. An agency blaster and guard utilized explosives one day later to remove several large boulders and restore access on the trail for the remainder of the hunting season.

How will situations like these be managed after the 2020 field season? Possibly through contracts. However, attempts to contract these types of projects have not met with success. The agency's blasting program has significant support at the Regional level, so there remains a possibility that an exemption can be secured to continue an agency blasting program in the Northern Rockies. Whatever the future direction of the program, it is clear that agency blasters have played an integral role, over many decades, in minimizing grizzly bear mortality, providing for the safety of wilderness visitors and workers, and maintaining access to public lands.



When:

March 24th, 2020 at 1:00 PM

Where:

Webinar Meeting

Meeting link:

<https://fs-fed.webex.com/fs-fed/j.php?MTID=m9e5a0f6979ca834230b5eb1fac9526a8>

Meeting number 963 853 111

Or join by phone:

Call: 1-888-844-9904 (Toll-free ATT Audio Conference) OR

1-816-423-4261 (ATT Audio Conference)

Access Code: 186 747 4

Who:

Bob Keane – Rocky Mountain Research Station

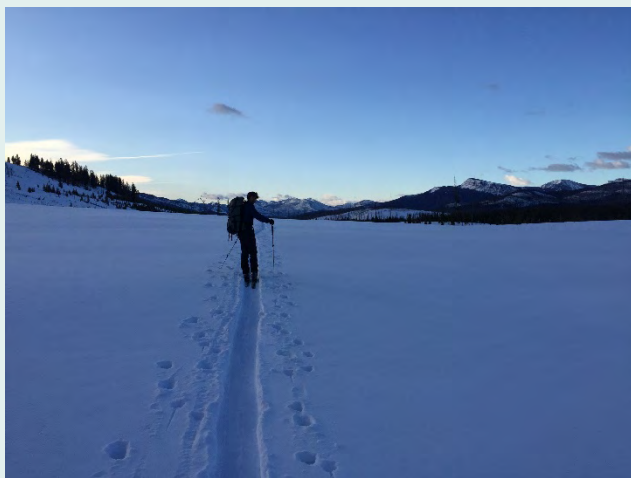
What:

30+ years of World Class Research in one of the World's Biggest Laboratories (AKA The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex). This 45-minute seminar will concentrate on two ecosystems: the ponderosa pine in the Big Prairie Valley and whitebark pine over the entire wilderness complex.

What a Difference a Year Makes

By Ian Bardwell, Rocky Mountain Ranger District

The February snow survey in the Sun River country of the Bob Marshall is conducted the last week of February and has been occurring since the Snow Survey sites were established in the 1940's. Last year's survey coincided with the polar vortex that settled on the east side of the Continental divide for all of February and stretched into early March. Last year, we saw a temperature high for the week that didn't quite push the mercury to zero and spent much of our time skiing in temperatures between -15 to -30 degrees. Conditions like these make the Wilderness seem much larger than it does on those warm summer days and decreases the tolerance for mistakes in judgement.



Snow survey 2020



Snow survey 2020

Contrast last February to this February's bright blue days – with highs in the lower Sun River that reached into the low 60's on February 28th – and you wouldn't think it was in the same place! Regardless, the snow pack for March 1st in the Sun River was 106% of the 30-year average and 92% of last year's snow pack on March 1st.

Much of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District measured above average for snowpack in the higher elevations this year, but – unlike March 1st of last year – the valley bottoms and the foothills of the front lacked any snowpack.

One final point to make: snowpack is a good indicator for stream flows and it is a poor indicator of what the fire season may bring.

One Curious Mule

By Guy Zoellner, Spotted Bear Ranger District

With all new mules – and people, I suppose – it takes years of working with them before you really know what you’re going to get. It’s a relationship that only time can build. Bling showed up at Spotted Bear as a young, unassuming mule just like all of the others. When she hopped out of the trailer and shied at the first puddle in the corral it was a tell of what her demeanor would be like. The stubborn, hard-headed reputation that mules get comes from ones like this. She was flighty, hard to catch and hesitant about the saddle. But – and as long as there’s a BUT with mules like this, they have direction they can go in life – but she was curious. After she hopped out and shied at the puddle, she gathered up her mind and snuck up on the puddle to sniff it, walk around it and figure out what it was. It was this curiosity that would go on to shape Bling’s time in the Wilderness.

As was shown in the first few days with Bling, she needed miles, and I needed a mule to replace one we had retired. After several weeks at Spotted Bear, she was headed with me to Big Prairie for the season.

Bling, the mule
*Photo courtesy of
Guy Zoellner*



This went fine, the catching was coming around, the flighty-ness was dropping off and the saddle was getting to be a familiar thing. But the curiosity just kept coming. She got stuck in a round bale feeder. She tried to crawl through it and would have made out just fine if her hips could have made it through the bars. Any loose rail in a corral would be dangling off a post in the morning, as she would systematically check each one throughout the night. And she had to go take a look at everything. A funny looking tree at the meadow’s edge, trot over and look at it. A burned stump off the trail, walk over and suck the smell off of it. Another bunch of mules and horses, lope right in and see who’s who. All fine things and a workable attitude.

Towards the end of July, I took her with me to haul some freight down to Basin Cabin. I was working with the trail plow and grader for several days, so it was great exposure for her to see more of the country.

(continued on next page...)



One Curious Mule continued....

Day two on the project, I waltzed out of Basin cabin to catch the team and get ready for work when I noticed Bling was absent. Usually, the jingling of pre-dawn mare bells and the rattling of a pail full of pellets brings everything in. But not Bling. So I grabbed a saddle horse and trotted around all the meadows and campsites within a few miles. No Bling. By this time I was fairly certain she must have tied in with an outfitter headed in the direction of Big Prairie and I'd have the crew there stow her in the corral when she arrived.

So we harnessed up the team and headed out for the day's work. Upon our arrival back at Basin, I could see a piece of paper tacked on the front door. From a hundred yards away, I knew unequivocally what that note pertained to. The note read, "Your black and white mule is probably following us. We tried to catch her but can't, we'll put the bars up across the trail at Bar Cr". Somebody had written a small 12:00 underneath it all. In crystal clear terms, that meant I knew which way Bling was headed and that she had quite a head start on me.

I grabbed a saddle horse and a halter, put the other critters in the electric fence and headed out. The bars at Bar creek are 9 or 10 miles away and I doubted they would hold her for long, if at all.

The first camp I ran into was only a few miles from the cabin. They had seen her, loose and following a short string of mules headed south. I thanked them, bid them a good afternoon and kept on. This would continue for miles. Everyone had seen her, not causing any problems, just plodding along behind the new herd she had found.

I knew, before I even made it to the bars, what I would find. The fellow who had left the note had made a solid attempt. The bars, or drift fence, were tied up and put across the trail. However, the top one was broken directly above the trail. All the evidence I needed that Bling had been here and had busted her way through to keep on with her new herd.

The last camp I stopped at confirmed what I already knew. They had seen her, following a string, several hours earlier. I was somewhere around 15 miles from Basin and the sun was getting ever closer to the horizon. One of the benefits we have is a radio we can call out on. So I conceded my lot in life and called Spotted Bear to ask that someone head to the trailhead in the morning with a horse trailer to retrieve Bling.

On my evening trot back to Basin, I had to laugh at what Bling had really done for me. I had made contact with countless parties who I otherwise wouldn't have talked with. One group showed me a patch of Toadflax that was unknown to us, that we were able to later put herbicide on. Another party had an individual in it who was enjoying his time in the Wilderness so much that he expressed interest in volunteering in some fashion. Last summer, that conversation came to fruition and he oiled and painted a backcountry cabin for the district.

Bling was picked up the next day and hauled back to Spotted Bear. Shoeing was in a few days, so she was tacked on the tail end of the next string headed to Big Prairie and arrived a week later, no worse for the wear. It's the community that exists back in the Wilderness and the stories we all accrue that gives a richness to the place. That note I still keep tucked away in a desk drawer, as a reminder of what one curious mule can do for us all.



New Single Hook Policy

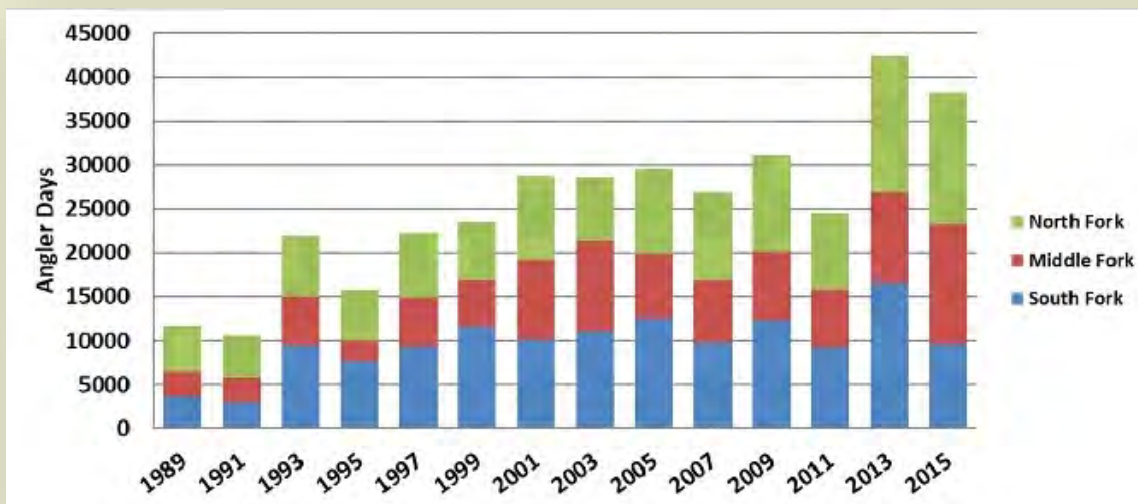
By Leo Rosenthal, Fisheries Biologist – MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Northwest Montana provides some of the best Westslope Cutthroat Trout angling opportunities in the state. Anglers can find solitude, crystal clear waters, and exceptional catch rates for Westslope Cutthroat Trout in all three forks of the Flathead River (North, Middle, and South). Additionally, the South Fork is one of only a handful of places where anglers can catch and release Bull Trout, a fish listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Fisheries biologists have been monitoring these fish populations since the early 1980's, and because of the remote nature of these rivers, have adapted to using more primitive technologies to acquire their estimates. Much of the Middle Fork and the entire South Fork lie in the Great Bear and Bob Marshall Wilderness areas. Limitations on the type of equipment and the distance to access these locations necessitate the use of pack animals rather than pickup trucks to get there, and angling rather than electrofishing to sample fish.

Mark-recapture estimates are conducted using angling to mark the fish and snorkeling for the recapture survey. The time and effort necessary to complete these surveys only allows each reach to be completed every three years.

Results from these population estimates reveal stable Westslope Cutthroat Trout populations in all three forks of the Flathead River. However, these estimates also describe a relatively low-density trout population, with most reaches containing 300-500 catchable trout per mile. When looking at memorable sized trout (>12"), those estimates shrink to roughly 30-60 fish per mile. Despite the low numbers of fish, catch rates for fly and spin fishermen remain high, making these rivers an excellent choice for novice and experienced anglers alike. Unfortunately, the fishery does show some signs that these high catch rates and an increase in river use have the potential to affect future trout numbers.

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Angler use in the three forks of the Flathead River, 1989-2015

New Single Hook Policy continued...

The Flathead Valley has experienced considerable population growth over the past 20 years. This growth has been from an increase in residents, as well as unprecedented numbers of visitors to Glacier National Park during the summer months. The rise in popularity has resulted in increased river use in all three forks of the Flathead River. When biologists examine Cutthroat Trout during population estimates, they report ~40% of fish over 12" show signs (hook scarring) that they have been caught and released before. These scars indicate that these low-density fish populations could be vulnerable to overfishing as use continues to increase. So, as a proactive measure to guard against these potential negative effects, FWP made a recent regulation change to eliminate treble hooks in the forks of the Flathead River upstream of Columbia Falls.



Westslope Cutthroat Trout showing signs of having been caught and released previously

Angling regulations can be found on the FWP website: <http://fwp.mt.gov/>

For questions related to this fishing regulation change, please contact Leo Rosenthal, FWP Fisheries Biologist, at (406) 751-4548.



An example of a lure with multiple, single-pointed hooks. (Photo courtesy of Rapala.)

The **2020 fishing regulations** for the North, Middle, and South Forks of the Flathead River will now require anglers to fish with only **single-pointed hooks** upstream of Teakettle FAS in the town of Columbia Falls. The regulation pertains to all rivers and tributaries in these drainages. Mountain lakes and Hungry Horse Reservoir are not included in this new regulation. This regulation change is an attempt to reduce the amount of handling that occurs while releasing fish. Much of the affected area currently requires catch-and-release for Westslope Cutthroat Trout, so the new regulation should allow anglers to release their fish with greater ease. Anglers can be compliant with the new regulation by doing the following: 1) Removing the treble hook from lures and replacing it with a single hook, 2) Cut two of the shanks off an existing treble hook, 3) Purchase lures equipped with single hooks. Anglers will want to use in-line eyed hooks in a larger size to replace their trebles. Lures with multiple hook attachments (i.e. Rapala) can still have multiple hooks but must be single-pointed hooks.

Updates from the Lincoln Ranger District

By Forest Moulton, *Lincoln Ranger District*

The Lincoln Ranger District will have a smaller wilderness and trails field presence this season due to two significant funding sources running out. The Southwest Crown of the Continent funding and BAER and Disaster funding for the 2017 fires were both instrumental additional allocations that allowed the district to have 11-12 wilderness and trails technicians on the ground over the last two seasons. The funding allowed us to accomplish some major Scapegoat Wilderness restoration projects and to rehab over 40 miles of trail burned in the 2017 fires. Despite this funding running out and having a much smaller crew, we should still accomplish some good work in the Scapegoat in the upcoming field season.



On the trails side of things, we will have a 4-5 person crew that will be split about 50-50 between wilderness and front country work. Despite the smaller crew size, we still hope to have all the Scapegoat trails logged out by the end of July, with mainline trails cleared again before the start of the early rifle hunt on September 15th. After logout, 2 small construction projects are slated for completion. One will replace a failing puncheon on the Arrastra Creek Trail #482. The other will tackle deferred maintenance on about 5 miles of trail on the Continental Divide Trail #440 in the Valley of the Moon area near Caribou Peak. Similar to years past, several partner groups will provide important support for helping us complete logout and project work including the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, the Montana Conservation Corps, and the Ninemile Packstring.

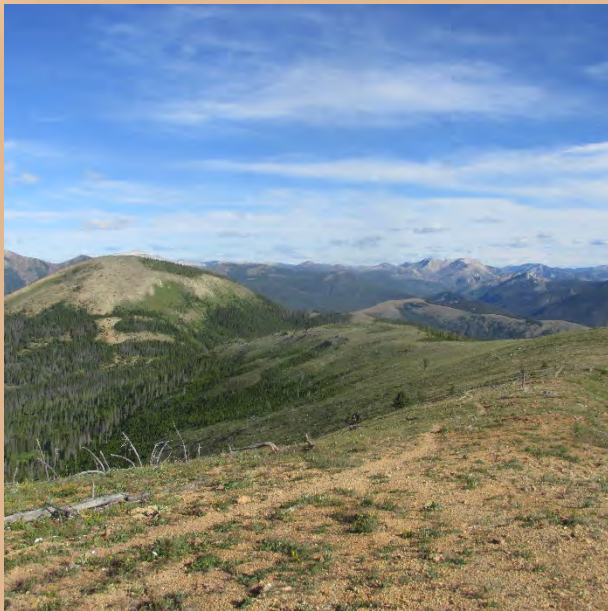
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Lincoln Ranger District continued...

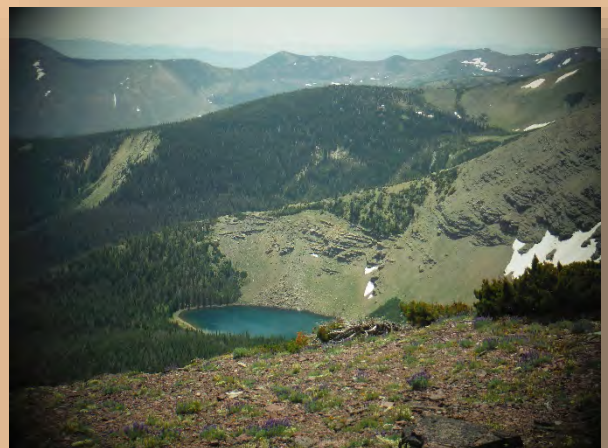
For the second consecutive year, we will also have a lead wilderness ranger who will work with a Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation intern ranger to complete our wilderness program work. One of their main priorities will be collecting solitude and campsite impact monitoring data in line with our Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework used in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. In this arena, they will be beta testing a phone or tablet app for data collection that will hopefully allow for easier field collection and a seamless syncing of data into our new Complex database. The rangers will also spray invasive weeds, help clear trails, and focus on public contacts and education.



Lastly, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation will be taking a break from hosting a National Trails Day event with us in early June. However, we will be partnering with local non-profits and business to help facilitate a Lincoln Trails Day event on August 8th. There will be information booths and live music in town at Hooper Park. This event will also include several recreational activities that folks can participate in including a guided hike to Lewis and Clark Pass, a trail loop run on the CDT out of the Alice Creek Trailhead, and a mountain bike ride on the Beaver Creek Trails.



For more information on this event or any other recreation related information on the Lincoln Ranger District, please call the District at (406) 362-7011.



Special Use Permits: Guided Backpacking and Day Use Hiking

By Colter Pence, Hungry Horse/Glacier View Ranger Districts

The BMWC has updated its application process for some temporary outfitter and guide special use permits, specifically for Guided Backpacking and Day Use Hiking. For these types of permits, there are specific limits on service days from a dedicated pool of temporary use days. Only 1 permit may be issued per holder for use within the BMWC within any 3 year period regardless of the district from which they obtain a permit. Pool days are distributed to qualified applicants on a first-come, first-served basis. Once all of the Temporary Pool Days available in a Resource Area have been authorized, no further proposals will be accepted for that season of use. The update to the application process described above includes the establishment of the following application periods:



Applications are accepted annually:

January 1 – March 30:

for activities proposed to take place from
May 1 – October 31

July 1 – September 30:

for activities proposed to take place from
November 1 – April 30

For more information on Guided Backpacking and Day Use Hiking special use permit applications, please contact the district office for the area you are interested in. Contact information is found on the back page of the newsletter.



Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

NATIONAL FORESTS

Helena - Lewis and Clark NF

Helena, MT 59602
(406) 449-5201
Forest Supervisor: Bill Avey
Deputy Forest Supervisor:
Sara Mayben

Flathead NF

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

Lolo NF

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

DISTRICTS

Rocky Mountain RD

(406) 466-5341
District Ranger:
Mike Muñoz
michael.munoz@usda.gov

Hungry Horse RD

(406) 387-3800
District Ranger:
Rob Davies
robert.davies@usda.gov

Seeley Lake RD

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

Lincoln RD

(406) 362-7000
District Ranger:
Michael Stansberry
michael.stansberry@usda.gov

Spotted Bear RD

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

Website

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



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TRIP PLANNER

www.bmwf.org/conditions-map/



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