

# *Swan View Coalition* Nature and Human Nature on the Same Path



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September 15, 2016

Valerie Kurth and Samantha Tappenbeck  
c/o Flathead Conservation District  
133 Interstate Lane  
Kalispell, MT 59901

Re: Krause Creek Community and Landowner Meeting

Dear Valerie, Samantha and Conservation District Folks;

We greatly appreciate last night's meeting about Krause Creek, including the questions and answers. We wanted to follow up with a few of our concerns and hope that the downstream restoration work proposed for the Garner property proceeds at a good pace.

Our greatest concern is that, with or without the formation of a "watershed group," some folks may argue that logging of public lands in Krause Basin is needed to somehow prevent wildfire and protect the investments in downstream restoration work. I heard rumblings in this regard from the Forest Service months ago.

I didn't get the impression from last night's meeting or in conversations with Don Garner that this is the feeling on the part of affected downstream landowners, other than the one comment made last night by a fellow sitting up front whom I do not know. He essentially said he thought the public land agencies should do something to decrease water yield in Krause Basin and asked if formation of a "watershed group" could help put pressure on the agencies.

As I indicated last night, Swan View Coalition and a number of its members have been engaged in public land management issues in Krause Basin for several decades - sometimes as cooperators and volunteers and sometimes as critics. We are still dealing with the negative impacts of the old logging road system in Krause Basin, especially in terms of ATV use that continually destroys erosion-control berms and devices installed to keep water runoff and sediment out of the various forks of Krause Creek.

Not only would logging in Krause Basin increase water yield, any associated construction or reconstruction of roads for logging access would intercept subsurface water flow and spill it out as surface flow that would also transport road-related sediment. These are well researched and documented results of logging, all of which run counter to the goal of limiting water and sediment flows into Krause Creek.

Logging and road building would also set back by decades our long work to restore Krause Basin from abuses and to reduce the likelihood of human-caused wildfire. Krause Basin continues to be riddled with lawful and unlawful ATV use, beer parties with bon fires, and the shooting of guns and its associated litter. Last summer (2015) shooting continued throughout the drought and fire restrictions put in place, in spite of the fact the first two fires on the Flathead National Forest both started at gravel pits where shooting was suspected as contributing to the cause. Fire crews indeed had to put out a campfire that had escaped in Krause Basin - during the period where such fires were forbidden. In short, concerns over wildfire in Krause Basin should be focused on ignorant, boorish and often unlawful behavior - not on the mistaken notion that logging prevents wildfire or reduces forest water yield.

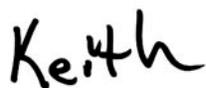
The continued lawful and unlawful ATV use in Krause Basin grinds down the erosion-control devices we have installed as volunteers and that the Forest Service had Montana Conservation Corps install on old Road 5389 some 6 or 7 years ago. We walked this road a couple of weeks ago and confirmed that every single Kelly hump and erosion control device has been rendered nonfunctional. The entire length of the segment of Road 5389 beginning just below where it crosses the North Fork of Krause Creek is rutted and channeling water and sediment all the way to where it crosses and is dumped into the South Fork of Krause Creek - a distance of one full mile!

The Flathead National Forest last year received 98 signatures on a petition asking that ATVs finally be banned from the old road and trail network in Krause Basin, which is now used largely by folks on foot, horse and mountain bike. Those signatures included the majority private landowners in the Krause Basin area. As a result, the Flathead is now considering in Alternative C of its Forest Plan DEIS to do just that - and we'll be working hard to see that ATV use is curtailed, which will help reduce beer parties, shooting, littering, and the chance of human-cause ignition of fire in Krause Basin.

We also hear that the Forest Service is making it difficult and/or unaffordable for water right holders listed in the report to continue diverting the 300+ gallons per minute from the North Fork of Krause Creek. Continued appropriate diversion of this water would help lessen impacts downstream where water quantity is a problem.

We understand the Krause Creek Restoration Report suggests a "watershed group" might help downstream private landowners coordinate restoration activities and this may also help in securing restoration funds. It is our hope that our objectives in the upper Krause Basin are viewed as supportive of downstream concerns and restoration efforts. If a "watershed group" is formed for Krause Creek, please keep us informed so that we may communicate with them.

Sincerely,



Keith J. Hammer  
Chair