

Swan View's News

Fall 2010



Swan View Coalition
3165 Foothill Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

"Nature and human nature on the same path."

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Vigilance and Celebration Fund-Raiser Party at El Topo Cantina November 7!

Forty-four runners attempted to shrink the Swan Crest in July, seeing how fast they could run its length from the Bob Marshall Wilderness to Columbia Falls. The Swan Crest 100 was run without a Special Use Permit and organizers failed to keep the number of participants and spectators under the 75-person limit required to exempt "small group events" from permitting.

Members of Swan View Coalition and an independent wildlife biologist monitored the event and Swan View is in the process of presenting its findings to the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service, whose wildlife biologists have great concerns with the event (pages 2-4).

We continue to press our case against competitive running events in key wildlife habitats. This newsletter presents several case studies of prior instances where Swan View Coalition got uses that posed excessive risks to the health and welfare of both wildlife and people disallowed on public lands. It takes a while for federal land and wildlife managers to come to grips with such uses and we'll persist in

this case as we have successfully in many others (page 5).

We'll take time out from our hard work November 7, however, to celebrate during a special fund-raising party at El Topo Cantina in Bigfork from 5-8 pm! John Dunningan will again entertain us with his unique brand of music and humor. There will be food, beverages, a silent auction, and we'll

raffle off two beautiful pile jackets donated by Patagonia (page 6)! Mark your calendars now!

Cinnabar Foundation has issued us another \$4,000 grant that must be matched by November 30th. This means your donations before then get doubled! And our annual meeting is November 21, prior to the Swan Range Community Music

Jam Session and Potluck (page 7)!

You can help us in our work by donating today, providing items for our silent auction, and by reading up in this newsletter on why biologists are concerned about foot races in key wildlife habitats!



At auction Nov 7: Two fire bowls by Chris Gotchsalk!

Keith

Swan Crest 100-Mile Foot Race Defies Wildlife and Safety Concerns, Permit Requirements

In late June, the Forest Service notified Swan Crest 100 race organizers it had concerns about running through grizzly bear habitat overnight and would not be able to issue the required Special Use Permit in time for the 36-hour race July 30-31. Race organizers withdrew their permit request. They said they'd offer the \$225 entry fee back to the 50 entrants and accept it instead as a donation, a move intended to circumvent the need for a commercial permit.

Local media reported organizers would halve the number of runners so the event would meet the remaining requirement that the total group size, which includes participants, support crews, and spectators, wouldn't exceed the "non-commercial small group" limit of 75 people.

On the eve of the race, however, 44 runners were still registered to run and pacers (companion runners) were still allowed.

Members of Swan View Coalition and a concerned wildlife biologist monitored aid stations along the route. Ninety-four people involved with the race were documented along Forest Service trails and trailheads, not counting an unknown number of "pacers" running alongside entrants between the aid stations. Runners were seen running with iPod buds in their ears and,

later in the race, without the bear pepper spray they'd been provided.

In September, a runner near Bigfork collided with a black bear while running alone, at dusk, with her iPod buds in her ears. The bear huffed and stomped its feet on either side of her as she lay still, letting her know who was boss and fortunately not mauling her. Elsewhere, numerous runners have been killed while running in bear habitat.

Swan View filed Freedom of Information Act requests for all records of public and agency comment on the race. Records

show the event should be reviewed by Fish and Wildlife Service, as previously promised by the District Ranger, and that wildlife biologists have grave concerns.

We are providing

our findings to the FS and FWS to help insure procedures are not again circumvented if another race is considered. The following pages include quotes from the public record, demonstrate how proper process should lead to denial of backcountry runs, and note violations of permitting requirements have resulted in numerous deaths on the Flathead. We are not against running for exercise, but we oppose ill-placed, competitive extreme events that needlessly risk the lives of humans and wildlife.



Runners head for trails in grizzly bear habitat. Pam Willison Photo

What Others Say About the Swan Crest 100 Foot Race

"Travel in groups of three or more people whenever possible and plan to be out in the daylight hours."

<http://fwp.mt.gov/recreation/safety/wildlife/bears/bearCountry.html>

"While taking a jog or a run may be good exercise, joggers and runners run the risk of surprising a bear on the trail. Trail running is discouraged as there have been an increasing number of injuries and fatalities due to runners surprising bears at close range."

<http://www.nps.gov/glac/planyourvisit/bears.htm>



Broken Leg Mtn. - Essential griz habitat, proposed wilderness, nighttime Run? *Keith Hammer Photo*

"Backcountry running events in grizzly habitat send all the wrong messages to the public about how we say people should behave in grizzly habitat. Such activity: 1) increases the potential for human injury and or death due to sudden encounters; 2) increases the likelihood of management action on grizzlies resulting from encounters under #1; and 3) increases the displacement and disturbance in core grizzly habitat thereby decreasing secure habitat in subunits and reducing available habitats. I see no benefits for grizzly bears from such activity. Agency sanctions of such activity through permits or consultations run counter to all of our messages to the public about the importance of core habits and the need to behave in a careful manner in grizzly habitat in order to avoid surprise encounters."

Dr. Chris Servheen, Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator

"Although grizzly bears have learned to avoid existing trails during the daytime period, they are unlikely to associate human use of trails in remote areas at night with moderate to high human levels of activity. Virtually all wildlife agencies recommend that recreationists avoid hiking after dark, or at dawn or dusk, when bears are most active. . . The Swan Crest 100 would require individual runners to cover a 100 mile course in 36 hours, which would mean running at night in grizzly bear country and possibly running alone."

Jane Ingebretson, Flathead National Forest Wildlife Biologist

More Comments on the Swan Crest 100 Foot Race

"Right off I'd like to state that I do not support the Swan Crest 100. . . So what is the purpose of the run? Is it enhancing the ecology of the area? Will it benefit grizzly bears in any way? . . . Wouldn't this open the door for others that might want to have an event for mountain bikers or motorcycles on Swan Crest trails where those uses are allowed? . . . How will the SC100 have a net ecological benefit?"

Henry Rivera, Flathead National Forest Wildlife Biologist, Retired

"Permitting this commercial back country trail race would be contrary to Flathead National Forest recommendations against trail running by forest employees and the public. Why would you permit and thus condone a risky activity while discouraging it for your own employees and the general public? Every wildlife management biologist I've spoken with concerning this issue agrees this race is a bad idea."

Steve Gniadek, Glacier National Park Wildlife Biologist, Retired

"Then we hit the trail. . . Shoulder high brush blocked our view of the trail itself . . . A couple hundred yards in we saw our first pile of bear scat."

Jim Skaggs, SC100 runner
recounting the race in his blog at
<http://ultrajim.blogspot.com>



Bear scat and bear spray - not intended to replace good judgement. Keith Hammer Photo

"As a registered runner in the race you might be surprised to hear I don't support the race. Unfortunately, I didn't know that the race organizers had not yet obtained a permit for the race when I registered. In light of the recent comments and talking to wilderness and bear people I know, I do not believe the race is a good idea. I realized that if I was hiking on the crest and came across sixty runners, I would not appreciate the company. I love that stretch of trail and think it should be kept as wild as possible."

Erik Leithe, runner who withdrew prior to the Swan Crest 100 Foot Race

Unauthorized Uses Can be Foolish, Harmful and Deadly

On New Years Eve of 1993, five snowmobilers died in a snow avalanche, including a 7-year-old Canadian boy riding on the back of his fathers snowmobile. They'd inquired locally and were directed to a shortcut trail illegally cleared through Krause Basin and up a deadly avalanche chute in the Swan Range.

Forest Service law enforcement had been alerted to the unauthorized trail a year prior, but did nothing about it. Swan View Coalition documented the initial and continued clearing of the trail after the deaths and filed a lawsuit. The District Ranger admitted in court the trail was cleared and maintained without the required Special Use Permit. The trail was legally closed and physically decommissioned under court order in 1999.

In 2004, Swan View Coalition secured a court order that removed a snowmobile bridge installed over the objections of Forest Service specialists, though under a faulty Special Use Permit. Specialists insisted the bridge must not be wide enough to allow ATVs and pickups to cross Lost Johnny Creek and access the grizzly bear core security area on the other side. The 8' wide bridge was removed in 2004, was not replaced, and watershed rehabilitation of now-closed ATV trails in the core security area was completed in 2009.

From 2002 to 2004, Swan View Coalition issued reports and complaints of unauthorized bridges and brush clearing that were allowing snowmobiles to access the upper reaches of Lost Johnny, Doris, and Silver Run creeks under low snow conditions and during critical spring seasons for wildlife. Old bridges and culverts were removed, in

addition to the new steel bridge removed in Lost Johnny in 2004, and decommissioning of old roads in Silver Run and upper Doris basins was completed in 2010.

In 1988, Swan View Coalition secured a recreation plan that prohibits motorcycle races in the wildlife-rich Krause Basin area. Such races had been run for years without review by the public or wildlife biologists. Swan View mapped the many miles of unauthorized trails being maintained and promoted by the races, forced the race into the Special Use Permitting process, and monitored the effects of what would be the last

motorcycle race once full environmental review came to bear.

The take-home message of these case-studies is that even entrenched uses

that damage public lands can be removed with persistent monitoring and pressure. Once unauthorized trails and uses become subject to the public and environmental review processes, they can no longer escape review by wildlife biologists and others in both the agency and private sectors - provided there is continued oversight!

Not unlike the motorcycle races in the 1980's, the Swan Crest 100 Foot Race was run without a Special Use Permit and failed to comply with the rules. The environmental review conducted thus far clearly points to the need to prepare an environmental assessment and consult with Fish and Wildlife Service - and the agencies now have the benefit of monitoring data collected during the 2010 race. We'll be pressing to have the race disallowed before someone gets hurt during such an event or through the foolish promotion of nighttime running in bear and mountain lion habitat.

Avalanche victims followed illegal trail

1-13-94 HUNGRY HORSE NEWS

By TAD BROOKS
Managing Editor

Five snowmobilers killed in the

built the trail.

Bulls and four Canadians, including a 7-year-old boy, were killed in an

Fund-Raiser Party at El Topo Cantina! ***Sunday, November 7, 5-8pm***



Music by John Dunnigan!

Silent Auction (closes at 6:30)!

Food, drink, friends, and fun!

Raffle of 2 Patagonia fleece jackets!

\$5 door donation also first raffle ticket!

El Top Cantina, Highway 35 Bigfork, is graciously hosting another fund-raising party for Swan View Coalition. Bring your checkbook (no credit cards please) to bid on silent auction items that include two 4' fire bowls by Chris Gotschalk in "Griz" and "Swan View" themes (below), as well as a wide array of other art, photography, therapeutic massage, gift certificates, and merchandise.

A suggested \$5 donation at the door will help defray costs of food and also get your first raffle ticket toward a fine Patagonia fleece jacket! The bar will be open for beverages!

Join us for an evening of great music, companionship, food, and drink with a purpose!



How to Make a Donation and See it Doubled!

Swan View Coalition relies in large part on member donations to fund its work protecting habitat for fish, wildlife and people. Your donation by November 30 will be graciously doubled through a matching grant from Cinnabar Foundation!

1. Send a check to Swan View Coalition at 3165 Foothill Road, Kalispell, MT 59901.

2. Use your credit card securely on-line at www.swanview.org or www.swanrange.org, by clicking on the Donate Now button!



General Membership Meeting Nov 21

Swan View Coalition's general membership meeting and election of officers will be Sunday, November 21, at 4pm, just prior to the biweekly Swan Range Community Music Jam Session and Potluck, which begins with the potluck dinner at 5pm.

The meeting, jam session and potluck will be held at the home of Keith Hammer and Pam Willison, 3165 Foothill Road - 3 miles north of Jewel Basin Road. Current officers are Keith Hammer - Chair, Julie Bates - Secretary, and Carol Buchan - Treasurer.



If there is pink on your mailing label, it means you haven't donated in nearly a year or more. Please make a donation so we can keep sending you our newsletter and continue our work!

- Here's \$25 to cover my minimum dues, newsletters, alerts, and Swan Ranger Reports.
- Here's \$50 to help restore a bit of peace and quiet to America's public lands.
- Here's \$100 to help keep forest roads from ending up in America's bull trout streams.
- Here's \$_____ to help secure grizzly, lynx and wolverine habitat for future generations.
- Here's \$_____ for _____ Gift Memberships at a minimum of \$25 each. I've included each recipient's name, mailing address, email address, and my greeting on separate paper.
- As a gift of appreciation for my donation, please send me the Swan/Flathead history booklet "The Lineage of Chief Aeneas: A History of People and Place" and/or a Swan Ranger embroidered patch (circle "hang-loop" or "sew-on").
- Save paper! Email my newsletters to _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

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Keeping Nature and Human Nature on the Same Path

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