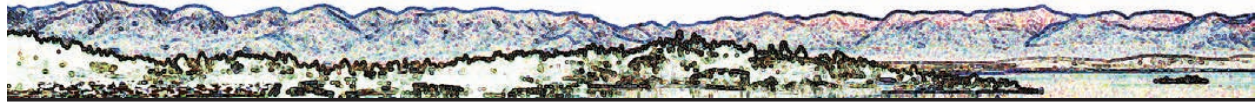


Swan View's News

Holidays 2023



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

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Things to Celebrate in 2023!

We have a few things to celebrate as 2023 draws to a close. After a 20-year struggle with the government, rare wolverine in the contiguous 48 states were finally granted protection as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act on November 30! A draft Recovery Plan for "threatened" lynx, which also depend on deep winter snow is also now out for public review. (Page 2)

After decades of controversy and an attempt by mountain bikers to increase the number of recreation trails in Krause Basin, we've won at least a temporary reprieve that will keep the trails capped at 1988 levels and not marked on the ground! We also see hopeful signs that DNRC might not log the largest hemlock trees in Krause Basin (Page 3)

After a year-long battle, the giant recreation corporation POWDR has withdrawn its interest in turning the Holland Lake Lodge, which is located on public land, into a large destination resort! Plus, a note on our November members meeting. (Page 4)

Then, of course, there is the reality check of Congress and the Biden administration

devoting \$50 billion over ten years to thin public forests under the guise of protecting homes and communities from wildfire. This even though it is the condition of those homes and what they are made of that determines their fate. We'll take a look at a couple such huge projects on the Flathead National Forest. (Page 5)



Wolverine photo by Steve Kroshel/USFWS

Our work is never done and that is why our members are so important to us. It is only through your continued support of our work that we are able to keep up the fight!

Between now and the end of the year, your donations up to \$15,000 will be matched by a generous donor! So please

take advantage of this opportunity to double your donation in support of our work!

A big THANK YOU to those of you who have donated this year and to those of you who will this December, perhaps again!

Happy Solstice and Happy Holidays!

Keith

Wolverine Get ESA Status, Lynx Get ESA Recovery Plan!

On November 30th, wolverine were finally [granted "threatened" status](#) under the Endangered Species Act after more than 20 years of advocacy and litigation by conservation groups that included Swan View Coalition. While the conditions of the listing are not perfect, it provides some immediate legal protections and sets in motion



Wolverine tracks in Swan Range

the process of designating habitat critical to wolverine survival and the writing of a recovery plan to move them away from extinction.

Almost simultaneously, a [draft recovery plan for lynx](#), which were listed as "threatened" in 2000 was released for a 60-day public review. That listing and the issuance of the recovery plan was similarly a result of many years of advocacy and litigation by a coalition of conservation groups. One of the main things these two species have in common is their reliance on deep winter snow pack, which is already declining and forecast to continue declining due to climate change.

Another thing that threatens both species is the likelihood of being killed if caught in traps set for species like wolves and other furbearers. Wolverines are not wary of traps set with tasty bait and lynx are easily drawn in by their catlike curiosity.

Unfortunately, the wolverine listing would allow for the mistaken killing of wol-

verine in otherwise legal traps set for other species, rather than prohibiting trapping in its habitat. Similarly, the listing provides an exemption for "taking" due to logging intended to reduce the threat of wildfires - which is precisely the smoke screen that the Forest Service uses for the majority of its logging and road building programs.

Also in November, a wolverine was found dead on a closed Forest Service road on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.



Lynx photo by Zdenek Machacek on Upsplash

Swan View Coalition found a wolverine dead on a Flathead National Forest logging road in 2021. (Click [here](#), see pages 8-9).

Fortunately, the public now has the opportunity to comment on the [wolverine "taking" exemptions](#) and the [lynx recovery plan](#) - which we intend to do, along with our attorneys at Western Environmental Law Center. We offer up our sincerest gratitude for WELC's tireless efforts on behalf of both of these species. You can read our joint wolverine listing press release [here](#).

Earthjustice deserves a shout out also for their work on behalf of other plaintiffs to protect these two species.

Promising News for Krause Basin?

On September 14, Swan Lake District Ranger Chris Dowling [issued a letter](#) outlining his immediate course of action as a result of what he learned from the Krause Basin Collaborative, of which we and many of our members were a part. It shows we've won at least a temporary reprieve that will keep maintained trails capped at 1988 levels and not marked on the ground!

This is progress in that the Flathead NF wanted to do away with the 1988 limits for the wildlife-rich area and instead increase the number of trails and use them to promote the area as a "Focused Recreation Area." Ranger Dowling said he also wants to take actions to "discourage use of user created trails [by] blocking access . . . utilizing boulders, vegetation, or other means that are effective." This will be good for re-securing wildlife habitat and send the message to mountain bikers and others that illegally built trails will not be tolerated.

We responded to Ranger Dowling, noting we "already have a Volunteer Agreement with SLRD to help maintain trails and of course offer to continue doing so in this Krause Basin initiative. In 2021 we agreed to partner with SLRD to 'rehabilitate and naturalize' unauthorized trails in Krause Basin. We of course stand behind that commitment. [Just] let us know of any particular work that needs to be done."

We also cautioned, however, that "While substantial progress was made during the Collaborative in producing a more accurate map of the 'system' and 'user-created' trails, it is vitally important that the

version of that map that you display at the Strawberry Lake and Krause Basin Interpretive trailheads shows only the 'system' trails. To display the 'user-created' trails would most certainly invite public use of those trails rather than 'discourage use of user created trails' as you intend."

Like all things, this will require close monitoring to ensure success in getting recreation use back under control in Krause Basin. We'll be doing that and we invite your help if you'd like to volunteer!



Bear tracks in the Swan Range

We still don't have an Environmental Assessment from MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation for its planned logging and thinning of DNRC lands in Krause Basin. Based on the unit flagging being done there, however, it looks like DNRC may no longer be planning on logging or thinning some of the last best stands of mature hemlock forest in the Basin!

It also appears, however, that DNRC is still intent on substantial acreage of thinning in the second-growth forests in the Basin. Even if done carefully, the results of this thinning will be quite a shock to visitors to Krause Basin, especially migratory songbirds and others critters that use the dense woods to hide from predators - as well as to people that recreate there.

It is too early to sing praises for DNRC avoiding the older hemlock forests until we know for sure that is the case. But the many of you that wrote emails and letters urging DNRC to do so should feel hopeful, based on the flagging thus far. We'll let you know when we know for sure!

POWDR Pulls out of Holland Lake Lodge Expansion!

The recreation giant POWDR has withdrawn its interest in buying into and expanding Holland Lake Lodge into a modern destination resort. Christian Wohlfeil, current owner of the rustic Lodge but not the land it stands on, says he still wishes to sell it and numerous outbuildings also in need of repair.

Because the Lodge sits on public National Forest land, its future and the Special Use Permit that allows it to be there are of keen public interest. Of the 6,500 public comments the Flathead NF received on its proposal to allow POWDR to expand the Lodge, 99% were opposed to it. It is good to see this giant corporation get the message that it is not welcome in the Swan Valley!

The months-long persistence of concerned citizens however, discovered through documents secured using the Freedom of Information Act that the sewage lagoon shared by the Lodge and a nearby Forest Service campground has been leaking raw sewage into Holland Lake for years! And band-aid, failed measures to repair the leak were not reported to the public, Missoula County, or the MT Department of Environmental Quality!

In light of these problems, Swan View Coalition and several other groups have [asked the Regional Forester and Flathead Forest Supervisor](#) to first consult with the public to brainstorm a sustainable solution. The groups also note that Holland Lake is critical habitat for threatened bull trout and cannot, for that reason among many others, be harmed.

Should there even be an antiquated sewage lagoon near Holland Lake? Are composting toilets, vault toilets and the hauling away of sewage (as occurs at other FS campgrounds) viable alternatives? Might it not be best to bring the Lodge into public ownership and manage it as a truly historic lodge of historic value?

What is clear thus far is that the Flathead NF has failed to monitor and enforce the current SUP for Holland Lake Lodge, letting it fall into disrepair along with the sewage lagoon. And keeping the public in the dark on these matters for years - and many more months once the public got wind of the problems - has sown a lot of distrust of the agency.

The former Forest Supervisor has been relocated. Time to turn over a new leaf!



Pam Willison photo

Annual Membership Meeting Report

Swan View Coalition held its annual meeting November 12 in conjunction with our every-other-week Swan Range community pot luck and music jam session.

Working Committee officers were re-elected to their same positions for another year: Keith Hammer - Chair, Julie Bates - Secretary, and Carol Buchan - Treasurer.

Huge "Fuels Reduction Projects" Aim to Thin and Clear-Cut Swan Range and Swan Valley Public Forests

There are two huge Forest Service "Fuels Reduction Projects" being planned for the Swan Range and Swan Valley. These are in addition to the huge 70,000-acre [Mid-Swan Landscape Restoration Project](#), which also is aimed at returning public forests to fictitiously sparse conditions.

The [Rumbling Owl Project](#) would "treat" 6,477 acres, with nearly a thousand of that being essentially clear-cut. The FS is seeking an emergency exemption barring the public from filing formal objections to this project!

The [East Valley Project](#) is aimed at the Swan Mountains along the east side of the Flathead Valley. It remains vague on details at this point but announces it is part of an effort "treating up to

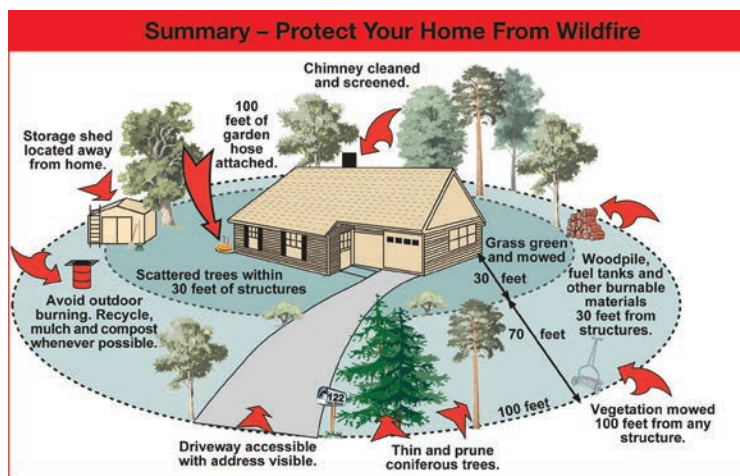
an additional 20 million acres on the National Forest System in the West, over and above current treatment levels."

Only a Forest Service in the pocket of the commercial timber industry could reason that the best way to address wildfires in the face of a warming climate is to reduce the amount of cool shade and carbon stored in the forest! On the contrary, [research has found](#) that "maintaining forest cover can help protect mammals from warming climates [as opposed to] removing tree canopies and drying the understory."

Paul Koberstein and Jessica Applegate provide a [detailed critique](#) of President Biden's 10-year, \$50 billion plan to reportedly save homes by attacking public forests rather than using that money to help people make their homes more fire resistant. FireSafe Montana's "[Living with Fire Homeowners' Guide](#)" shows that fires in thinned conifer forests spread ten times faster than fires in dense conifer forests and that fires in regenerating clear-cuts spread over forty times faster! This is because thinning or clear-cutting replaces

larger wood with younger, smaller "fuels" now exposed to harsher sun and higher winds to drive the fires.

The Guide also shows that the fate of your home comes down to how you manage

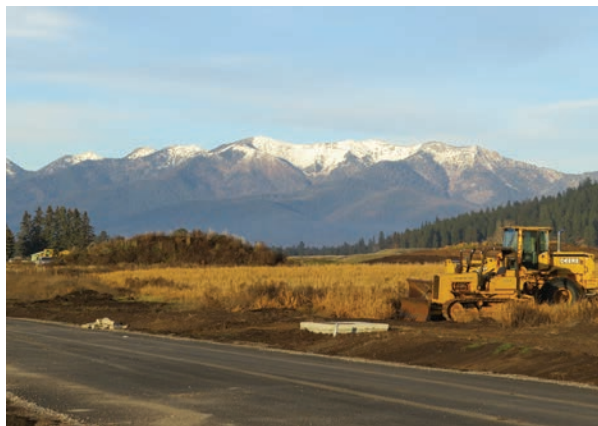


your house and the 100 - 200' "defensible space" around it. Logging outside that space primarily puts public trees into private sawmills for private profits.

In short, the Forest Service and timber industry are trying to scare people into supporting these "fuels reduction" logging schemes and falsely promising they will somehow save their homes. Meanwhile, politicians are hell-bent to show that they are doing something about wildfires, even if it is the wrong thing, while lining their pockets and those of the timber industry!

Unsolicited Praise for Our Work and Advocacy!

- "Thanks for all the years of resistance and perseverance. Here's a small gift in appreciation for all you do." S.K. "I see your name in the news for courageously protecting our valuable natural resources. Thank you for your diligent efforts." N.G.
- "A good outcome for all your hard work! Congrats!" A.M. "Thank you for standing up for our forests and wild lands!" R.W.
- "Great expose' on Forest Service malfeasance!" C.M. "Really good stuff. Nice work!" G.N.
- "Good work on the Tram Scam. Thanks for your vigilance." B.L. "Excellent, we will use this as an example." J.C.
- "Really good article about the Forest Service and the serious lack of transparency when it comes to opening up our forests to commercial enterprises without allowing for public comment." S.R. "Thank you so much for your attention and dedication to our tails!!" E.M.
- "Great work! Thanks for digging in and giving the discredited former Supervisor another good kick in the butt on the way out the door." L.C. "I so enjoy your newsletters. Thank you!" S.H.
- "Great photos and I always love your captions!" K.K.
- "So happy to support your work." C.S.



We cannot develop the front-country and the back-country if we are to conserve wildlife and human health.
Swan Range photo by Keith Hammer

Generous Donor Matching Your Donations up to \$15,000 Donate Today and Double Your Gift!

We rely in large part on member donations to fund our work protecting habitat for fish, wildlife and people. **You can help us broaden our membership by giving Gift Memberships at \$25 each**, either on-line or using the form below! **It's easy to join with and help others support our work:**

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 <https://swanviewcoalition.networkforgood.com> (or by clicking on the Donate Now button at right)!



Network for Good handles your transaction securely for us and informs us immediately via email of your donation by credit card. You can also choose to give monthly, quarterly or yearly there to make it easier or more affordable (or change your mind anytime)! If you have other info you want to get to us, such as Gift Membership info, simply email it to keith@swanview.org or mail it to the address in #1, above.



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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