

**FRIENDS OF THE WILD SWAN ♦ SWAN VIEW COALITION
WESTERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER**

NEWS RELEASE

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**GROUPS CHALLENGE SECOND INDUSTRIAL LOGGING
PROJECT IN MONTANA'S SOUTH FORK FLATHEAD RIVER
TO PROTECT IMPERILED WILDLIFE**

Missoula, MT – Two local conservation groups, Friends of the Wild Swan and Swan View Coalition, represented by the Western Environmental Law Center, late yesterday filed a second [lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service](#) in order to protect the pristine South Fork of the Flathead River watershed from yet another proposal to aggressively log the area.

The South Fork is a congressionally protected wild and scenic river, and home to some of the most imperiled animals in the continental United States including lynx, wolverine, grizzly bear, gray wolves, fisher and bull trout. As this area is one of the last wild places in the lower 48 capable of providing for this array of wild native species, the area was designated as critical habitat for lynx and bull trout, and deemed essential to the survival and recovery of grizzly bears in the Northern Rockies. Wolverine and fisher, two rare forest carnivores, are also known to inhabit the area.

The Forest Service's Soldier Addition II Project is located on the west side of the South Fork Flathead River near the prized Bob Marshall Wilderness complex in the Northern Rocky Mountains. The project calls for industrial logging methods, including ground-based, skyline, and helicopters, to remove almost all of the mature, 75 to 130 year old forest stands on over 1,200 acres in the South Fork that have never been logged. An additional 823 acres would be thinned and 1,333 acres burned. The project also would re-opening 14.6 miles of roads previously closed to protect wildlife and water quality, and would require the construction of another 5.6 miles of temporary roads to access the trees. This logging project would jeopardize the area's wildlife, which are already teetering on the edge of survival.

The Forest Service is simultaneously proposing another aggressive logging project - called the Spotted Bear River Project - just across the South Fork from the Soldier Addition II Project, on the east side of the river. This project would log 1,853 acres of pristine wildlife habitat adjacent to the Great Bear and Bob Marshall Wilderness areas. In February, these same groups filed a lawsuit to stop the Spotted Bear logging project.

“Contrary to law and sound wildlife management practices, the agency has refused to consider the cumulative impacts on wildlife and water quality from the two massive logging projects even though they will be occurring simultaneously and are located next to one another in the same watershed and same grizzly bear management unit,” said Matthew Bishop, an attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center in Helena who is representing the groups.

“The cumulative effects to wildlife from the Soldier Addition II and Spotted Bear River Projects are enormous,” said Arlene Montgomery, Program Director of Friends of the Wild Swan. “Industrial logging and more roads do not belong in this remote place that is critical habitat for imperiled fish and wildlife.”

"With 23,000 acres of habitat flooded by Hungry Horse Reservoir, the Spotted Bear and Bunker Creek areas are critical habitat connectors between the Great Bear Wilderness, Bob Marshall Wilderness, and northern Swan Range," said Swan View Coalition Chair Keith Hammer. "Elk and other wildlife can't afford to have their critical habitat damaged by more roads and logging."

The proposed industrial logging projects will not only harm wildlife, but will likely take a toll on the local economy and the thousands of outdoor recreationists who visit the area. Hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, boating, rafting and other recreational pursuits are popular activities in the remote South Fork Flathead River area, which is also the gateway to the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wilderness areas. Industrial logging will disrupt recreation and cause unsafe conditions on the reservoir roads.