



BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS COMPLEX

2009 NEWSLETTER

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Calling All Wilderness Supporters...

LETTER FROM BMWC LEAD RANGER - DEB MUCKLOW

You're invited to share your feedback.

Join us Saturday, April 25th at Lambkins

Restaurant on Main Street in Lincoln.

We are hosting the annual public meeting
for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.



Some of you recognize this as the LAC (Limits of Acceptable Change) meeting or LAC Task Force. Yes, we will have some LAC discussion but hope to be broader than with just LAC information. This annual meeting is for all the interested parties to talk about and discuss the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat and Great Bear Wildernesses. As wilderness stewards and managers, we need to hear what you think is working, what is not and areas of concern. Please give me a call at 406-387-3851 or email me at dmucklow@fs.fed.us to share topics you'd like for us to discuss and present.

This last year was an interesting one. I appreciate that Gene Persha has shared his perspective on visiting the South Fork of the Flathead in the Bob Marshall Wilderness this past summer. Gene has had a long commitment to the Bob Marshall Complex from afar and it is always great to learn what folks think and see following a period of absence from the wilderness. For those that don't know Gene, he is from Wisconsin and has a strong commitment to wilderness and encourages all of us to stay engaged! On this note, I invite everyone to contribute details of your wilderness experience or a photo - we'd love to hear from you. Please consider writing a short article for the 2010 newsletter.

A special thank you to Shannon Freix with the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation for her willingness to put together the annual BMWC newsletter. Her work is really appreciated.

You'll notice a few articles in this issue that encourage you to plan ahead and prepare in advance for your visit. Please consider doing this now more than ever. Why? The changing landscape from wildland fires within the past ten years has created many changes - add in blow down, high water, changed fords and stream crossings - your planned campsites and routes may need to be adjusted.

WE even had some near misses this past summer. A special thanks to the Cheff crew as

INVITATION:

Annual BMWC Public Meeting & Limits of Acceptable Change

When

Saturday, April 25th, 2009
10:00am - 3:00pm

Where

Lambkins Restaurant
460 Main Street
Lincoln, MT

Need Directions?
406.362.4271

Comments - Topic Ideas?

Please contact
Deb Mucklow for
additional information:

406.387.3851 or
dmucklow@fs.fed.us

"This annual meeting is for all interested parties to talk about and discuss the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat & Great Bear Wildernesses."

Though we think we have a good understanding - your direct input is really needed! Forest Service and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks managers will be present and all of us are looking forward to catching up and listening! We'll also have an update from the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation. For those not able to participate we will be posting the specific monitoring reports on the Flathead Forest WEB page following the meeting and will welcome further discussion and question by anyone interested. All attendees should provide their own lunch.

Rocky Mountain Ranger District

Wilderness Snow Survey

You already knew that the US Forest Service spends the summer out on the trail, but did you know that they are also on the trail during the winter months? On skis, of course.

The US Forest Service conducts annual snow surveys in the backcountry to collect data about snow pack depths and accumulation from designated sites each winter. This information is sent to the NRCS (National Resources Conservation Service) to help predict spring run-off and is also used for long-term historical tracking.

Kraig Lang and Russ Owens of Rocky Mountain Ranger District offer their daily log of their wilderness snow survey in *The Bob*.

Monday, 2.23.09 : Arrived at District Office at 0500 to find truck planned for trip with dead battery. Took alternate vehicle. Stopped at Gibson Reservoir overlook to check ice conditions – looks possible. Unable to drive to trailhead due to snow depths. After group discussion at boat ramp, all agree to travel on reservoir ice instead of Gibson Lake trail. Cracks in clear ice reveal about 18" ice on average. Too slick to walk so we strap on skis and start sliding. At 1030 we arrive at Fish and Game Cabin at head of reservoir. Decide to try and complete snow survey and then continue on to Cabin Creek Station. Observe fresh Mountain Lion tracks at elk carcass above K bar L Ranch. Complete Goat Mountain survey at 7000' finding average of 26" snow and 8.4" of water content. Descend to North Fork Sun River valley and ski north. Russ observes short viewing of a single wolf in riparian area near river. Otter tracks observed along the river. Open water on lower river bring concerns about need to ford in gathering twilight. Farther north ice conditions improve and we travel about a mile on river to mouth of Circle Creek, then climb to the cabin. Average elk sign south of Circle Creek. No elk observed. Moderate trail breaking in warm afternoon conditions. Long 20+ mile day but nice to be ahead of schedule for once.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN, page 15

Photo Credits: Peter Frederick





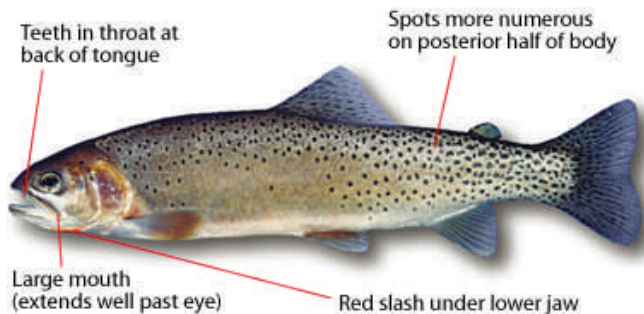
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Westslope Cutthroat Trout Conservation

The South Fork Flathead River drainage comprises more than half of the remaining interconnected habitat for westslope cutthroat trout throughout their historic range and provides a world-class fishery for this native species. Although wilderness designation has protected this natural resource from human related threats such as habitat degradation and fragmentation, hybridization and competition with introduced trout species remains a persistent threat to Montana's state fish. In an effort to preserve this important piece of Montana's natural heritage Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, US Forest Service, and Bonneville Power Administration began the South Fork Flathead westslope cutthroat trout conservation program. This program is aimed at restoring westslope cutthroat trout populations in 21 high mountain lakes, approximately half of which lie in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

In 2008, fisheries crews conducted stream and lake surveys in the Big Salmon drainage to identify fish distribution and collect genetic samples from trout in Lena and Necklace lakes. This work is planned to continue in summer 2009 in addition to fisheries sampling in the Youngs and Danaher drainages.

For more information about these projects please visit the project website (<http://fwp.mt.gov/r1/wctproject/default.html>) or contact fisheries biologist Matt Boyer (phone: 751-4556, email: mboyer@mt.gov).



Westslope Cutthroat Trout

FWP Update

By Leo Rosenthal

Bull Trout Redd counts in The Bob

Every year, as summer transitions into the fall months, bull trout make the long journey home to spawn in the tributaries from which they originated. For the Flathead Lake population, bull trout migrate into the small tributaries of the North and Middle Forks of the Flathead River. Similarly, bull trout residing in Hungry Horse Reservoir ascend the South Fork Flathead River to find their natal streams. As the fish enter the tributaries, certain areas are selected for their unique habitat qualities, which include substrate composition and the influence of groundwater. Typical of many other trout species, bull trout spawn in pairs, and create spawning nests, or redds. These redds are clearly visible



Bull trout redds are often easy to spot early in the fall because the female's preparation of the site for her eggs removes algae from the gravel. Redds are most often found in the watershed in fairly shallow water,

depressions in the streambed, and provide the evidence that successful spawning has occurred.

This was the 29th year of redd counts for the Flathead Lake bull trout population. Redd counts have been conducted on four index streams in both the North and Middle Forks annually since 1980. In order to determine what percentage of the total spawning run is captured during annual index counts, we periodically complete basin-wide surveys. Because of the level of effort required to survey all suitable spawning habitat available to adult bull trout, basin-wide counts have been restricted to a rotation of

The Low Down in Lincoln

2008 REVIEW AND 2009 PLANS

Ernie Lundberg

Trails Manager, Lincoln

Another summer flew by, is it age that makes time pass quicker? It was a very busy summer and we only had a few fires and no fires in the Wilderness. I know you have to be careful what you wish for, but it would be good to burn some of the downfall in the old '88 burn. The Helena Forest reorganization brought some changes to the wilderness and trails program. Casey became the Wilderness Ranger for the Helena portion of the Scapegoat and the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. The strategy being to save some budget, get someone with experience in the Gates and try to improve the 10 year challenge score.

We hired a small trail crew—Cole returned and we hired Natelie and Hanna. It is amazing the amount of work three people can get accomplished. It was a big change from a one person crew in 2007. The Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation (BMWF) and the Charlie Russell Backcountry Horseman (BCH) got a lot of work accomplished as well. They cleared trails and maintained, fences and facilities. Several trails were cleared and maintained that would otherwise not have been cleared without their help. The 2009 work for the BMWF and BCH is getting scheduled on the calendar. Later on this spring we will set some firm dates and iron out the details of the work and support. The BMWF is providing a weeds crew for the first time this year. We currently don't have a huge weed problem in the Scapegoat, and any help we can get to keep it that way will be appreciated.

A large portion of the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness burned in 2007. The Gates fire was a suppression fire and therefore received BARE money for the reconstruction and rehab efforts. Lincoln RD has the only pack string on the Helena NF, so Casey and the crew helped out by packing camps and supplies to the crews working on the trails and rehab. A fire sometimes leaves managers an unexpected opportunity. In the process of inventorying trails and locating previously inventoried camp sites Casey discovered a few more sites that had not been inventoried. Prior to the fire the sites hadn't been used and became overgrown. When the fire burned the vegetation they reappeared. The crew spent a few days working in the Gates Wilderness but spent most of their season working in the Scapegoat. When we decided to have Casey work both wilderness areas we know it was an ambitious plan. Our plan for the Gates seems to be working, we had a Wilder-

ness Ranger, Casey, on the ground, were able to get monitoring data gathered and entered into a data base, and start working on an education plan for the Gates. Hopefully when the education plan is complete all of this will get us a couple more points on the 10 year challenge.



Gates of the Wilderness washout & erosion after fires.

I am sure you remember the big debate, last year, on where the Grizzly Bear should be displayed. After all the debate and letters from students Lincoln RD was the chosen to display the bear. On July 8, 2008 the bear became a permanent resident in the front office at the Lincoln RD. The front window had to be removed to get the bear in and replaced with low E glass. One of the main reasons the USFWS chose the Lincoln RD to display the bear was for educational purposes. People stop to see the bear, often ask questions about him and that helps foster further educational discussions.

For a week prior to the bear being on display we had 15-20 people per day come in to see him. After the bear arrived the number of visits to the office dramatically increased. In July and August there were 6500 visitors, some days over 200 visitors came in the office. There was so much interest in the bear we kept the office open on weekends and put lighting on him 24/7 so people are able to view him after hours. The number of visitors has dropped this winter to an average of about 13 people a day. We wanted something besides the blank wall behind the bear.

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New Law Enforcement Officer in The Bob

MEET KEVIN ARNOLD

In February of 2008 the Law Enforcement and Investigations division of the U.S Forest Service hired Kevin Arnold as the Wilderness/Backcountry Law Enforcement Officer. Kevin's primary responsibility is the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

This past fall Kevin spent the majority of his time back in the Bob Marshall doing backcountry patrols. These patrols were done with the help of other Law Enforcement Officers including Game Wardens with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Kevin is based out of the Lincoln Ranger District; however, he is a resource that is utilized across the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex as well as other backcountry areas across Region One. He will be in the Bob Marshall extensively this upcoming summer and fall.

Here are a few reminders of rules and regulations for users of The Bob as they prepare for their upcoming trips this season.

- Food and other attractants must be stored properly according to the Food Storage Special Order. If you are using a food container it must be certified by the IGBC as bear resistant and display the inspection decal. Most of the surrounding Ranger Districts have certified bear resistant containers that can be loaned out to the public if needed. By following these requirements you will help minimize human/bear encounters.
- Be responsible with your campfire. It is illegal to leave a campfire left un-attended on National Forest land. Before leaving camp make sure your fire is "dead out" and not producing any smoke or heat.
- Only certified Weed Seed Free hay and grain may be used in the Bob Marshall Wilderness as well as all other National Forest Lands in Region One. It is important that proper proof of certification is also with the feed at all times. Certified hay must have the designated twine or numbered tags on it. Grain and other feed must have with it the proper certificate tag that states it has been inspected and is certified weed seed free.

Here are a few reminders of rules and regulations for users of The Bob as they prepare for their upcoming trips this season.

- Always remember to practice "Leave No Trace" techniques. Stock users need to prevent unnecessary damage to trees and the ground where they tie or otherwise contain their stock.

If you plan on fishing any one of the many lakes or rivers in the Bob Marshall Wilderness this coming summer be sure to purchase a valid Montana fishing license and have that fishing license in your possession at all times while fishing. Also, it is important to check the 2009 Montana fishing regulations for any regulation changes, specifically for Bull Trout fishing on the South Fork of the Flathead River.



Kevin Arnold, Law Enforcement Officer in The Bob, with horse, Major.

Hungry Horse Ranger District

New Wild & Scenic River Regulations & Float Guide

Colter Pence

Trails Manager, Hungry Horse

Imagine this setting, getting off your river float trip on a stretch of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River just as the sun is setting, pitching your tent as it gets dark, waking up to a wonderful sunrise and stepping out of your tent the next morning to find an unmentionable pile just a foot away. Well, amazingly enough this is more and more the case. The River Managers from the Flathead National Forest began seriously discussing the possibility of requiring self-containment receiving after complaints about human waste and other damaging use at sites along the Three Forks of the Flathead River.

In response, new regulations have been created for various stretches of the river system. On the wilderness portion of the Upper Middle Fork, solid human waste must be self-contained and packed out to an approved disposal site for all over night trips. Self contained means a system to contain all solid human bodily waste using a washable, leak-proof, reusable toilet system OR a disposable biodegradable bag toilet system that is approved for landfill disposal. Wag Bags™ or Restop™ for example are baggies that contain a biodegradable powder which treats the human waste. They must be contained within a leak or spill-proof container until they are disposed of properly. Either system allows for the carry-out and disposal of solid human body waste in a responsible and lawful manner. The system must be adequate for the size of the group and length of trip.

Additionally on the wilderness portion of the Upper Middle Fork, campfires must be contained in a metal fire pan or on a fire blanket and ash may be disposed of on site within the river corridor. The Lower Middle Fork and North Fork River requires human waste containment and recommends firepan/blanket use. The South Fork River continues to recommend that recreationists practice Leave No Trace principles to minimize human and fire related impacts. Please contact the river managers on the Hungry Horse and Spotted Bear Ranger Districts for more information.

To assist with the roll out of these new regulations the Three Forks of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River Float Guide has been updated and expanded. It now includes the most up to date river route and rapid information, as well as new natural history and interpretive information. The guide is printed on water proof paper and is spiral bound so that it can slip into a life vest pocket. Get yours today!



The new Three Forks of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River Float Guide guide is \$12.95 and is available at any Flathead National Forest office or through the publishing partner, Glacier Association, (406) 888-5756.

A NEW FACE AT HUNGRY HORSE RANGER DISTRICT

The Hungry Horse /Glacier View Ranger Districts wish to announce their new trails manager, Darin Fisher. Darin comes to us from the Gallatin National Forest and has a breadth of trails experience. Currently, he is adding to his trails experience by backpacking through New Zealand, and he will be joining the district full time in April. Welcome Darin!

Seeley Lake Ranger District

CONGER CREEK FIRE UPDATE

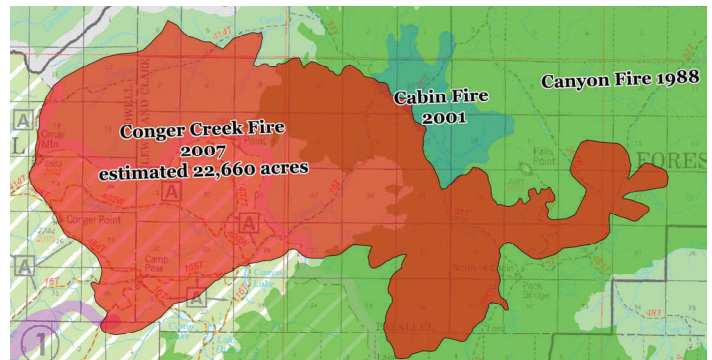
On July 15, 2007 the Conger Creek Fire started on the Seeley Lake Ranger District. By the end of September it had burned 25,150 acres, all on US Forest Service land, both in proposed wilderness and in the Scapegoat Wilderness.

Late in the fall of 2007, a Smokejumper crew and a Forest Service trail crew started clearing, removing hazard trees and scouting to see the workload for 2008. Many of the trails suffered severe erosion and were chock-full of downfall and still standing hazard trees. In 2008 quite a few groups assisted in clearing, installing water bars, re-routing trails, re-treading trails, and scouting for noxious weeds.

The Regional Pack String packed about 200 water bars to Camp Pass in June, with snow still on the ground. A four-person Forest Service trail crew worked the entire 2008 summer season in the Conger Creek Fire clearing, installing water bars, re-routing and re-treading trails. A few of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation volunteer groups cleared trails and installed water bars on trails within the fire including the American Hiking Society, Wilderness Treatment Center, and the Summit Prep School. The Backcountry Horseman, Outfitters, and Forest Service Personnel helped with pack support throughout the summer. A contractor also worked on a trail within the fire perimeter.

A two-person Forest Service crew monitored all trails within the fire perimeter for noxious weeds. In areas where there was little to no pre-existing weeds, no new infestations were found one year after the fire. However, where there were pre-existing weeds and an existing seed-bed, the noxious weeds came back vigorously, especially Canada thistle.

A lot of work was completed in 2008, but of course there is more to do. In 2009, crews will be back in the Conger Creek fire clearing, installing water bars, and other trail maintenance. Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2008 season a success and see you next year!



Map: Conger Creek Fire Perimeter, Seeley Lake Ranger District. Photo: Conger Creek looking north. Rider, Maunda Hagan.





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www.mountainfilm.org



PHOTO: ASIEMET COPYRIGHT OLIVER HIGGINS



T E L L U R I D E MOUNTAINFILM

ON TOUR

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

THURSDAY, APRIL 16th
WHITEFISH, MT
 O'Shaughnessy Center
 Doors open 6pm • Films at 7pm

Pre-Event Tickets are \$12 at
 The White Room Mountain Shop
 Rocky Mountain Outfitter
 (\$15 at the door)

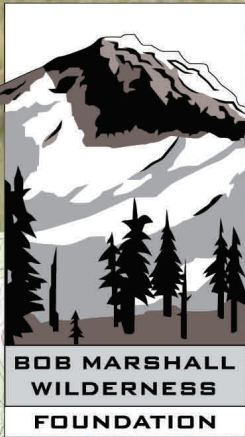
FRIDAY, APRIL 17th
HELENA, MT
 Carroll College, Simperman Hall
 Doors open 6:30pm • Films at 7pm

Pre-Event Tickets \$10
 Blackfoot River Brewery
 Carroll College - Student Activities
 (\$12 at the door)

SATURDAY, APRIL 18th
GREAT FALLS, MT
 Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center
 Doors open 6:30pm • Films at 7pm

Pre-Event Tickets \$10
 Big Horn Wilderness
 (\$12 at the door)

Explore "The Bobs" 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

Looking Back Over Thirty Years

Wilderness Enthusiast, Gene Persha

This last summer I had the chance to walk the South Fork Trail from Meadow Creek to Salmon Forks. Although I travelled this route a number of times, it had been thirty years since I last used it. The trail seemed as good or better than it was thirty years ago, and I was fortunate enough to have dry weather conditions. I was impressed with the overall adaptations made for stream crossings with new bridges and some rerouting. I especially liked the bridge over Little Salmon Creek with its low profile.

The one thing that had a lasting impact on me was walking through the fire burn area from Black Bear to Salmon Forks. I first noticed the lack of shade and the new openness in areas alongside the trail. I missed the trees: their color, their smell and clusters that made a forest what it is. It seemed to me that this was such a fine forest years ago, and now was in state of decay showing its scars everywhere.

I also walked throughout the area around the Salmon Forks ranger cabin. I noticed fire scarred trees throughout the whole complex. I thought the ranger cabin could only have been saved by the fire protection wrap. I worked my way down from the bench area to the South Fork shoreline. I crossed many snags and went around many burned trees, few showing much life left in them. I sat down on a big rock by the river and just looked back and around the whole area trying to imagine what a powerful fire this was. Even the tree I sat under reading a book on a high bank over the river thirty years ago, was now in its death cycle. I did miss this pristine forest, and it sure looked a lot nicer years ago. There was real life in that forest! But maybe there is beginning life starting anew I can't see.

Nonetheless, fire has its role in the wild. It made, shaped, or conditioned the forest thirty years ago. I have been lucky to have experienced Murphy Flats and White River Park before recent fire altered the landscape of the surrounding



“The forest is in itself a timeline of life with stages marked out for visitors to see. Sometimes one is fortunate to see an untouched site in its prime.”

area. But fire does create the wilderness in the great scheme of things. It prepares the forest for its next cycle which someday will greet visitors as it greeted me thirty years ago. And fire always readjusts the natural biota of plant and animal habitat that usually have some positive effects. The forest is in itself a timeline of life with stages marked out for visitors to see. Sometimes one is fortunate to see an untouched site in its prime. I guess I have and still remember it.

USFS Approved Horsemanship Classes



Be sure to save the date for upcoming horsemanship classes in your area. If you plan on volunteering in The Bob this summer with the Forest Service, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation or a another organization you need these classes.

- April 18th: Defensive Horsemanship Course (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 19th: 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.
 - *Call BCH-Flathead Chapter to reserve a space: Rick Mathies: 406.752.2209.*
- May 21st: Horsemanship Class (no cost) with Rocky Mountain Ranger District at the Chateau Rodeo Grounds. All day; bring lunch and a lawn chair. *Contact Ian Bardwell at RMRD to reserve you space: 406.466.5341.*

LETTER FROM LEAD RANGER, FROM FRONT PAGE

they helped out another party that had snag injuries in the Gordon Creek drainage. I'm always impressed how all parties come together to help out in emergencies.

The Spotted Bear District helped on a couple of situations that may have been able to be prevented. We encourage folks to really know the stock they are using and know their level of skill – we have some great partners such as the Back Country Horseman Chapters around the complex that are a wonderful resource to help learn the needed skills. Plus you get to meet and work with folks that have a lot of history, energy and sense of fun!

One of the questions we've heard in the last 30 days is will the BMWC be getting any of the stimulus money for more jobs related to trail or bridge work? The short answer is we don't know yet. The latest we've heard is that more projects will be selected by the end of March – so this is an area we'll plan to address at the public meeting. The short answer is that we did submit several needs and we'll wait to see how they rank with all of the other forest projects submitted.

I'd like to close with a special "thank you" to all the partners, volunteers, outfitters, employees and individuals that continue to bring their own passion for wilderness and management into each experience (both work projects and in visiting the Bob Marshall, Great Bear and Scapegoat Wildernesses) – your help in clearing down fall, trail rocking, brushing, campsite clean up, respecting other wilderness users, weed inventory, weed eradication, other trail work, historic phone line maintenance, managing human waste, Schafer Meadows airstrip maintenance, etc. These are all great examples of your work and you all help make a difference! **Thank you for the continued caring – I appreciate that we get to work with such dedicated individuals.**

I look forward to seeing you in 2009! Please contact me or any of the District Rangers in the complex if we can help on an issue. Hope to see you at the annual public meeting April 25 in Lincoln, Montana!

Deb Mucklow
Lead BMWC Ranger 2009

LINCOLN, FROM PAGE 4



The Lincoln High School was contacted and Anne Allen's art class volunteered to paint a mural on the wall behind the bear. The mural not only provides a natural background setting for the bear but is a beautiful work of art and worth seeing by it's self. An addition is being planed to better display the bear. The addition

would allow visitors to view the bear from all sides even after hours, and have space to display educational information.

Hope you are faring well this winter and maybe we'll see you down the trail some place.

◀**The famous Lincoln Grizzly Bear.** Federal and state officials have decided to mount an 830-pound male grizzly bear at the Helena National Forest's Lincoln Ranger District office, a short distance from where it was killed in a vehicle collision on Highway 200 on 10-17-07.

Backcountry Weed Crew

SPOTTED BEAR RANGER DISTRICT 2008 SUMMARY

Tad Wehunt & Eric Kroeger

Wilderness Ranger, Spotted Bear

Differences between wilderness and non-wilderness weeds

The front country weed battle and the backcountry battle are of two different characters. Portions of the front country are so infested with weeds that the crews must prioritize which infestations will be sprayed in the given season. The front country crew does a great job hitting all of the priority sites. Priorities are geared towards roads and trailheads to minimize the spread of all species of weeds into the wilderness.

In the backcountry, the philosophy is to hit every known weed population that we can and keep surveying for new weed populations. The final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for noxious weed management says, "The forest plan provides the goal of maintaining the 'natural condition' in Management Area 21 (the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wildernesses)". Priorities are based on the aggressiveness of the weed species. Generally, high priority sites are those that have leafy spurge, yellow toadflax, and goatweed. Next in line are 80% of our sites that contain knapweed, sulfur cinquefoil, and houndstongue. The last priority is the sites that contain Canadian and bull thistle.

The backcountry weeds crew, based out of Big Prairie Ranger Station, had a good season of spraying along with some solid surveying adven-

tures. Having a two person crew proved to be enough manpower for 90% of the spray sites. However, in the larger sites such as Little Salmon Park and White River Butte we felt under gunned, and the addition of a willing trail crew was welcome.

This year, the backcountry weeds crew completed some good survey runs. Aside from surveying our known weed sites for changes in density, we thoroughly GPSed the knapweed sites on the South Fork from Big Prairie north to Mid Creek Takeout. We also took a day and surveyed the north shoreline of Big Salmon Lake. During one hitch, we made a run up Spotted Bear River and down the White River.

These surveys consist of a GPS point at the weed patch, followed by the percent of the immediate area that is infested, and percent cover of that infested area.

The weed program is supported by several partners. A special thank you to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for the continued support. This has allowed us to make sure the winter range and transitional ranges of elk are kept as weed free as possible.



Do your part by removing weeds from your property, washing vehicles, boots & animals that have been in infested areas.

Spotted Knapweed

The knapweed infestation along the south fork got covered pretty well this year, especially the section of the river from Big Prairie north to Mid Creek takeout. The "float and spray" was a worthy venture. We were able to GPS and spray every floodplain with the exception of 3 large sites. Overall, I think the knapweed population is decreasing. The patches appear to be getting thinner. This will make it harder for future weed crews as weeds get sparser and harder to find.

We haven't found any knapweed sites that are away from a stream or river corridor which leads me to believe that the river is still the main source of spread. We must keep up with our spraying, but we must keep surveying for those headwater sites. Without exploring for the source of the problem, we'll be fighting this battle forever.

Leafy Spurge

The spurge patch in the Danaher is still in existence. We had hoped to get to this patch before the plants started to flower. We

got to the patch on July 9th and the plants were already blooming. When I returned on September 19th to remap the site, I noticed there was about 20-30% of the plants were absolutely dead from the spray. The other parts were either on their way out for the season and curled over from spray, or in the midst of going to seed.

Yellow Toadflax

Our biggest site, Little Salmon Park seemed to be improved in certain areas. The small patch at Black Bear Cabin had less than

LOOKING BACK, FROM PAGE 10

Walking back on the return leg of my trip, I thought of my life as a part of nature with everything gradually changing. Some of us are lucky to do meaningful things, have worthwhile experiences, and have good memories of them. Perhaps, that is what makes wilderness travel such a good activity for me. It has made me appreciate what is there in the short time we have to sample the natural forces beyond ourselves. It is a humbling thing to feel the impact of what a wilderness in its essence is. This past trip was part of a life cycle also for me. I had a thirty year snapshot in time. I was happy to relive the moments, and they are always good for me in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. They are a reminder of what we really have here. I am glad I had such a time span to compare what once was and what will again be.

More Signs of Change

Red Plume Lookout 1950s
Red Plume Lookout 2008 (right)

Mount Wright 2006
Mount Wright 2008 (below)



Photo credit: Bill Stricklin. Image taken from Blackleaf Pass looking west to Mount Wright. Fool Creek Fire (2007) impact.



Do you have a unique experience in The Bob you want to share?

Send us an article to publish in the 2010 Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex Newsletter. Tell us about your favorite backpacking trip, a unique wildlife encounter or your first hike into The Bob. See specifications and contact info below for article submissions.

Submissions should be sent in a Word document—no fancy formatting, please. Include 1-2 photos as an attachment (not embedded in Word file) and be sure to include captions, name of place or people in photo, etc as a footnote in Word file. Email submissions only, please. All submissions subject to editing and reprint permission in BMWC newsletter. Deadline for submission is February 28, 2010. Please email to Hans Castren, Spotted Bear Wilderness Ranger: hcastren@fs.fed.us or call 387.3859 with questions. One submission will be selected for 2010 newsletter.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN, FROM PAGE 2

Tuesday, 2.24.09: Complete Cabin Creek snow survey at 5200' prior to heading north to Gates Park Station. Survey reveals average of 15" snow depth 4.2" of water content. Breakable surface crust and wet snow underneath. Starts snowing just as we leave to ski north. Difficult trail breaking for leader due to crusted snow and not much better for others. Dead reckoning to Gates Park off trail beyond Sulphur Creek crossing. Snow intensity picks up in afternoon causing sticky conditions. No game sign today. Snow at Gates Station about 24". Moderately difficult day due to poor snow conditions. All glad we put in a long day Monday as today was hard traveling. Russ tore out binding pin holes on ski boots late today and tonight fashions a reinforcement plate by cutting out section of cookie sheet at cabin. He achieves a decent repair considering the tools and materials he has to work with.

Wednesday, 2.25.09: On trail at 0600 today with intent of round trip about 17 miles to Wrong Creek Snow Survey site and return to Gates Park Station. Temp about 20 Degrees. 6" new snow and colder temperatures have set up crust enough to stay on top and we have good skiing. Pine Martin tracks are observed in upper Gates Creek drainage. Survey at Wrong Creek site shows an average of 34" of snow with 8.2" of water content. On leaving Wrong Creek for our return trip, we are fortunate to briefly observe a Wolverine in the trail corridor. Tracks reveal the Wolverine had followed our ski tracks up from the river and had been lying under the branches of a large spruce tree along the trail. Upon hearing us, it jumped from under the tree and bounded back down the ski track for several hundred yards before heading off into the timber. Moderate downfall on trail #110 on west side of river. As we near

Gates Park a front moves in with lowering temps and increasing snow. 5 degrees when we arrive at the cabin. Upon inspection, Russ decides to repair his boot again and also builds two additional reinforcement plates.

Thursday, 2.26.09: On the trail at 0700 this morning skiing about 16 miles to Fish and Game Cabin at Gibson. Very cold this morning at minus 13 degrees and snowing hard. Moderate trail breaking today in 6" to 12" fresh snow and brutal, windy, full on winter conditions. Skied on the river ice from Dryden Creek to Biggs Creek where we experienced more frequent sections of open water. A third of the way out today, Russ's boot repair fails completely and we fashion a "cable binding" of sorts with some chute cord. This arrangement worked very well but needed to be redone about once an hour due to problems with abrasion. Pine Martin tracks in "Two Shacks Timber". Small band of 15 Bighorn Sheep observed at Reclamation Flats. Glad to make it in to the cabin by about 1600 and get warmed back up.

Friday, 2.27.09: Up early this morning as we head back out to the road skiing on the frozen reservoir. Warmer. Sunny. Bobcat tracks in willows by the cabin. Tracks of two wolves observed on the reservoir ice heading east. Fresh, warm, cinnamon rolls with icing a welcome treat at Joan Stevens' cabin where we parked in Mortimer Gulch. Good trip. Good Company.

Snowpack Summary: March 1, 2009 snow water content on the east side in the Sun /Teton / Marias River basins was 73% of average based on a 30 year period. This is the ninth lowest year on record and only 67% of last year.



SPOTTED BEAR WEEDS, FROM PAGE 12

10 plants remaining. The patches at both Limestone Creek and White Creek in the Danaher showed dramatic improvements. The picture to the right is of the White Creek patch in 2006. This year it is reduced to maybe 20-30 plants. The same story goes for the Limestone patch. Shirttail Park on the other hand seemed to have increased slightly in size. I believe it got hit late in the season last year and late again this year. The sixth patch is at the mouth of Babcock Creek in an oxbow on Young's Creek. This site did not get reached this year.

Houndstongue, Sulfur Cinquefoil, Daisy, & Thistle

The houndstongue populations in the backcountry are hard to tell of they are decreasing or not. It is one of those plants that can be dispersed by any animal into any part of the forest. Infestations that we know of seem to be slowly decreasing. The key to houndstongue is to spray it young before it ever seeds. If there are flowering plants,

bag and burn the flower heads, then spray. We had great success on young rosette plants, but the flowering plants were a little tougher.

Sulfur Cinquefoil is one of those plants that we spray but, we seem to have limited success. We are controlling the patches (keeping them from spreading) but, it always seems like a wild goose chase to eliminate this species.

Daisy populations around Black Bear seem to be decreasing. Less and less daisy appear on the airstrip each year, however it does like the trees. Being thorough in these areas is the only way to success.

Thistle populations are still freely dispersing themselves throughout the burned areas of the South Fork. However, it seems to be fairly well matched against the fireweed and new snowberry plants that are coming back. We continue not to target these plants and spend our energy chasing more noxious species.



FWP, FROM PAGE 3

every three to five years.

This past year represented a basin-wide year for the North and Middle Forks. While much of the North Fork, and portions of the Middle Fork are accessible by road, a considerable portion of the Middle Fork lies in the heart of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Under ideal weather conditions, an FWP crew traveled to the headwaters of the Middle Fork during the first week of October. Personnel surveyed Morrison, Granite, Lodgepole, Schafer, and Dolly Varden Creeks while staying at Schafer Meadows. After a restful night at the guard station, the crew continued on to Gooseberry Park, where they would survey Strawberry, Clack, Bowl, Trail, and Basin Creeks in the days that followed. Overall, bull trout redd numbers for the Flathead Lake population were similar, if not higher, than previously observed since the establishment of mysis shrimp in the early 1980's. Redd count numbers for the wilderness portion of the Middle Fork were also consistent with other years in which basin-wide counts were conducted.

This was the 16th year of monitoring for the South Fork/Hungry Horse Reservoir bull trout population. FWP surveys four reservoir tributaries annually and four Wilderness tributaries periodically. Basin-wide counts have been conducted twice previously. Because of time constraints, and the level of effort necessary to conduct basin-wide, backcountry redd counts, FWP crews only counted the four reservoir index streams for the Hungry Horse bull trout population this year. The 2008 total of 74 redds was slightly below the long-term average, but well within the range of past counts. A basin-wide survey of the South Fork is planned for 2009.

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