

Swan View's News

Summer-Fall 2012



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

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Keeping to the Path: Navigating Collaboration, Bullying and Vandalism!

We remain steadfast and on the path of conserving quiet habitat for fish, wildlife and people - especially in the Swan Range. Though there are constant challenges and attempts to derail our efforts, members like you keep us moving forward through your letters and contributions!

We continue to work for Wilderness designation for the Swan Crest, so it will be available to our children as a source of quiet solitude. And we continue working to stop vandals from turning public trails into extreme sports theme parks.

In response, local promoters of ultra-marathons and breakneck mountain biking have publicly appealed to people and foundations to stop funding our work (see page 2). We're happy to report their efforts have backfired and instead increased our support.

Government agencies are also trying to marginalize us and our work, by insisting on logging key habitats of imperiled species like lynx and fisher (see page 3), trapping imperiled species like wolverine (see

page 4), and by shamelessly manipulating collaborative restoration efforts to instead increase logging and road-building (see page 5)! This forces us to file lawsuits instead of being able to resolve the problems through administrative channels.

The good news is that electronic and so-



Crater Lake in Jewel Basin.

Keith Hammer Photo

cial media are helping us tell our story directly to the public (see page 6) and we're seeing increased support of even controversial lawsuits. But none of this is possible without those of you that support us by writing letters to public officials and sending us a check now and then!

Simply put: **thank you, we couldn't do it without you!** We hope you can join us for our **annual membership meeting on November 11** at the Mountain Brook Community Library (see page 6)!

Happy Trails!

Keith

Bullies and Vandals!

Unruly breakneck mountain bikers apparently think public trails are better off with bike ramps and jumps. Well, someone may think the Mona Lisa looks better with a mustache, but adding the mustache is vandalism just the same.



Beardance Trail

Keith Hammer Photo

While we've gotten some unlawful bike ramps removed from the lower portion of the Beardance Trail on Crane Mountain, more ramps have been constructed further up. Some of those ramps (above) block the trail to horses and hikers - even to bikers that don't like ramps!

While we try to get the Forest Service to put a stop to this, breakneck biking advocates have extended their vandalism to include our Facebook page, where we've had to remove a number of inappropriate comments and ban some users. Ditto for some proponents of ultra-marathon foot races.

Trail run and bike organizers have also publicly called on people and foundations to stop funding our work, some after firstly noting the good work we do. We're not surprised to see such selfish bullying, nor are we surprised to see an increase in our support as a response to it. The selfish behavior of folks that refuse to place reasonable constraints on their behavior is apparently not lost on the public.

Folks in North Vancouver encourage us to not back down to the type of bullying that replaced hiking with breakneck biking there. We encourage you to not let the Forest Service reward vandals on the Flathead:

Please write a note to Ranger Rich Kehr, 200 Ranger Station Road, Bigfork, MT, 59911 or rkehr@fs.fed.us. Insist that he remove all bike ramps and jumps from the Beardance and Crane Creek Trails!

On a more positive note, ultra-marathon organizers this summer did not hold a Swan Crest 100-Mile Run. They instead held a 57k run that did not involve running overnight in grizzly bear habitat, required no aid stations or support crews, was less commercial, and involved fewer than a dozen folks. We've made a standing offer to meet with them and talk about wildlife and wilderness issues.



Jerry Sprunger Cartoon

Lawsuits Protect Wildlife Connectivity and Habitat!

If you were elk, bear or other wide-ranging wildlife and wanted to get from the Flathead Range to the northern Swan Range, you'd have to either swim the 23,000 acre Hungry Horse Reservoir or cross through the lowlands near Spotted Bear just south of the reservoir. Along with Friends of the Wild Swan, we've filed lawsuits against two big timber sales that would substantially harm wildlife connectivity and habitat in the crucial Spotted Bear area - and have already won a year's reprieve from the logging!

Concerned about our claims of harm to threatened lynx habitat, the government agreed to conduct no logging activities in 2012 in exchange for more time to prepare its defense. This essentially granted us a voluntary first-season temporary injunction!

Our attorneys at Western Environmental Law Center, however, are hard at work on these cases. If the court does not decide upon these cases by June 1, 2013, we'll have to ask for a court-ordered injunction to replace the voluntary one due to expire then. At stake are some 4,000 log truck loads of trees that currently provide habitat for elk, bear and a host of forest carnivores that include pine marten, fisher, lynx, and wolverine.

The Spotted Bear River and the Soldier Addition timber sales were each examined in a lesser Environmental Assessment, but

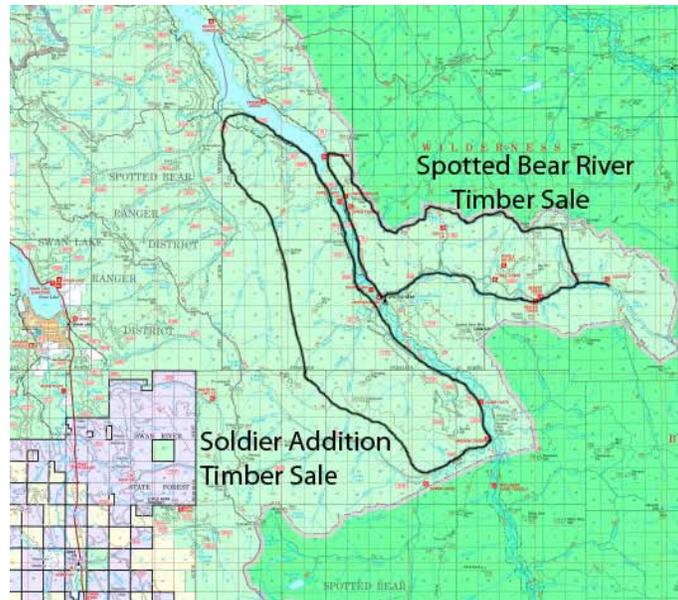
neither looked at the cumulative effects of the two big projects. Our lawsuit asks for a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement that includes an adequate assessment of the cumulative impacts of these side-by-side timber sales.

As shown in the map on this page, the two timber sale areas will impact a majority of the Spotted Bear area that provides habitat connectivity between the Great Bear Wilderness to the north, the Bob Marshall Wilderness to the south (both dark green), and the unprotected northern Swan Range to the west (light green). Respondents to an on-line Flathead Beacon reader poll supported our lawsuits by nearly a 2-1 margin!

Another issue in both lawsuits is the plan to log snowshoe hare habitat critical to

threatened lynx, which feed primarily upon hares. The EA's admit some areas slated for logging shelter snowshoe hares for fisher to feed upon, while denying those same areas provide hares for lynx - an obvious attempt to end-run Endangered Species Act protections that extend to threatened lynx but not to the unlisted fisher!

Also at issue in the Spotted Bear River Timber Sale is a plan to hereafter extend the open season on two gated roads that currently provide grizzly bears and calving elk security during the critical spring season.



Big timber sales threatening wildlife connectivity .

End Wolverine Trapping in Montana!

The Western Environmental Law Center, on behalf of Swan View Coalition, seven other local conservation groups and one individual, submitted a formal petition on July 31 to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission ("MFWP") to halt the trapping of wolverine in Montana - the only state in the contiguous U.S. that still allows the imperiled animal to be trapped.

Wolverines resemble a small bear that is custom built for high-elevation, mountain living. They have large, crampon-clawed feet designed for digging, climbing, and walking on snow.

Once prolific across the West, the wolverine population in the Lower 48 is now down to no more than 250-300 individuals. Montana has the highest concentration of wolverine in the Lower 48, but still only about 100-175 individuals.

So rare are these native carnivores that in December 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the wolverine a species that warrants protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. It determined that an already small and vulnerable population of wolverine in the lower 48 will continue to decline in the face of climate change, which is causing a reduction in suitable wolverine habitat in Montana (wolverine depend on late spring snow and cold temperatures) and increasing the speed by which isolated populations vanish.

Trapping is a major source of wolverine mortality in Montana. In one study, of the 14 wolverines tracked in the Pioneer Mountains during a three-year period, 6 were killed in traps, including 4 adult males and two pregnant females. As a result of trapping, the wolverine population in the Pioneers was reduced by an estimated 50%.

In another study of wolverine in the Swan Range, trapping killed five times more wolverine than natural causes in a population that can ill afford it, killing nearly two-thirds of the wolverines being studied in just five years.

"We're lucky to see wolverine on rare occasions here in the Swan Range of Northwest Montana, where they were first studied back in the 1970s," said Keith Hammer, Chair of petitioner Swan View Coalition. He asserted, "Trapping must stop if these rare and wonderful animals are to return from the brink of extinction."

The petitioners are asking MFWP to close the wolverine trapping season before the 2012 trapping season begins on December 1, 2012, and to not reopen it until wolverine populations have recovered enough to no longer need protection of the Endangered Species Act.

This article is condensed from WELC's press release. Please visit our web site at <http://www.swanview.org> for links to the full press release and petition.



Wolverine on snowfield.

Chad Harder 4-Frame Photo

Collaboration and Calamity in the Swan Valley!

The Southwest Crown of the Continent Forest Restoration Collaborative (SWCC) was chosen as one of ten projects in the nation under the 2009 Forest Landscape Restoration Act's Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). SWCC has since been promised a share of \$40 million over ten years to restore forest ecosystems in portions of the Blackfoot, Clearwater and Swan River watersheds.

All of this money must be spent implementing restoration work on Forest Service lands, but none of it can be spent planning that work. So, the Forest Service deems where it does its planning and hence where CFLRP funds can be spent.

The Flathead National Forest, unfortunately, continues to plan numerous large timber sales in the Swan and cast them as "restoration," while areas in need of road reclamation and other watershed restoration work go without planning funds. This even though the Flathead inherited some 450 miles of old Plum Creek roads through the Legacy Project in the Swan Valley, has identified four watersheds "functioning at risk" there (Jim, Cold, Glacier, and Beaver), and is required to identify which roads it will keep and which it will decommission by 2015.

The Forest Service, in spite of mounting evidence to the contrary, continues to identify "too many" trees as the primary

problem with ecosystem integrity - rather than "too many roads and noxious weeds." This so it can solve the problem with more logging rather than road decommissioning. Swan View Coalition and Friends of the Wild Swan have continually challenged this ill-conceived premise and summarized Forest Service research showing ecosystems with the fewest roads and "management" retain the most health and resiliency.

In the pending Glacier Loon Fuels Reduction and Forest Health Manage-

ment Project, even primary SWCC collaborator The Wilderness Society has objected to much of the logging. TWS says the project area "is not lacking in open forest conditions." TWS "encourage[s] significantly more road de-



Meadow Smith Unit #10, where thinning has destroyed key habitats for forest carnivores and their prey. *Keith Hammer Photo*

commissioning" and concludes it cannot support the use of CFLR funds for this project" as it stands.

While it is good to see others critical of the Forest Service, the deck remains stacked. The SW Crown Landscape Assessment mentions roads and weeds only 24 times, while "too many trees" lingo is used 762 times! We'll continue to push for CFLR funds to restore watersheds through road decommissioning. And we'll challenge the Forest Service when it abuses collaboration to instead provide political cover for its huge logging projects thinly disguised as "restoration."

Staying Active with Electronic and Social Media

We now have both of our web sites revamped, a Facebook page, and a YouTube channel to better and more quickly provide you with news and calls to action - and it's paying off! What used to require days and hundreds of dollars to write, print and mail out an action alert, now takes a few hours.

Our new email system also allows us to provide you with a brief summary accompanied by reliable links that lead you to more information with just a simple click. And, we have the ability to provide you with a short video on YouTube that automatically directs you to a "take action" page on our web site.

We don't want you to forget however, that socializing is best done face-to-face out in the Swan Range. So come join the Swan Rangers any Saturday morning for a partial-day outing after breakfast at the Echo Lake Cafe.



Which encounter do you prefer? Keith Hammer Photos

While these outings are mostly for fun, they also are educational and we sometimes come across abuses of public lands. On one summer hike to Lamoose Lake, for example, the Rangers watched motorcycles rip around illegally off-trail and took photos and video of it. We posted some of the video to YouTube, which also linked to our web page helping folks write their complaints to the Forest Service!

While we're glad to provide a hard copy of this newsletter to those who prefer it, we also encourage you all to provide us your email address so we can send you our weekly Swan Ranger reports and occasional action alerts! We hope you'll check us out on-line at:

<http://www.swanview.org>
<http://www.swanrange.org>
<http://www.facebook.com/SwanViewCoalition>
<http://www.youtube.com/user/swanviewcoalition>

Annual Membership Meeting and Elections November 11!

We hope you can join us for our annual membership meeting November 11, where we'll quickly recap recent events, elect officers, then socialize over a potluck dinner followed by a regularly schedule Swan Range Community Music Jam Session!

We'll meet at 4pm, potluck at 5, and the music will start around 6! We'll meet at the Mountain Brook Community Library, 2353 Foothill Road.

We hope you'll renew any lagging annual dues prior to the meeting (minimum \$25) and join the following folks whose recent contributions will be matched by Cinnabar Foundation (see page 7): Inger, Karen, Tad, Greg, Elaine, Roger, Linda, Riley, Pat, Tom, Donna, Bob, Lily, Misty, Nora, Val, Dean, Pat, Lloyd, Scott, Jill, Chris, Fawn, George, Tim, Sukey, Keith, Mark, David, Bill, Jill, Bob, Carol, and John.

Your Donations Will Again be Doubled By Cinnabar Foundation!

We've again been issued a \$4,000 Challenge Grant by Cinnabar Foundation, meaning \$4,000 in our members' individual donations will be matched by Cinnabar. So be among the first to donate and see your money doubled!

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 found there!

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.



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 patch (circle "hang-loop" or "sew-on").
- Save paper! Email my newsletters to _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

Swan View Coalition, Inc.
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