

Swan View's News

Holidays 2012



Swan View Coalition
3165 Foothill Road
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"Nature and human nature on the same path."

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Hope for the Holidays: Accomplishments and the Path Ahead!

The Holidays are a good time to look back at our accomplishments and include them among the many gifts that we are thankful for. An honest appraisal acknowledges all the hard work invested to shift public attitudes and government management of our public lands. It also includes a great big **THANK YOU** to all of you that support our work through your financial contributions and your letters written to public officials!

An honest appraisal must also acknowledge the considerable inertia and opposition to change that make our work never-ending. This newsletter will highlight in broad terms the opportunities that lay ahead of us and the substantial obstacles in our path.

A group of neighbors got together 28 years ago to protect the visual and ecological integrity of the Swan Range. We've been hard at it as Swan View Coalition ever since and we've also been involved in the national, regional and local initiatives discussed in this newsletter.

In short, considerable scientific research has shown that our National Forest ecosystems suffer from too many roads and too much logging (page 2). Forest Service initiatives to reduce its road system, however, are instead being stood on their ear (page 3)! And, initiatives to conserve old-growth forests most often morph into log-

ging projects that at best leave the biggest trees while removing the smaller trees and brush equally essential to old-growth ecosystems (page 4)!

Your continued support will help us put these initiatives back on track and help us influence revision of the Flathead Forest

Plan in 2013 (page 5). Thank you for meeting the Cinnabar Match with your donations and know we still need to raise another \$14,000 in 2012 (pages 6-7)!

Happy Holidays and Happy Trails!

Keith



Swan Range and Swan River. *Keith Hammer Photo*

The Big Picture: Progress and Obstacles!

The 1986 Flathead Forest Plan would have built 75 miles of road per year until its already abundant 4,000 miles of roads was increased to 6,000. Our lawsuits, however, brought the road construction program down to essentially zero and replaced it instead with a mandatory road removal program that has thus far removed over 700 miles of road. Our lawsuits also reduced the maximum logging level on the Flathead from 100 million board feet per year to 54 in order to protect old-growth forests, fish and wildlife!

We were successful because the findings of research were, and remain, on our side. The Forest Service has attempted at times to change its course nationally. In the late 1990s, then Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck recognized the unique and irreplaceable value of old-growth forests and the incredible environmental and economic damage inflicted by logging roads.

Subsequent agency efforts to protect old-growth forest ecosystems, however, have largely morphed into - at best - efforts to protect the biggest trees while still logging the underlying trees and brush that are also key to the ecosystem. And agency efforts to reduce its road system have instead morphed into a renewed road building program to access "unhealthy" forests supposedly in need of a logging cure. This in spite of agency findings that the most re-

silient forest ecosystems are those that remain un-roaded and un-managed!

Key in its bid to remain a logging operation, the Forest Service uses words like "biomass" and "fuels" to depersonalize and vilify native forests. Trees and brush absolutely essential to providing forage for snowshoe hares, for example, are cast as little more than tinder that should be chipped and run through a biomass plant. Never mind that threatened lynx absolutely depend on snowshoe hare as food!

And never mind that trees and brush sequester carbon while providing food and shelter for wildlife. The Forest Service would have us believe instead logging removes carbon from the atmosphere because it removes the plants and trees storing that carbon! One web

site even claims that the more we drive our SUVs the more carbon we remove from the air if we use fuels derived from plants and trees (even though those fuels release their carbon back to the air - see page 4)!

It is with such fuzzy math and misrepresentations that the Flathead National Forest will begin revising its Forest Plan next year (see page 5). We'll be there to clarify that forest biomass is more correctly called wildlife habitat - and that neither fish, wildlife nor the American taxpayer can afford to build and maintain the roads required to haul it all off to market!



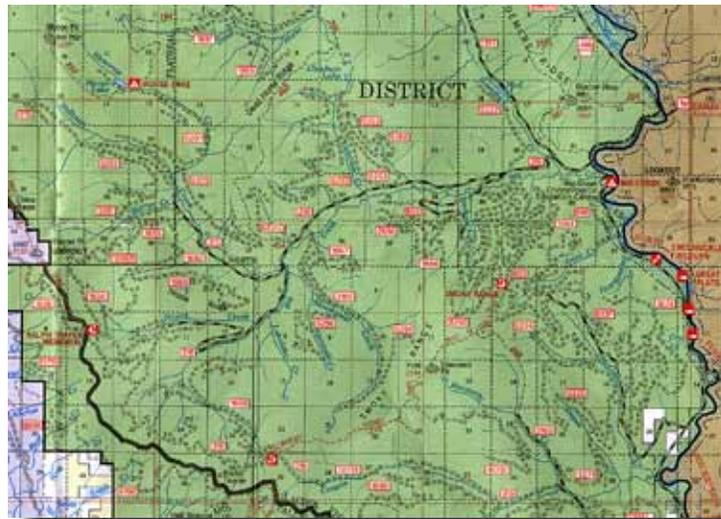
Forest Service and Plum Creek roads and clearcuts in the Swan Range.
Russ Klein Photo

Road Reduction Gets Jammed in Reverse!

In November 2010, Deputy Forest Service Chief Joel Holtrop directed all National Forests to identify the "minimum road system" needed to manage the Forests and to identify the roads in need of removal. He expressly wrote "this process points to a smaller road system than our current one."

The need to reduce the road system was firmly grounded in the findings of former Chief Mike Domeck and Holtrop's experience as a former Flathead National Forest Supervisor. Domeck in 1998 found "The Forest Service estimates a \$10 billion backlog in needed road reconstruction and maintenance. Only about 40% of forest roads are maintained to the safety and environmental standards to which they were designed." He concluded "Roads that are no longer needed or that cause significant environmental damage will be removed."

The Flathead National Forest concluded it needs \$6.2 million each year to maintain its road system, but receives less than \$1 million. Like many National Forests, it acknowledges it's cheaper to decommission a road than to maintain it long term. Indeed, the Flathead restored its Big Creek watershed (pictured above) by decommissioning 60 miles of roads there - helping Big Creek become the first watershed ever removed from the "impaired" list in Montana! (See our Winter-Spring 2012 newsletter).



Flathead National Forest roads in the Big Creek watershed.

In spite of such successes and the obvious environmental and financial need to removed roads, new Deputy Chief Leslie Weldon this year re-issued Holtrop's directive but removed the words "this process points to a smaller road system!" Only an agency in denial of its own research and inconsiderate of the American taxpayer could contemplate building even more roads to arrive at its "minimum road system."

Indeed, the first two big timber sales on the Flathead issued since Weldon's renege

propose more permanent road construction, and one reneges on prior road decommissioning! Yet the Flathead provides no economic analysis indicating what is a reasonable and affordable "minimum road system."

We'll continue to comment on all Flathead

projects and appeal them when they don't take the steps necessary to arrive at an affordable minimum road system. And we're currently litigating two large timber sales near Spotted Bear, one of which would relax road management and wildlife security.

Meanwhile, you can review our summary of research showing that watersheds generally suffer from too many roads, not too many trees. Just visit our web site at www.swanview.org, click on Reports and Documents, then scroll down to "Watersheds Suffer From Too Many Roads, Not Too Many Trees!"

Is it Wildlife Habitat or Simply Forest Biomass?

The Forest Service, timber and energy industries would have us all believe this:

1. Biomass facilities will convert waste logging slash that is going to get burned anyway into electricity, heat and bio-fuels.

2. Living and dead forest biomass is just going to go up in smoke in a forest fire anyway, so we just as well generate electricity and bio-fuels during the process.

What they aren't so forthcoming with is the fact that many biomass facilities cannot use the limbs and low quality chips that can be derived from logging slash. Facilities like the one proposed for the University of Montana campus in Missoula, for example, instead require high quality chips often derived from chipping and drying whole trees.

Facilities that don't actually consume logging slash hence do not replace slash-burning emissions of carbon with their own; they produce carbon emissions in addition to the slash burning. Similarly, because nobody can predict where wildfires will burn, facilities that use chips from whole trees emit carbon in addition to that emitted during forest fires. (Not to mention that forest fires generally burn only the limbs of trees and leave the carbon sequestered in the unburned trunk).

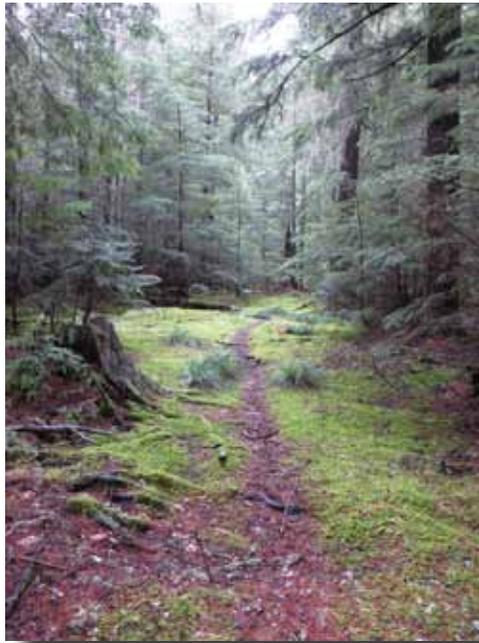
Given that burning wood produces 50% more carbon than burning coal for the same amount of heat, these cumulative carbon emissions are critical in weighing whether

burning trees instead of coal will reduce carbon emissions. And, given the American Lung Association opposes the burning of forest and agricultural biomass to generate electricity, we should indeed be concerned with wood burning's other pollutants, which include emissions of nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and sulfur dioxide.

As the Forest Service finds it harder to justify sawing the public's last big trees into boards, it is turning to the logging and chipping of smaller trees to feed biomass facilities - under the guise of reducing carbon emissions that contribute to global warming. This to also justify keeping its costly road system.

Portable biomass pyrolysis plants have been recommended by the Forest Service because they sequester some of the carbon as biochar. However, 75% of that biochar is burned to dry the chips that feed the process, immediately releasing the carbon into the atmosphere!

Promoters of another process even claim the more we drive our SUVs using their bio-fuels derived from biomass, the more carbon we remove from the air. The math to arrive at this outrageous claim apparently firstly takes credit for not burning fossil fuel in your SUV. This is akin to telling one car salesman you'll buy his \$20,000 car if he first pays you \$20,000 to not buy a similar car from the dealer down the street! (continued on next page)



Western hemlock. *Keith Hammer Photo*

Some local folks, however, have developed a process by which true wood waste is converted into soil supplements and bio-fuels without releasing any carbon to the atmosphere during production. The carbon produced during pyrolysis is either bound up in biochar, bio-fuels or bubbled as CO₂ into algae ponds. The carbon-fed algae is then digested to produce methane and nitrogen-rich supplements that are combined with the biochar to form balanced soil supplements. As the methane is burned to fire the pyrolysis process, the resulting CO₂ is again returned to the algae ponds. Carbon is not released into the air until a consumer burns the biofuel product in an engine that does not capture the exhaust carbon.

The key to all this is to firstly recognize that "forest biomass" is both wildlife habitat and watershed filter. Woody debris left or fallen to the ground provides critical habitat for mice, voles and other small critters near the bottom of the food chain. Similarly, small trees, limbs and brush provide critical food for snowshoe hare, which in turn are food critical to threatened lynx.

Old growth forests are a delicate mix of old and young trees and soil health depends on trees left to rot on the forest floor. It will require constant vigilance to insure utilization of trees to produce electricity and bio-fuels truly helps reduce carbon emissions and is of small enough scale to leave forest ecosystems and their carbon intact.

Flathead Forest Plan Revision to Begin in 2013

The long overdue revision of the 1986 Flathead Forest Plan is due to begin in 2013. The original Plan has been amended 27 times, largely in response to the Forest Service Chief's late 1980s rulings on our Plan appeals and lawsuits, but also to adopt later regional direction for management of fish, lynx and off-road vehicles (ORVs).

Plan revision was initiated in 2004 but was suspended in 2006 while new nationwide planning rules were written. As mentioned at the outset of this newsletter, our lawsuits secured Plan amendments that lowered the timber sale level by half and set forth motorized vehicle use limits for grizzly bear habitat security.

The new planning process will include a collaborative process. This can be harmful if the process becomes a matter of adopting the least common denominator to satisfy retired Flathead National Forest employees that took over Montanans for Multiple Use in an attempt to return to the good old days of logging, road building and ORVs at large. We'll be involved in the revision

to insure the new Plan gives a fair shake to the new economy that has emerged from road removal, watershed restoration, and non-motorized recreation - but we've got our work cut out for us!



A family owned watershed restoration business.

Hassle-Free Ways to Support our Work!

The easiest way to support our work is to join those who **set up a recurring donation via the Donate Now button on our web site**. Network for Good's secure credit card processing form will appear nested in our web page, as shown below.

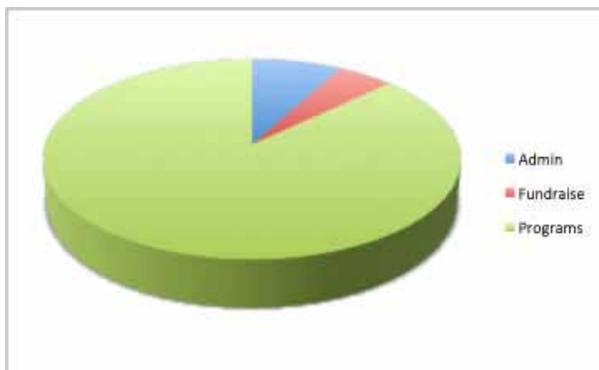
You can then **choose the size of donation you wish to make and whether you want to make it monthly, quarterly or annually**. And you can change your mind anytime!

A recurring donation frees you from having to remember your last donation, take note of our reminders, or go on-line each time. But you can use the Donate Now button to make a one-time donation if you prefer. Look for it at www.swanview.org!

Of course, you can instead send a check to us at 3165 Foothill Road, Kalispell, MT 59901 - using the form on the next page to select your free gift of appreciation!

Where the Money Goes and What People Say!

About half of our financial support comes from people like you and half comes from foundation grants. Eight percent of it is spent on administration, bookkeeping and reporting to government agencies, while 5% is spent on fund-raising. The remaining 87% is spent keeping America's remaining roadless areas roadless, keeping America's remaining old growth forests standing, and promoting ecosystem restoration through limits on off-road vehicles and the reclamation of excessive roads.



"Thanks for the excellent alert with all the background info and photos. I wish every group was providing this kind of information." George A.

"Your leadership in protecting our watersheds is very appreciated." Shirley H.

"We appreciate your role in the nonprofit community, and your professionalism in protecting the environment in the Flathead Valley." Chany O.

"Thanks for doing the trail work!" Bill B.

"You've reinvented bang for the buck!" Jon H.

"Donating a small amount each month makes it affordable." Cindie J.

Help Us Raise \$14,000 to Meet our Year-End Budget!

Swan View Coalition relies in large part on member donations to fund its work protecting habitat for fish, wildlife and people. You can also help us broaden our membership base by giving Gift Memberships at \$25 each, either on-line or using the donation form below!

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

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



Network for Good handles your transaction securely for us and informs us immediately via email of your donation by credit card. If you have other info you want to get to us, such as the names, addresses and greetings you choose for your Gift Memberships, simply email them to keith@swanview.org or mail them to the address in #1, above.

We hope you'll join the folks who support our work through their generous donations: Inger, Karen, Tad, Greg, Elaine, Roger, Linda, Riley, Pat, Tom, Donna, Lily, Misty, Nora, Val, Dean, Pat, Lloyd, Scott, Jill, Chris, Fawn, George, Tim, Sukey, Keith, Mark, David, Bill, Jill, Bob, Carol, John, Claudia, Jackie, Jim, Ross, Cindie, Kraig, Hank, Dan, Jon, Wayne, Joel, Barbara, Pam, Mary, Julie, Don, Frances, Joe, Sally, Mike, Larry, Carolyn, Mary Beth, Dominic, Lise, Dick, Debbie, Steve, Marilyn, June, Warren, Peter, Andy, Thomas,



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 \$500 to help secure grizzly, lynx and wolverine habitat for future generations.
- Here's \$_____ to help save the world, one mountain range and one river at a time!
- 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 patch (circle "hang-loop" or "sew-on").
- Save paper! Email my newsletters to _____

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