



# ***Swan View's News***

**Swan View Coalition**

**Fall 2001**

3165 Foothill Road, Kalispell, MT 59901 [www.wildrockies.org/swanview](http://www.wildrockies.org/swanview)

***"Keeping an eye on the Swan Mountains and America's Public Lands!"***

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## ***Words from the Chair: A Call for Civility in the World***

The terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11 have left America and the world stunned and wounded. Life since has been anything but business as usual. On behalf of Swan View Coalition and its members, I want to express our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those who have perished in this attack and in the rescue efforts that have followed. I want to express our sincerest wishes of healing to those who have been wounded, whether physically or emotionally.

The President of the United States has asked us to get back to work and to resume as normal a life as possible. As we do so, however, we must also recognize that our lives have been changed by these events. We will need to be more cognizant of those who use hate, violence and terror to further their agenda. We will also have to practice great discretion in our efforts to put an end to such behavior.

Unfortunately, in the Flathead Valley and elsewhere, the use of violence and terror has become all too common in efforts to stymie citizen based land-use planning and other conservation efforts. And, sadly, those who most openly encourage such behavior set about using the World Trade Center tragedy to launch further attacks against peaceable citizens before the dust had even settled.

This newsletter contains a special report on "Hate, Wise Use, and the Militia" that has been being researched and prepared since last Spring. It is not a pleasant subject to report on, but neither is it an issue on which we can bury our heads in the sand in hopes it will all just blow over. It is presented in the spirit of better educating the public about the threats being made so we can work more effectively to change such behavior.

This is a call for civility in the world and a call for all people to return to the proud work of defending both democracy and conservation as corner stones of this country.

Keith J. Hammer - Chair

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**Hate, Wise Use, and the Militia**

**Hate**

**John Stokes**

"This station is going to be doing what we can to . . . get rid of these green bastards in our community. . . Identify the enemy and drive them into oblivion or oblivate [sic] them." That's John Stokes on March 2, threatening conservation-minded folks he calls "Green Nazis." Such hateful threats are not limited to his KGEZ 600 "The Edge" radio program, however.

This report will look at how hate and threats of violence are being used to try and stifle civil dialogue, democracy, and conservation initiatives. It will also look at how such tactics are doomed to fail as offended citizens rise to the occasion to defend these honored traditions of our country.

This report will examine the relationships between Stokes, his supporters, the Wise Use movement, and the militia movement. It will provide a better understanding of this extremist agenda being pursued not only in the Flathead Valley of Montana, but across the nation in what David Helvarg describes as "The War Against the Greens." Only by better understanding the threats can we better defend ourselves, our planet, and our country against them.

While he may portray himself as a down-home defender of Montana, John Stokes moved to the Flathead Valley in 1994 from Stanwood, Washington, where he was a real estate broker and failed to convince his county to secede from the state. Upon arriving in the Flathead, Stokes appeared at a public meeting alongside a militia organizer as they trashed a locally-led land use planning effort. The Flathead County planning department underwent bomb scare training. Stokes bought a radio station.

In February of this year, Stokes suggested on the air that someone "call in a bomb threat" to Governor Judy Martz's office when she could not keep an appointment to appear on his program. Over the coming months, his program would air the names, phone numbers, and/or location of the homes of conservation-

minded folks he calls Green Nazis and terrorists. A number of folks reported to authorities they had received threats to themselves, vandalism, and/or green swastikas stickered to their places of business.

Stokes' already limited favor with state officials nose-dived in May. Attorney General Mike McGrath refused to appear on



Robin Loznak/Daily Inter Lake photo  
*John Stokes burns a green swastika at his Kalispell radio station to protest Earth Day 2001.*

Stokes' "The Edge," saying "Clearly, this radio show promotes hate." Governor Martz followed suit, saying that her refusal to appear was "based on evidence of various statements you have made advocating violent behavior toward specific individuals."

Stokes has been caught lying about his AM radio station ratings, claiming he is #1 in the Flathead AM market and #2 in AM/FM. He is in fact #3 and #7, according to the Montana Human Rights Network and the ratings firm cited by Stokes. Stokes is not without his followers and supporters, however. Hundreds have turned out for his publicity stunts and his spiteful rhetoric unfortunately has surfaced elsewhere.

### **jmpnfish**

"Jmpnfish" is the user name found on a series of email threats to a number of conservation-minded folks and organizations in western Montana, including Swan View Coalition. It is used by Mike and Cathy Aastrom. Mike Aastrom acknowledged on May 10 to a Flathead County Sheriff's detective he indeed wrote the two email threats received by Swan View Coalition, the second of which was sent the day Stokes burned his green swastika. Authorities told Mike Aastrom to knock it off.

A sampling of jmpnfish messages speak for themselves: "You guys will perish . . . We will get you out of this state . . . This is our state . . . We're going to kick your . . . ass." And, written to the web site of the newly formed Flathead Valley Human Rights Coalition, well after the Sheriff's May 10 warning to cease threats: "Keep your powder dry, your gonna [sic] need it."

A Sheriff's detective told Swan View its case was closed upon issuing a warning to Mike Aastrom and his agreeing to stop making threats. The status of other complaints filed with authorities and their investigations remains unknown.

***Take your group of Green Nazis to hell with you . . . You deserve . . . a train ride, like the Jews got to take . . . The father, the son and the holy ghost brought me to write this letter.***

**jmpnfish**

The relationship between Stokes' agenda, the Aastroms and the Militia of Montana revealed itself as a Convoy of Tears was organized in Kalispell this summer to provide relief to farmers protesting the reservation of irrigation water for protected species in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

### **A Convoy of Tears and Jeers**

Stokes promoted his radio station as supporting the August Convoy of Tears to Klamath Falls. Local newspapers listed Stokes' z600 web site as well as Cathy Aastrom's phone and jmpnfish email address as sources for more information regarding the convoy organizing effort. In the end, both would give the otherwise respectable convoy effort a black eye.

Mike and Cathy Aastrom each signed an on-line petition urging the release of reserved water in the Klamath Basin to farmers that had occupied the head gates of the federal irrigation project, opening the gates

on several occasions to protest withholding of water for threatened and endangered fish. Mike Aastrom added "www.z600.com will let ya know what we are doing. . . if i could be there standing with ya i would preferably armed [sic]."

In late July, "mike and cathy Patriot" updated the Militia of Montana on Convoy preparations and plans, using her jmpnfish email account. Stokes told the Willamette Week newspaper he was also going to Klamath Falls and was bringing a 10' green swastika he intended to burn publicly.

The Montana Human Rights Network, Swan View Coalition, and other Flathead area citizens concerned with the extra fuel this might add to an already volatile situation in the Klamath alerted the press, Oregon residents and authorities. Klamath-based organizers, in turn, made it clear they did not want others tacking their agendas onto the irrigation protest and that the burning of a green swastika would constitute "hate speech." While Stokes responded "I'm not prone to listen to any committees," he did not go to Klamath Falls and the green swastika sent along with the Convoy was sent back unburned, despite his on-air urging from Kalispell.

Convoy organizers and Dave Burgert, reported by the Klamath Falls Herald and News to be a Montana Militia member, told the press that militia members had been present at the Kalispell send-off rally but

had not gone along. Burgert told the Herald and News he personally felt "use of the word 'militia' would cloud the goal of the convoy." Indeed, it has become common practice for militia members to instead use the term "Patriots."

Researcher Paul de Armond, reporting to the Anti-Defamation League in 1994, wrote "The best-known link between Wise

Use and the militias continues to be John Stokes. Stokes was active earlier this year in the Everett, Washington area. . . [The groups he was active in] were among the first to be openly distributing MOM [Militia of Montana] literature inside the Wise Use Movement in the Puget Sound area. . . This summer, Stokes moved to the Kalispell, Montana area."



Robin Loznak/Daily Inter Lake photo

*Jugs of symbolic tears at the August 18 Kalispell send-off of the Convoy of Tears, attended in part by Montana militia members, according to convoy organizers.*

## Wise Use and Dirty Tricks

As conservation groups like Swan View Coalition have purposefully distanced themselves over the past decades from groups that espouse acts of sabotage or terrorism, some Wise Use groups appear to have not. In his excellent book "The War Against the Greens," David Helvarg reports that the southern California-based Wise-Use group "Sahara Club" has conducted scores of "dirty tricks workshops around the country for 'logging groups and logging companies' in the Northwest, hunters

in Arkansas, and Wise Use activists in Texas, New Mexico, Illinois, and Pennsylvania." As an excuse for its use of dirty tricks "to go after the person responsible for your grief," Sahara Club says "you can't reason with eco-freaks but you can sure scare them."

Helvarg writes "Dozens of environmentalists throughout the country have reported receiving obscene phone calls, death threats, and 'Dear Faggot' letters following Sahara Club's publication of their . . . names, addresses, phone numbers, and license plates numbers."

Sound familiar? Indeed, a good read of Helvarg's book leaves one with the impression that John Stokes is a carbon copy of Wise Use organizers Chuck Cushman and Ron Arnold, who have been instrumental in establishing the movement to put a human smiley face on corporate greed. Arnold is quoted by Helvarg as encouraging industry to support anti-environmental groups "because citizen's groups have credibility and industries don't." De Armond reports that Cushman's organizing tour of Washington state in 1994 was "accompanied by the appearance of Militia of Montana literature," as with some of the groups of which Stokes was a member or leader at that time.

## Montanans for Multiple Use

Positions taken by Montanans for Multiple Use have hardened since Clarence Taber became its President a few years ago. His predecessor participated in a collaborative planning process on the Flathead National Forest in order to secure timber sales along with implementation of the Forest Plan's Amendment 19 road management and obliteration program. Taber appealed the outcome in 1999, asking that Amendment 19 be rescinded. The following year, MFMU issued a printed declaration claiming "We declare Amendment 19 null and void."

On October 10, 2000, John Stokes helped announce "Gate Opening Days/GOD" by circulating an email stating "The [destruction of road closure gates on federal land] is a region wide civil protest and

the gates are being opened now in the dark of nite without fanfare. It's time Just do it and shut up [sic]."

On October 16, 1999, in what he called a "public service," Taber led a demonstration against the court-ordered reclamation of a snowmobile and off-road vehicle trail illegally cut open near the Flathead's Peters Ridge. His demonstration included taking a pick-axe to an earth berm recently revegetated with native plants by volun-



Swan View Coalition photo

*Clarence Taber, President of Montanans for Multiple Use, takes a pick-axe to a snowmobile trail closure recently planted with native vegetation by the Montana Conservation Corps under a federal court order.*

teers from Swan View Coalition and the Montana Conservation Corps.

Threats and plans to illegally reopen the reclaimed trail continue to be discussed on Stokes' "The Edge" radio program. Taber's March - April 2001 MFMU newsletter states "The following business members support Montanans for Multiple Use - please give them your support: Militia of Montana . . . The Edge Z-600 . . ."

### **The Militia of Montana**

In his 1994 reports to the Anti-Defamation League, Paul de Armond describes the militia movement and the Militia of Montana as follows:

"The militia movement is a highly diverse collection of organizations and individuals that are promoting armed resistance by paramilitary groups organized at a local and regional level. The militia movement emphasizes conspiracy theories that focus first of all on sinister plots to confiscate firearms and imprison gun owners. From this premise, the theories expand to a vague international conspiracy to destroy the Constitution of the United States and seize its territory."

"The Militia of Montana has been repeatedly identified as having connections to the racist Aryan Nations, Christian Identity, tax resisters, and Posse Comitatus."

On January 1, 1996, USA Today Magazine reported:

"The militia movement came under intense national scrutiny after the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Federal building in Oklahoma City . . . The most ominous aspect of the militia's program is the convic-

tion, openly expressed by many of them, that an impending armed conflict with the Federal government necessitates paramilitary training and the stockpiling of weapons in preparation for that day of reckoning. . . The Militia of Montana, one of the movement's most visible and extreme groups, . . . has been promoting for sale in its catalogue a comprehensive bomb-making manual entitled The Road Back."

***The following business members support Montanans for Multiple Use - please give them your support: Militia of Montana . . . The Edge Z-600 .***

MFMU Newsletter; March - April 2001

De Armond concludes:

"For the militia movement participants to suggest that society has broken down to the point where resort to force is the only means of resolving problems is not only absurd, but also contains the elements of self-fulfilling prophecy."

### **Summary and Recommendations**

In his 1996 article "A Not So Distant Mirror," de Armond offers both criticism and respect for the militia/Patriot and Wise Use movements:

"In their role as social critics and collectors of grievances, the 'Patriots' and Wise Users are remarkably acute, but they are unreasonable in both analysis and action -- rejecting a discourse which supplies rea-

sons and appeals to reason and instead relies on force for persuasion."

John Stokes has the same First Amendment right to free speech as anyone else. Along with that right, however, comes the responsibility to not lie, threaten or defame another person. Those who regard themselves as militia have the same right to legally own and bear arms as anyone else, but along with that right comes the responsibility to not use them or reference them to threaten others or commit mayhem.

Wise Use groups have the same right to peaceably assemble and protest as anyone else, but along with that right comes the responsibility to not threaten, intimidate or commit vandalism against others.

The Golden Rule should apply as we work to change the behavior of those who threaten or terrorize us. We must be certain to criticize only inappropriate behavior and call for enforcement only against illegal behavior, lest we argue to undercut our own rights as well.

Behavior left unchallenged too soon becomes acceptable. Behavior oft repeated becomes the norm. It is our job to chal-

lenge behaviors that arise from hate and threaten individuals, democracy, and civil dialogue. It is also our job to shine the full light of day on those who insist upon such behavior.

Do not let this newsletter discourage you. The best remedy and defense against intimidation is to become informed, take basic security precautions, and let those who would threaten you know that you are not going to hide or abandon your principles.



Cartoon by Elmer Sprunger

Scores of activists in the Flathead have done just that as John Stokes attempts to pollute the stream of public discourse with his vitriol. Scores of other people have become active precisely because of their

disgust with Stokes and his ilk.

Just as the Klamath organizers rebuked Stokes and sent his swastika packing, local supporters have criticized his extremism as well. Instead of cowering in the corner, concerned citizens have formed the Flathead Valley Human Rights Coalition. Instead of running to hide, the conservation community in the Flathead has grown stronger. And that's just in the past few months!

## Acknowledgments

We thank the Montana Human Rights Network and numerous individuals for research used in this special report. Without their work, this would not have been possible.

We thank also the many people who have offered support, security and assistance in the face of threats against us.

## Further Resources

MHRN's [www.mhrn.org](http://www.mhrn.org)  
FVHRC's [www.aboutfacts.com](http://www.aboutfacts.com)

Read Paul de Armond's reports at <http://nwcitizen.com/publicgood>

Read David Helvarg's  
"The War Against the Greens"

## ***David Helvarg Speaks: "Boomers, Wise Users, and Bush Pioneers"***

**Bozeman - October 4**

**Missoula - October 5**

**Kalispell - October 6**

Contact us at 406-755-1379 or [redraven@digisys.net](mailto:redraven@digisys.net) for details.

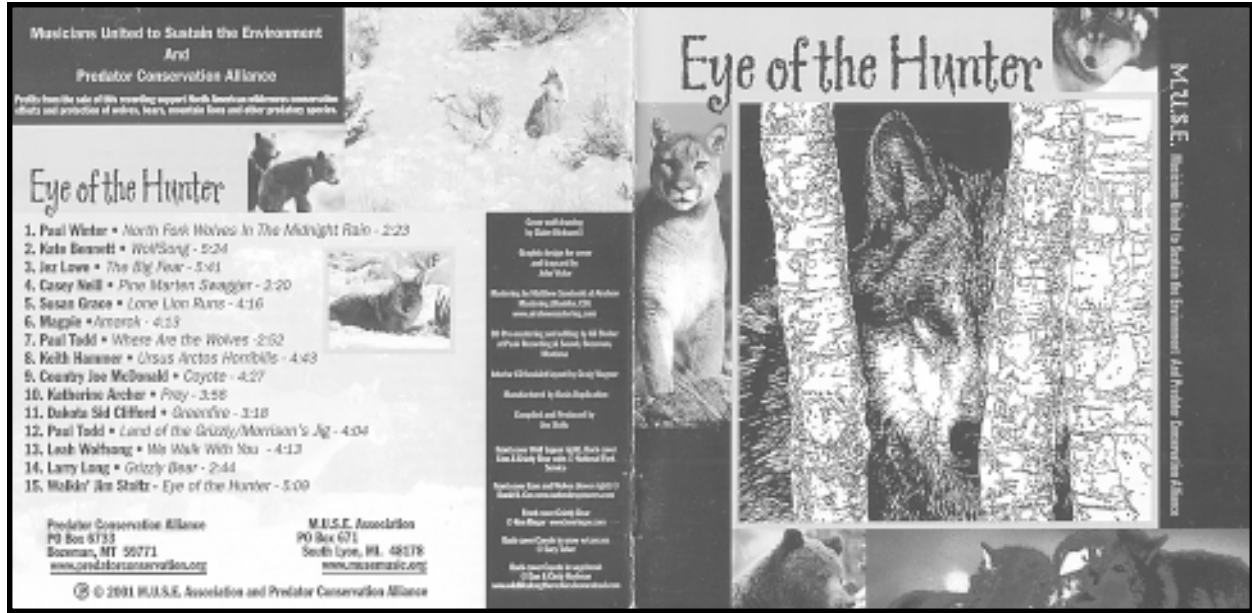
Helvarg's October 6 appearance will be a keynote address to the Montana Human Rights Network's annual conference in Kalispell October 5-6. This year's conference is "Human Rights and Corporate Responsibility." MHRN may be contacted at 406-422-5506.

## **★★ *Foothills Timber Sale Field Trip* ★★ *October 13***

Montana DNRC will be conducting a public field trip of the proposed Foothills Timber Sale project area from 9am - 3pm on Saturday, October 13, 2001.

The morning will be spent indoors at the Swan River School Gym to share information. Bring your lunch. The afternoon will be spent outdoors in on-site visits of state land off the Strawberry Lake Road or Krause Basin Road, where discussions will continue.

Our thanks to those of you who wrote DNRC about this proposal and asked for field trips. Please plan to attend and bring a neighbor or other interested folks along. **It is absolutely essential that these sessions be well attended so DNRC can hear and understand your concerns in-person and on-the-spot.**



## CDs For Sale to Benefit Wildland Predators and Their Habitat

Hear Paul Winter play soprano sax with the Flathead's North Fork wolves, Flathead area activist/songwriter Keith Hammer's "Ursus Arctos Horribilis" and "Land of the Grizzly,"\* Walkin' Jim Stoltz, and much more.

Just in time for Christmas gifts, proceeds will help Swan View Coalition in its work to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat in Northwest Montana.

**Send \$15 (not tax-deductible) for each CD to Swan View Coalition  
3165 Foothill Road, Kalispell, MT 59901**

\*Keith Hammer's songs were donated for their use on this nonprofit, fund-raising CD produced by MUSE and Predator Conservation Alliance. Credit for Keith's lyrics to "Land of the Grizzly" were inadvertently omitted from the liner notes.



If your name is circled on your mailing label, it means you haven't donated in nearly a year or more. Please make a donation or let us know you are still alive so we can keep sending you our newsletter.

**Here is a ( ) token, ( ) a chunk, ( ) all of the money I have, as a tax-deductible contribution.  
Send me \_\_\_ CDs at \$15 each (not tax-deductible). They'll make great Christmas gifts!**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY, STATE, ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

*Swan View Coalition, Inc.  
3165 Foothill Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901*

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