



BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS COMPLEX

2010 NEWSLETTER

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We Want to Hear From You...

LETTER FROM BMWC LEAD RANGER - DEB MUCKLOW

Join us Saturday April 9th 10 am – 3 pm
at the Hungry Horse Ranger Station
conference room in Hungry Horse, MT
for the annual “LAC” or Bob Marshall Com-
plex public meeting.



I'd like to hear from any of you that have been involved from the 1980's to current – your feedback on agenda topics, areas of interest, what is working or what is not is appreciated! And if you've never attended and this is your first visit, your thoughts and comments are also important to all of us. The Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex managers (Forest Service representatives from the Lolo, Lewis and Clark, Helena and Flathead National Forests Fish Wildlife and Parks representatives from Regions 1, 2 and 4) .

The Bob Marshall Wilderness complex is comprised of the Bob Marshall, Great Bear and

are many desirable locations. The group recommended the Forest Service continue to host the meetings and that while there could be additional outreach to other wilderness users and supporters, if we went to a location such as Helena, the travel was similar for all if the meeting was just moved around the complex. Furthermore, it was suggested that all groups (i.e. Back-country Horseman chapters, Montana Wilderness Association, Montana Pilots, Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, outfitters) spread the word on the location, date and time to encourage participation.

For those not able to participate we will be posting the agenda, meeting notes and summaries of presentations on the Flathead Forest WEB page following the meeting and will welcome further discussion by anyone interested. For those able to join us, note that lunch will be on your own and there a few options in Hungry Horse and the canyon area. While you're here we will also be showing off the new Hungry Horse Station that we moved into in November and are really enjoying for its new and updated facilities.

Thanks in advance for the current interest and participation in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex – there remains a wide range of interests and users. Looking forward to hearing what you have to say! Please contact me at 406-387-3851 or dmucklow@fs.fed.us to share agenda requests.

Deb Mucklow,
BMWC Lead Ranger.

INVITATION:

Annual BMWC Public Meeting & Limits of Acceptable Change

When

Saturday, April 9th, 2010
10:00am - 3:00pm

Where

Hungry Horse
Ranger Station
10 Hungry Horse Drive
Hungry Horse, MT

Need Directions?
406.387.3800

Comments - Topic Ideas?

Please contact
Deb Mucklow for
additional information:

406.387.3851 or
dmucklow@fs.fed.us

“For those not familiar with “LAC” it stand for Limits of Acceptable Change – and this meeting has been occurring for at least 24 years! .”

Scapegoat designated wildernesses and also has ties with adjacent lands that provide the access and trailheads to the wilderness. As managers, we really value the opportunity to meet and talk with wilderness users, supporters and advocates.

At the annual meeting in Lincoln, MT in April 2009, we had a good discussion on the location for the annual meeting and I recognize that there

Rocky Mountain Ranger District

South Fork Sun River Prescribed Burn—Block II Complete!

After six long years of waiting for the return of an acceptable burn window, block II of the South Fork Sun River prescribed burn project was completed the week of September 21, 2009.

Since the Decision Notice was signed in 2001, a NEPA review process was completed before conducting the prescribed burn. The review process highlighted the need to analyze the burn area for high quality, multi-storied lynx foraging habitat as outlined in the 2007 Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction. A determination was made from data collected in cover board plots, that block II did not contain multistoried lynx foraging habitat and that prescribed burning would not (and did not) result in effects that are different from those disclosed in the original decision.



Completion of block II was a big success and resulted in treatment of 1,048 acres. A much broader spectrum of alternatives for fire management in this area of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex are now available. A flight of block III was completed after the burning of block II. Observers on that flight concluded that approximately 100 – 300 acres of block III is potential lynx foraging habitat. Field crews will complete cover board plots in those identified areas this summer and windows of opportunity to complete block III in its entirety or with exclusion areas will be sought for the fall of 2010.

The objectives of the South Fork Sun River prescribed burn are: to allow lightning caused fire to play a more natural role in this portion of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and to make the wilderness boundary more defensible against the risk of wildfire escaping the wilderness.

Corey Buhl
Fire Management Officer
Rocky Mountain Ranger District



“The objectives of the South Fork Sun River prescribed burn are:

- to allow lightning caused fire to play a more natural role in this portion of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and*
- to make the wilderness boundary more defensible against the risk of wildfire escaping the wilderness.”*

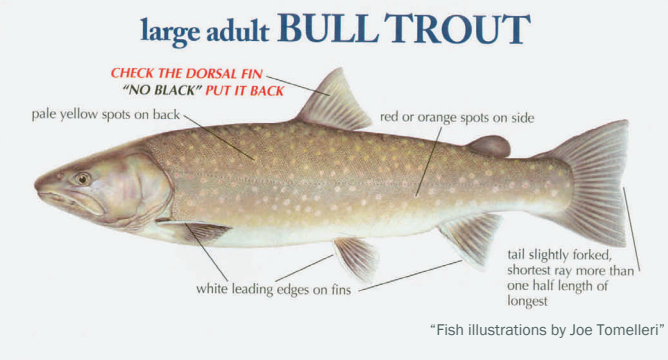
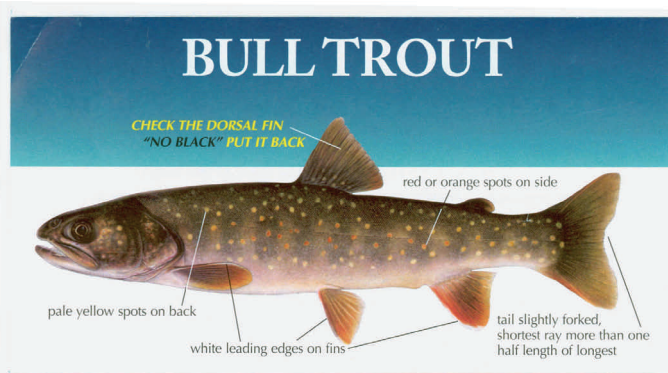


Patrol Lookout (Sam Chapman) had a nice view as the burning progressed on 9/23/09.



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

The South Fork of the Flathead River is home to robust populations of native westslope cutthroat and bull trout. Anglers can find incredible wilderness fishing opportunities for these two species throughout the river system upstream of Hungry Horse Reservoir. The South Fork contains one of the largest, intact, fluvial westslope cutthroat populations remaining in the United States, with numerous fish over 16" eager to rise to a fly. Backcountry anglers are reminded that South Fork Flathead regulations allow harvest of up to 3 cutthroat daily, with no fish exceeding 12". Anglers wishing to release their catch should make efforts to play fish quickly, not to exhaustion, and limit the amount of time the fish is out of the water.



The South Fork is also one of only a few places in Montana where anglers can fish for bull trout, a species listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The bull trout found in the South Fork are a migratory population, primarily residing in Hungry Horse Reservoir. Each year, adult bull trout move upstream into the South Fork, making their way to the tributaries in which they were originally spawned.

South Fork Fishing

By Leo Rosenthal

"The South Fork contains one of the largest, intact, fluvial westslope cutthroat populations remaining in the United States, with numerous fish over 16" eager to rise to a fly."

Anglers are allowed to catch and release bull trout in the South Fork from the third Saturday in May, through July 31. The closing date of the catch and release season (July 31) was shortened by two weeks from previous seasons starting in 2009. This was done in response to drought conditions of recent years, and the low water and elevated water temperatures observed earlier in the summer. Adult bull trout can become increasingly vulnerable as they concentrate near the mouths of cooler tributaries during these conditions. Anglers are reminded that a valid Hungry Horse/South Fork Flathead River catch card must be in possession when fishing for bull trout. These catch cards are free of charge, and can be obtained at the R-1 Fish, Wildlife & Parks office in Kalispell, or obtained from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks website at <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/license/bulltrout.html>

Leo Rosenthal is the MFWP fisheries management biologist for the South and Middle Forks of the Flathead River. For inquiries regarding these fisheries, email

lrosenthal@mt.gov.

South Fork Flathead Wilderness Fishing Regulations

- A valid state of Montana fishing and conservation license must be in possession while fishing
- Harvest of up to 3 cutthroat daily, none over 12" in rivers and streams
- 3 daily, No size limit in lakes
- Bull Trout: catch and release from Saturday, May 15th through July 31st
- A valid Hungry Horse/South Fork Flathead River Bull Trout Catch Card must be in possession when fishing for bull trout
- Catch cards are free and must be obtained in advance
- see FWP Montana Fishing Regulations for complete listing

What's Happening Down South

LINCOLN RANGER DISTRICT REVIEW

Ernie Lundberg

Trails Manager, Lincoln

The average snowpack in the 08-09 winter attracted a large number of snowmobilers to the Lincoln area. High marking is a popular activity on the steep challenging slopes in the Copper Bowls. There were two avalanches in the Copper Bowls that exposed bare ground and rocks that blocked access into the Bowls. The snow was deep but unstable and most snowmobilers did not venture on to the steep slopes that access the Wilderness boundary. There were no incursions into the Scapegoat Wilderness on the Lincoln District.

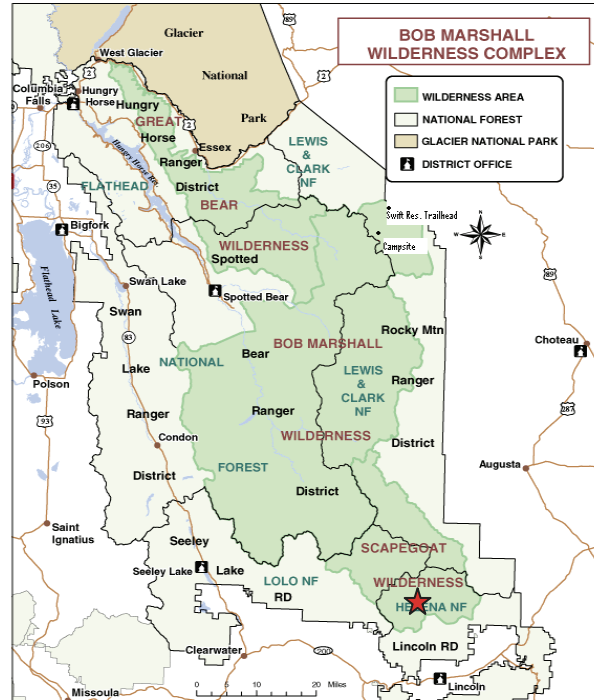
Cole, our lead trail crew person, and Hanna returned for another season. Casey Burns, Wilderness Ranger, recruited our third person from Lincoln High School, Caleb, aka Rowdy, a graduating senior to complete the 09 trail crew. Rowdy was an experienced stock person, growing up working with stock, and fit into the crew very well.

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation (BMWF) requested three projects on the Lincoln District. Projects were identified and crews matched to the projects. The BMWF crews worked miles of trails that would not have been done without their contribution. One BMWF crew the National Smokejumpers Association (NSA), has returned to the district almost every year. They work on facilities and/or trails with equal expertise. They cleared and brushed a district trail that accesses one of the prime grizzly bear and most remote areas on the district. The NSA crews always come complete with a cook and of course plenty of stories and great evening entertainment. It is always a pleasure to have them and we look forward to hosting them again.

The 2010 NSA project is the replacement of approxi-



NSA crew replacing a gate at Webb Lake Guard Station.



mately 100 feet of puncheon approximately 1 mile from the Indian Meadows Trailhead on the Mainline Trail #481. The decking has been replaced several times and now is due for a total replacement; mud sills and stringers along with the decking and curb logs. The Regional Pack String out of Ninemile is slated to do the packing.

There were two Capital investment Projects, CIP, planned for the season; Chaps Gap and Arrastra trail reconstruction. The Lincoln District trail crew accomplished the Chaps Gap trail reconstruction project and the BMWF crew brushed and cleared other trails in the area. The second CIP, Arrastra trail reconstruction, was completed by contract; with Casey inspecting the contract. The pre-contract layout inspection in the spring revealed a major avalanche approximately half way through the project area, completely burying the trail in snow and debris, over six feet deep. The trail was completely gone and the hope was for a warm summer to melt the snow by the time the contractor arrived at that point on the trail. The contract went very well and was completed prior to the contract termination date. The avalanche did not melt by the time the contractor arrived and a temporary route was established around the site. The trail will be monitored in 2010 to see if the snow melts and a decision will be made whether to put the tread back on the original location or improve and maintain the temporary route.

SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT

Deb Mucklow, District Ranger

Take Pride In America

In July 2009, Tad Wehunt and I had the opportunity to represent the Spotted Bear Ranger District at the National "Take Pride in America" ceremony in Washington, D.C.. We were recipients of this award for our commitment to hosting and supporting the variety of volunteers that support our work in the Great Bear and Bob Marshall Wilderness. The award reaffirmed how important volunteers are to Spotted Bear Ranger District AND the National Forest! Through this "Take Pride in America" recognition, we were the only Department of Agriculture and National Forest unit recognized – all of the others were Department of Interior agencies and programs.



National Take Pride in America Ceremony, Washington, D.C.

In addition, the Regional Forester's recognition award for the sponsored volunteer group of the year went to the Montana Pilot's Association.

Thank you to all the volunteers and partners that support the Spotted Bear RD and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. This formal recognition reinforced what a special place and individuals/groups you all are to put forth such an effort. And mostly how fortunate we were to get the opportunity to see and observe the passion and commitment and be part of this effort. Working on this traditional remote ranger district requires an extra commitment from all the employees – those that haven't experienced this life style don't normally understand until they visit. We value the volunteers and learn from them. They contribute to our trail maintenance, wilderness management, facility management, airstrip maintenance, weed control and inventory, wildlife and fishery work, recreation facilities and very importantly meeting and greeting the public. They play a key role in keeping the history and the future connected. I am very proud of the Spotted Bear Ranger District employees and volunteers. We will continue to work hard to find a match for those interested in working with us.



I believe over 13.5 FTE's in 2008, valued at approximately **\$425,000** tells the story!

MANY THANKS!



Volunteers hard at work

A to Z (Or In This Case W)

Avalanches or the remnants of avalanches were a big challenge in 2009. On the Spotted Bear Ranger District we had numerous slides – some in historic slide areas and others in locations you'd have never guessed. These impacted the wilderness users by limiting access for a long time. In the adjacent photos you'll see some of the magnitude of the challenges the field crews and volunteers were faced with in getting trails opened and accessible. On Youngs Cr– it took cooperation with the weather to really get the snow melted, sawing, tread work, blasting, patience, more help and good photographers to help explain the situation!



Thanks Greg Gilcrest for sharing your first hand experience!

Weeds are still present and accounted for on the Spotted Bear Ranger District. That said we are making progress containing weeds. Following the 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007 wildfires we have tried to treat known populations so that even though a great substrate was provided for the seeds to germinate, the weeds did not move into new locations. We admit to not being 100% successful, and feel that we are ahead of where we thought the spread could be.

Special recognition is due to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Sikes Act, Flathead County Resource Advisory Committee, Missouri Breaks Resource Advisory Committee and Tri-county Resource Advisory Committee, and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation! These groups have allowed us to match our appropriated dollars to get more work done on the ground.

In 2010 you'll see both a front-country and a back-country weed crew. There is special emphasis occurring in the Spotted Bear River drainage, White River, and the Danaher. Please contact Spotted Bear if you have a area you have observed noxious weeds – we'd rather hear about it several times than not know! We will be doing herbicide treatment, hand treatment, monitoring of effectiveness of last years sites, and more inventory in 2010.

Contact Spotted Bear Ranger District
406-387-3800 (before May 15)
406-758-5376 (after May 15)

to get information on trip and route planning and to share any known weed locations.



Spotted Bear Weed Crew

Around The Complex.....

American Reinvestment & Recovery Act



After the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act was signed into law in February 2009, many of the districts and forests in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex had an opportunity to submit projects for funding. Proposed projects needed to be “shovel ready” meaning already developed for implementation and were to address deferred maintenance needs and back logged work. The following projects were funded and this is where you will see people out swinging Pulaski’s in the complex this next year:

Ranger District	Location	Project Description
Hungry Horse RD	Bergsicker Creek Trail #217	Perform needed tread improvement work and clearing. 2 weeks of MCC crews.
	Marion Creek Trail #150	Perform needed brushing and tread improvement work. 3 weeks of MCC crews.
Spotted Bear RD	Camp Creek Trail #233	Heavy trail maintenance work – MCC crew expect 8 – 12 weeks.
	Molly Creek Trail # 138	Heavy trail maintenance work – 4 – 6 weeks.
	Wall Creek # 90	Contract with Pentagon Creek work on Wall Creek 1 – 2 weeks, crowning turnpikes
	Pentagon Creek # 173	Contract with Wall Creek, heavy trail maintenance – work expected all season.
	Smokey Creek #120	Contract – work expected all season.
	East Fork Strawberry Creek # 371	Heavy Trail maintenance work – MCC crew expect 8 -10 weeks.
	Trail Brushing (multiple trails)	Trail brushing – targeted trails very heavy shrub/brush components – Forest Crews, Student Conservation Association & Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation partners.
	Helen Creek #100	Heavy Trail maintenance – Forest Service crew and Student Conservation Association partner, all season.
	Pagoda Trail #100	Contract – heavy trail maintenance, work expected most of season.
	Wilderness Suspension Bridges – Black Bear, Salmon Forks and Big Priarie	Forest Service delivery of materials, contract to perform maintenance work on suspension bridges.
Seeley Lake RD	Sarbo Creek Trail #377	Perform major clearing and corridor widening. Contract.
	Falls Point Trail #436	Perform needed tread improvement and erosion control. 2 weeks of Force Account crews.
	Upper Dry Fork Trail #31	Perform need brushing and clearing. 2 week of Force Account crews.
	Wilderness Signs	Installing needed signs at trail junctions and wilderness boundaries. 3 weeks Force Account crews.
	Amphitheater Trail #218	Attempt full reclamation of trail that hasn’t been maintained since 1988. 8 weeks of MCC crews.

“Proposed projects needed to be “shovel ready” meaning already developed for implementation and were to address deferred maintenance needs and back logged work.”

Seeley Lake Ranger District

BACKCOUNTRY WEED ROUNDUP

In the summer of 2009, the Seeley Lake Ranger District had two Wilderness Rangers that also acted as a weed crew to survey and treat back-country weed infestations. Seeley also had assistance from the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation's (BMWF) new Weeds Program. Between the Forest Service weed crew and the BMWF, Seeley Lake treated about 95% of known infestations and discovered some new areas that need to be incorporated into future management plans.

The Forest Service crews spent most their time in the farther reaches of the Scapegoat, treating newly discovered orange hawkweed and common tansy near Carmichael cabin as well as common toadflax, spotted knapweed and sulfur cinquefoil near the Dry Fork Divide. They also made three releases of *Urophora cardui* biocontrol agents on Canada thistle in areas from both the 1988 Canyon Creek fire as well as the

“Between the Forest Service weed crew and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, Seeley Lake treated about 95% of known infestations “

2007 Conger Creek fire. In the past *Ceutorhynchus litura* has been released on Canada thistle in the same areas. There have been large explosions of Canada thistle post fire and we are hoping these bio agents will help curb the spread, as the infestations are too extensive to spray.

The BMWF had five projects on the Seeley Lake Ranger District this season, which ranged from hand pulling to spraying.



BMWF crew after a hard day's work pulling weeds on the Seeley District

The first project focused on toadflax and knapweed near the North Fork Cabin. The second project ventured farther up the Dry Fork to spray common toadflax patches near the Cabin creek confluence as well as spraying some thistle in camps and along the trail. The third and fourth projects were pulling knapweed up McCabe creek and the North Fork of the Blackfoot. These hard-working crews filled 16 garbage bags of knapweed in one day! The BMWF did great work and Seeley looks forward to relying on them for more help with our back-country weed treatments.



Linaria vulgaris (Yellow Toadflax)

Besides the existing weed populations, there is one new invader that has been discovered close to the North Fork of the Blackfoot. This new invader is Blueweed or Vipers Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*). Blueweed is a biennial that is in the same family as Houndstongue. The distinguishing characteristics are 1) blue flowers with pink stamens arranged on the upper side of short stems that elongate after flowering, 2) stems and leaves are covered with stiff hairs which are swollen at the base (wear gloves if pulling!), 3) stem has a reddish or blackish flecked appearance. Even though it has a pretty flower, it is a noxious weed that is toxic to stock and sheep and can take over our native landscapes. We don't want this weed in the wilderness!



Echium vulgare (Blueweed)

If anyone sees this weed please contact your local Ranger District.

Shannon Connolly
Natural Resource Specialist
Seeley Lake Ranger District





T E L L U R I D E
MOUNTAIN FILM

An independent documentary film festival.
 A place to learn, be inspired and celebrate
 indomitable spirit. Come and check it out!

ON TOUR

THURSDAY, APRIL 15th

WHITEFISH, MT
 O'Shaughnessy Center
 Doors open 6pm - Films at 7pm

Pre-event tickets at
 The White Room Mountain Shop
 & Rocky Mountain Outfitter
\$15

FRIDAY, APRIL 16^h

GREAT FALLS, MT
 Lewis & Clark Interp Center
 Doors open 6:30 - Films at 7pm

Pre-event tickets at
 Big Horn Wilderness &
 Mountain Front Market in
 Choteau - **\$15**

SATURDAY, APRIL 17th

BOZEMAN, MT
 Emerson Cultural Center
 Doors open 6pm - Films at 7pm

Pre-event tickets at
 Barrell Mountaineering &
 Northern Lights Trading Post
\$15

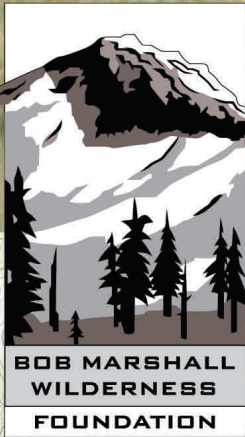
SUNDAY, APRIL 18th

HELENA, MT
 Myrna Loy Center
 Doors open 6:30 - Films at 7pm

Pre-event tickets at
 Blackfoot River Brewing
\$15

A FUNDRAISER FOR THE BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS FOUNDATION
 CALL 406.387.3808 FOR MORE INFORMATION OR VISIT WWW.BMWF.ORG

Explore "The Bob" this summer!



www.bmwf.org

Get outdoors and join a Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation volunteer project this summer. Explore the rugged and gorgeous country of the Bob Marshall Wilderness, Great Bear Wilderness, Scapegoat Wilderness and Rocky Mountain Front.



We provide food, group gear and adventure. You bring your personal camping gear and a willingness to explore! Check out the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation website for a calendar of projects, frequently asked questions, and registration information. Be sure to sign up early - projects fill up fast!

Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation
PO Box 190688 • Hungry Horse, MT 59919
406.387.3808 • www.bmwf.org

Big Game Update

Mac Long, Regional Supervisor



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

2009 was another successful year for accomplishing a significant amount of work in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. **Enforcement patrols** were conducted around the complex from June through November. These patrols enhance compliance with wilderness regulations as well as fish and game regulations, while providing visitor contacts to answer questions and provide assistance when needed.

According to Wildlife Biologist Brent Lonner, the **Sun River elk herd** which primarily winters on the foothills of the Rocky Mountain Front in the Sun River Wilderness Management Area, is doing well. Come spring time the vast majority of this herd migrates west into the Bob Marshall Wilderness to summer. Overall numbers are good with just over 2,600 elk being observed this winter (objective is to be close to 2,500). Calf production and bull numbers look to be average thus far.

We continue to have really high elk numbers to the south of this area (HD 422), some of which summer in the Scapegoat area. Just over 1,600 elk were observed in this area this winter.

Overall, **Bighorn Sheep** appear to be doing well, with around 800 sheep observed during fall rut surveys (HD's 421, 422, 423, & 424). However, only a smaller portion of these animals actually spend much time (summer) in the Wilderness areas. Overall, the lamb:ewe:ram ratios looked good.

Through the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, Dr. John Squires, is conducting a Lynx Research Project this winter. The USFS is interested in building on findings obtained through 10 years of lynx research in managed landscapes by stepping up efforts to research **Canada lynx** in unmanaged, backcountry habitats. They have a particular interest in how projected climate change may affect the species in coming decades. The team plans to use detailed vegetation plot data at relocation points to inform spectral landscape classifications with the goal of developing a resolute map of lynx habitat throughout the species' distribution in western Montana. They could then, among other things, project how climate change may influence the amount and distribution of lynx habitat given warming and altered disturbances processes (insects and fire). Climate modeling requires that managers identify lynx habitat across the species' distribution, including in the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex. Our current GPS sample of lynx movements and resource use is restricted to the managed landscapes in the Purcell Mountains and Seeley Lake. During winter 2009-2010, they will deploy GPS collars primarily in the northern por-

“FWP will propose that the FWP Commission eliminate hunting for mountain goat in HD 280 (Located within the Scapegoat Wilderness) for 2010- 2011.”

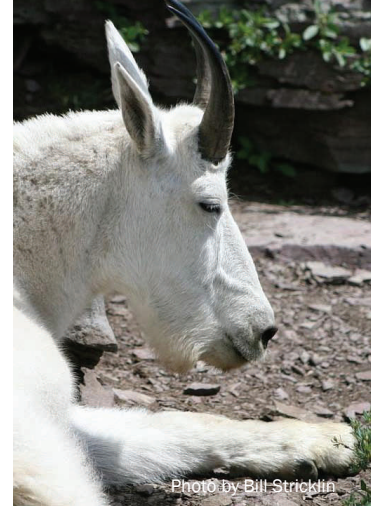


Photo by Bill Stricklin

tions of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex to augment our existing data set. Work will be specifically focused in the Schafer Meadows and Spotted Bear areas but may also include work along the Rocky Mountain Front and Scapegoat north of Lincoln. This will improve their data set for climate impact modeling and our assessment of changes to lynx habitat due to projected increases in wildfire in lynx habitat.

A few of the **Mountain Goats** relocated in 2008 and 2009 to the Rocky Mountain Front have also made their way to the Bob Marshall Wilderness Eastern boundary around the greater Rocky Mountain area. Currently, it is unknown if they are wintering there or just summering in the area.

FWP will propose that the FWP Commission eliminate hunting for mountain goat in HD 280 (Located within the Scapegoat Wilderness) for 2010-2011. Two goat licenses were issued annually from 1984 through 2008, and only one in 2009. Harvest success has been about 50% over the past 25 years. By the early 1980s, it was clear that goat populations in HD280 were in decline. FWP counted 37 goats in 2004 and 34 goats in 2008 in aerial surveys. Recent research suggests that goat populations of less than 50 individuals are highly vulnerable to extirpation. In these small populations harvest rates of as low as 1% annually may not be sustainable over the short term (Hamel et al., 2006). Our ability to sustain small, huntable goat herds depends not only on herd productivity and harvest rate but also on survey frequency. Modeling indicates that with a survey frequency of 1 per 5 years and with expected herd recruitment, a population of less than 50 individuals can sustain only 0 – 1% annual harvest with an acceptable risk of extirpation (Hatter, 2005). FWP cannot maintain survey frequency in this district adequate to maintain hunter harvest without unacceptable risk to this population.

Hamel, S., Côté, S.D. Smith, K.G., Festa-Bianchet, M., 2006. Population dynamics and harvest potential of mountain goat herds in Alberta. *Journal of Wildlife Management*, 70(4): 1044-1053.

Hatter, I. 2005. Guidelines for Determining Sustainable Harvest of Mountain Goats. Biodiversity Branch, BC Goat Workshop. Prince George, BC, Canada.

Gates Bridge Gets A Facelift

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RANGER DISTRICT

This year the Trail Program on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District will be administering a contract on the repair of the Gates Park Pack Bridge.

The repairs to be made include the replacement of both towers, the resealing of the concrete, and the replacement of all hanger cables. The transport of all materials in the wilderness will be done with pack stock.

An alternate route approximately 200 yards downstream of the bridge will be maintained for travelers during construction. Construction will be done during low stream flows to allow safe fording for travelers. Low flows also are the best time to do the work on the bridge because the concrete abutments are fully exposed for repairs at this time.



If you have any questions regarding this project please contact Ian Bardwell, Trails Program Manager at 406-466-5341.

ARRA, FROM PAGE 6

At Seeley: We are preparing for a very busy but hopefully productive season. Seeley Lake Ranger District received \$460,000 for trail maintenance and reconstruction along with an addition \$30,000 for trail sign improvements funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This is on top of our normal year to year program. We intend on using our resources and partnerships, such as MCC and Contracting, to implement these trail projects. We also plan to hire another large Forest Service trail crew this year.

The ARRA funds will be used directly on the ground. Recently, we solicited three contracts for award this spring and anticipate one more construction contract to be awarded by the first of April. Contracts include trail maintenance and clearing, pack and saddle stock to support our crews, the sign requisition, and a reconstruction

project on Lodgepole Creek Trail. The Montana Conservation Crew's will be used for much of our maintenance and small reconstruction projects. An agreement with MCC out of Helena to bring on two crews for 16 weeks will assist us in the numerous projects we laid out before the early snowfall last autumn.

A lot of work has been done and there's much more to do. With the help of our partners, the hard work of our trail crew, and the desperately needed stimulus funding, maybe this year we'll finally clear out some of our long overdue backlog. Looking forward to another wonderful year in the woods!

Happy Trails
Jacob Long
Trails Manager

LINCOLN, FROM PAGE 4

The trail crew also provided assistance in local fire suppression in 2009. In the late summer and fall Casey and crew used the stock to pack fuel and supplies to remote locations to assist the fire crew on fuel reduction and wildlife burns.

It was a great season a lot of work was accomplished, thanks to our partners the BMWF, NSA, Outfitters and the Lincoln Trail crew.

Ernie Lundberg, elundberg@fs.fed.us

Look Up

WILDERNESS HAZARD TREE AWARENESS

Kraig Lang

Wilderness Ranger, Rocky Mountain Ranger District

Some years ago I worked with a very bright and talented young woman who I later heard was struck and killed by a falling tree during a severe thunderstorm while sleeping in a tent at night. Her fellow trail crew members found her in the morning. Although I do not know all the details of this specific situation, it is likely that this tragedy may have been prevented by the consideration of some simple protocols.

For most backcountry users, the selection of a good camping spot revolves around finding a site close to water, with the availability of some flat areas to set up the sleeping tents. If it is summer, you might seek out some shade trees. If travelling with stock, you put a high priority on the availability of forage for the horses and mules. If you can also find a location with some scenic views so much the better.

With the past history of wildfires in many areas of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex (BMWC) and increasing tree mortality due to bark beetle infestations, forest visitors need to add hazard tree awareness to our campsite selection process in many locations. In my patrol work as a Wilderness Ranger in the BMWC, I have encountered numerous situations in the past several years where I have contacted parties camped within close proximity to hazard trees. Many of these parties were totally unaware of the potential risk they were taking by setting up camp and sleeping in these locations. Other groups did recognize there was some level of risk but the potential danger was not great enough to cause them to select another location to camp. I am concerned that some backcountry users are not aware of the significant risk to personal safety they are taking by camping in close proximity to hazard trees. First you must be able to recognize the indicators that hazard trees exist.

Be alert to any of the following:

- Any dead tree
- Dead or broken tops
- Fire damage to root systems and tree trunks
- Cracked or split trunks
- Any large hanging limbs
- Leaning trees
- Trees that appear supported by other trees
- Obvious decay, rot, fungus and or conchs
- Soil erosion / undermined root systems
- The presence of mushrooms at the base of trees
- Sprung roots
- Trees with red needles
- Bark beetle infestations (pitch pockets)

If you evaluate these indicators and have any concern that a tree may be a hazard, camp as far away from this tree as possible. Do not camp in proximity to trees that show obvious signs of weakness. Personally, I try and use a protocol of never setting up my camp or sleeping any closer than one and one half (1.5) tree lengths of any tree I suspect might fall. Also keep in mind that most hazard tree incidents happen during thunderstorms or other wind events. Be especially alert in burned or bark beetle impacted timber stands during wind events. If you are travelling on the trail and you observe any of the indicators of hazard trees, do not stop in proximity of these trees. Keep moving in areas with weakened trees, especially during storms. Resist the temptation to use hazard trees as shelter during storms.

It is my hope that you will make consideration of hazard tree risks a routine part of your campsite selection process and also be alert to this danger while travelling on the trail. Your life or the life of one of your friends or family may depend on it.



Hazard trees in The BMWC



USFS Approved Horsemanship Classes

If you plan on volunteering in The Bob this summer with the Forest Service, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation or another organization you need this class.

- April 17th: **Defensive Horsemanship** (no cost) with legendary Smoke Elser presented by the Backcountry Horsemen-Flathead Chapter. All day, 9am — at 301 Botavia, near Kila, MT. Bring lunch and a lawn chair.
- April 18th: **Packing Clinic** (free to BCH members, \$30 for non-members) presented by the Backcountry Horsemen-Flathead Chapter. All day, 9am — at 301 Batavia, near Kila, MT. Bring lunch and a lawn chair.
- May 20th: **Defensive Horsemanship** (no cost) with Rocky Mountain Ranger District at the Choteau Rodeo Grounds. All day; bring lunch and a lawn chair. *Contact Ian Bardwell at RMRD to reserve you space: 406.466.5341.*

Call BCH-Flathead to reserve a space: Rick Mathies: 406.752.2209.

Trout Tales

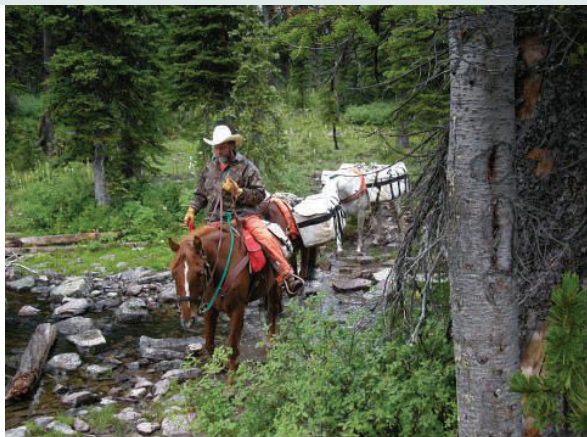
WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT CONSERVATION IN THE BMWC

Matt Boyer, FWP Fisheries Biologist

Located at the southern end of the Bob Marshall Wilderness, Danaher Creek meanders through a high elevation meadow complex before joining Youngs Creek to form the headwaters of the South Fork Flathead River. The cold, clear tributary streams that feed Danaher Creek are filled with clean gravels that provide ideal spawning and rearing habitat for westslope cutthroat trout. In July 2009 Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks fisheries crews collected 270 juvenile westslope cutthroat trout from Danaher Creek as part of the initial effort to establish a brood stock from this genetically pure population. Offspring from these fish will be used to reestablish native trout populations in certain high mountain lakes as part of the South Fork Flathead westslope cutthroat trout conservation program.

To help ensure that the fish survived the 24-mile trip from Danaher Guard Station to the North Fork Blackfoot Trailhead, fish were loaded in plastic bags filled with oxygenated water and placed in cooler panniers with ice. After eight hours on the trail, the pack string of mules arrived at the trailhead where a hatchery truck awaited their arrival. Hatchery workers transferred fish from the mules to the aerated trunk tank where they began the next leg of their journey to Sekokini Springs Westslope Cutthroat Trout Conservation Facility in Blankenship. Survival was excellent during the long transport; all but one of the fish survived. Presently, these fish are in the process of

“In July 2009 Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks fisheries crews collected 270 juvenile westslope cutthroat trout from Danaher Creek as part of the initial effort to establish a brood stock from this genetically pure population.”



Backcountry Horsemen volunteer Andy Breland packing westslope cutthroat trout fry to be stocked in Pyramid Lake.



Pack string in Danaher meadows transporting westslope cutthroat trout.

transitioning from wild to hatchery feed and those that mature this spring will be spawned to initiate a “Danaher-specific” broodstock. Subsequent wild fish collections will take place over the next two years to ensure that the genetic variation in the broodstock is an adequate representation of that found in the wild Danaher population. Next summer fisheries crews will continue genetic and disease testing in South Fork streams to identify additional populations for replication. Building upon lessons learned from this past year, it is hoped that in future years multiple brood stocks will be available for westslope cutthroat trout conservation in the South Fork.

Elsewhere in the Bob Marshall, fish stocking is being used as a method to replace or “swamp out” introduced trout with native westslope cutthroat trout. MFWP resumed swamping in George, Woodward, and Pyramid lakes in summer 2009 and is evaluating this technique as an alternative method to chemical treatment for removing nonnative trout.

For more information about these projects:

visit the South Fork Westslope
Cutthroat Trout Project website

(<http://fwp.mt.gov/r1/wctproject/default.html>)

or contact fisheries biologist

Matt Boyer

751-4556

mboyer@mt.gov

PACKING IN STYLE

FLATHEAD BACKCOUNTRY HORSEMEN LADIES PACK TRIP

Deborah Schatz, Past President, Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead

Six members of the Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead made an overnight pack trip into the Bob Marshall Wilderness in August 2009. Our campsite near Elk Lake was gorgeous, surrounded with colorful mountain peaks and purple huckleberries.

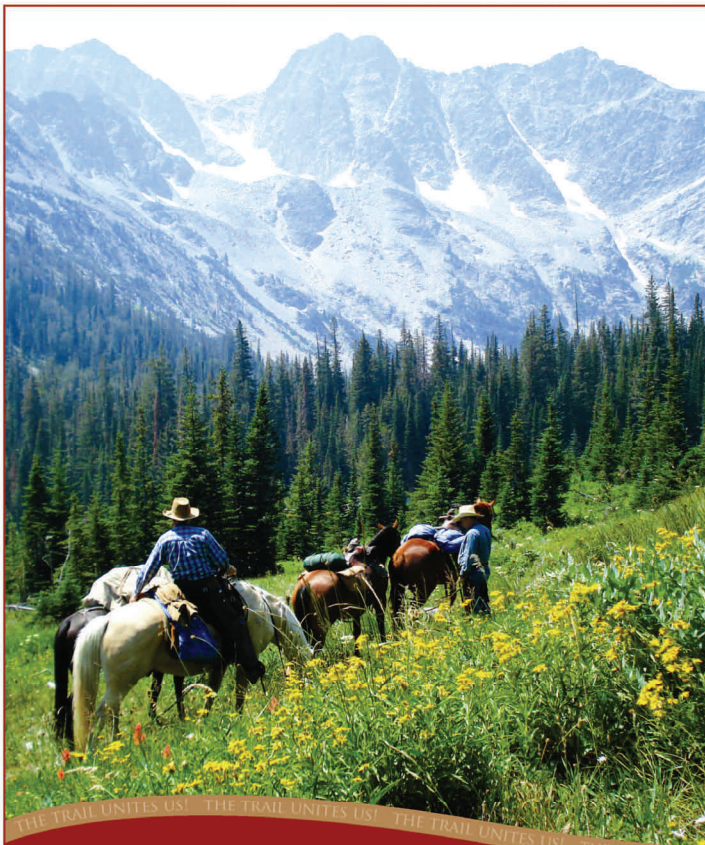
The purpose of our pack trip was to pack out a group of Boy Scouts who had volunteered their time and talents to work on the trails. Under mostly sunny skies, the

Scouts spent the week learning the basics of Pulaski, shovel and nippers to dig trail drains and cut water bars, thoroughly enjoying their Wilderness experience.

Likewise, the ladies of Back Country Horsemen used the trip as a training tool for new members, teaching basic packing skills, Leave no Trace camping and stock handling techniques. Topics of instruction included safe stock handling, necessary supplies, packing tips, balancing loads and

trail safety. Leave No Trace topics included food preparation and storage, camping gear, trash disposal and stock containment.

This project was organized by the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation and the Flathead National Forest, bringing a total of four organizations together working on trails in The Bob. What a great way to spend time in the backcountry with friends!



888.909.CDTA
www.cdtrail.org

Canada
Mexico

THE TRAIL UNITES US

The CDNST in Montana and Idaho

- 981 miles in MT/ID
- 100 miles in ID
- 57% complete
- 427 miles to build



Backcountry Horsemen Ladies Pack trip to Elk Lake in the Great Bear Wilderness on the Hungry Horse Ranger District . The Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation organized this service project and the Boy Scouts Troop #17 from Whitefish worked for the week on the trail to the lake.

MEET THE KING OF TRAILS

Photo: Climbing up to the Idaho border near West Big Hole. Credit: Charlie O'Leary.

IN 1978, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) was created by Congress with the vision to create a primitive and challenging non-motorized trail on or near the Continental Divide to provide people access to some of the most rugged and scenic places left in the world.

TODAY, the Continental Divide Trail Alliance (CDTA) is the leading non-profit organization working with land agencies to protect, build and finish the CDNST with the help of dedicated volunteers. Only 72% of the Trail is complete with the toughest work yet to go.

IN YOUR NECK OF THE WOODS the CDNST begins in Glacier National Park, heads south through The Bob, snakes through Helena and Butte, traces the border of Montana & Idaho and heads into Yellowstone National Park. We need your help in these areas - join us!

WANT TO HELP? Pack trail volunteers into the backcountry, become a member of CDTA, sign up to be a Crew Chef! There are many ways to help out. Contact the MT & ID Regional Representative, Shannon Freix, for more information: shannon@cdtrail.org, 406.781.0627.

USGS Collecting Grizzly Bear Hair Again This Summer

US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY CONTINUES RESEARCH PROJECT

The U.S. Geological Survey began a grizzly bear research project in 2009 in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) of northwestern Montana. This work is based on hair collection and DNA analysis methods similar to those used in the 2004 Northern Divide Grizzly Bear Project. However, instead of producing a snapshot of population size, the objectives of this new work are to assess how well population trend can be monitored by sampling hair at natural bear rubs along trails, roads, and fence and power lines. This approach holds promise of providing reliable estimates of population trend in an efficient and cost effective way.

Bear rubs and other passive hair collection opportunities occur on all types of lands found in the NCDE: forest and open range, public and private, front country and back country. Bear rubs are located by hiking forest trails, roads, power and fence lines to identify natural bear rubs. Short pieces of barbed wire were attached to the rubbed surface to facilitate hair collection at most sites, however, barbless wire is used on trees bumped by pack stock. No lure or attractants are ever used. Genetic analysis of the hair reveals the species, sex, and individual identity of the bears sampled. This information is used to determine the number of times each bear was sampled which is used to estimate population growth and survival rates.

In 2009, field work began in mid May, with approximately 14 full-time biological science technicians deployed across our 8.5 million acre study area. We identified 4,907 bear rubs to serve as hair sampling points and collected 9,240 bear hair samples from them. Genetic analysis is scheduled to be completed by summer. Field sampling will continue in 2010 and 2011 with bear rubs surveyed and hair collected at least three times.

Surveying bear rubs is safe and efficient, and is consistent with wilderness "minimum tool" requirements. No trapping or overflights are required, sampling can be conducted on established travel routes, grizzlies and black bears are sampled concurrently and no bait or lure is used so bear behavior is not affected. Because field sampling methods require little training and experience, there is potential to reduce monitoring costs through assistance by existing agency personnel and volunteers, and there is no more risk to people (or bears) than would be expected on any hike in the woods.

Years 1 and 2 of this 4 year project were funded by the U.S. Forest Service, with substantial in-kind support from dozens of other agencies and organizations.

More information can be found on the following websites:

Current bear project: http://www.nrmsc.usgs.gov/research/NGSbear_monitoring.htm

2004 bear project: <http://www.nrmsc.usgs.gov/research/NCDEbeardna.htm>

Video of bears at rubs: <http://www.nrmsc.usgs.gov/research/KendallRemoteCamera.htm>

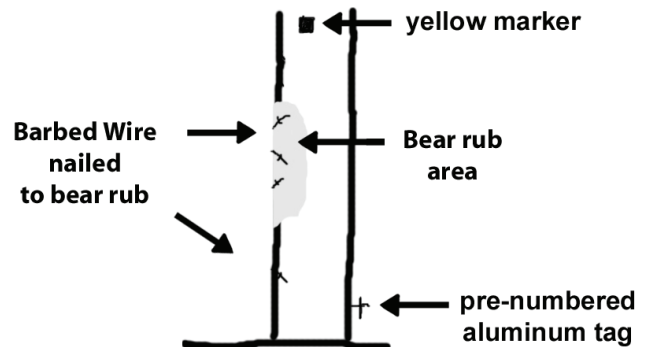
Amy Macleod
USGS Northern Divide Bear Project
USGS - Glacier Field Station, B998 Glacier National Park, West Glacier, MT 59936

If you would like to 'adopt-a-trail' to collect bear hair or volunteer in any other capacity please email your area of interest and contact information to:

Amy Macleod at
amacleod@usgs.gov



BMWF volunteer collecting hair sample



Grizzly Bear using a "bear rub tree"



SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT
PO BOX 190340
HUNGRY HORSE, MT 59919