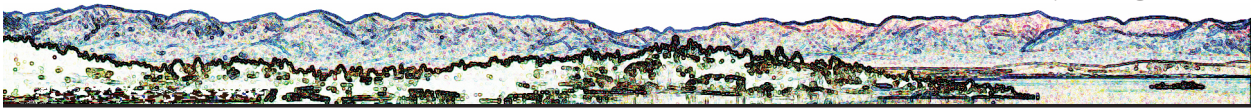
Swan View's News

Winter-Spring 2018



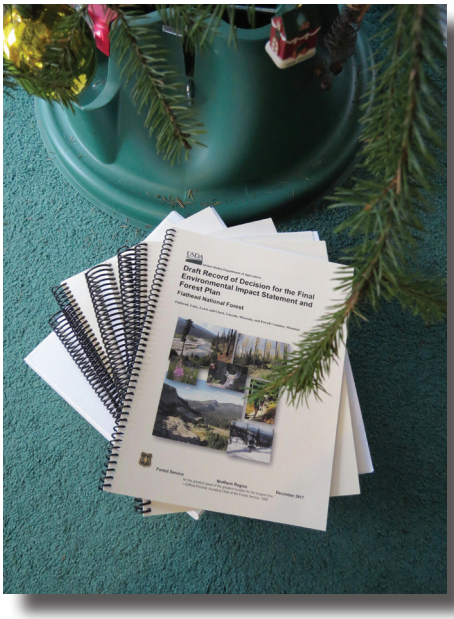
Swan View Coalition
3165 Foothill Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

"Nature and human nature on the same path."

www.swanview.org
www.swanrange.org
swanview@swanview.org

Forest Plan Objections Separate Wheat from Chaff!

The Flathead National Forest dumped 3,000 pages of documents on the public just before Christmas, initiating the 60-day period in which the public can file formal Objections to them. The documents include the revised Flathead Forest Plan and Amendments to the other four Forest Plans in the Northern Continental Divide Grizzly Bear Ecosystem. All are intended to pave the way for removing Endangered Species Act protections of threatened grizzly bear in the NCDE.



The Forest Service received 74 Objections, the majority and most comprehensive from conservation organizations and folks-seeking better protections for fish and wildlife (page 2). "Conservation" groups that collaborated in the Whitefish Range Partnership did not file any Objections over the removal of grizzly bear protections in the Forest Plans (page 4).

In response to our alerts, 22 of our members and others filed Objections opposing plans to designate Krause Basin a Focused Recreation Area with ATV trails marked on the ground. They want Krause Basin non-motorized, as promised in several prior FS decisions, and want the unique cedar-hemlock forests preserved in this wildlife management area (page 3).

The Flathead received nearly 34,000 comments on its draft Plan, with 98% of those wanting the revised Forest Plan to retain current grizzly bear and road decommissioning programs while recommending Wilderness designation for all remaining roadless lands. The revised Flathead Plan instead drops the grizzly bear/road programs and increases the area where logging can occur - as requested in the Whitefish Range Partnership Agreement (page 4). Such collaborative sell-outs are becoming a widespread problem (page 5).

THANK YOU to all of you who have written letters or Objections, sent us notes of kindness (page 6), or supported our work financially. If you haven't in the past year, please DONATE NOW to support our ongoing work (page 7)!

THANK YOU!

Keith

Numerous Strong Objections Filed To Protect Fish, Wildlife and People!

We worked with a coalition of strong conservation groups to insure credible Objections were filed against the revised Flathead Forest Plan and Amendments to the other four Forest Plans in the NCDE. These Plans pave the way for de-listing the grizzly bear in the NCDE. They give the appearance of maintaining grizzly bear habitat protections when they in fact remove or weaken those protections.

Because we monitor all activities on the Flathead NF, we know these relaxed protections are already increasing logging and road building. The Flathead declared the NCDE had enough bears in 2011 and started relaxing protections then! Why wait for a new Forest Plan?

Motorized mayhem isn't "sharing" ski trails! Keith Hammer photo

Our Objection to these new Plans include Objections we have filed against numerous logging projects since 2011, including court orders we have won against them. In a nutshell, we have provided the documents showing that the current Forest Plan Amendment 19 capped the miles of road that can exist in grizzly bear habitat. The Flathead argues Amendment 19 does not, so it can build all the roads it wants for logging and recreation.

The Flathead is using this lie to make the changes in its revised Plan look less drastic and more consistent with the current Plan as it moves to expand logging and road building. Unfortunately, "conservation" groups in the Whitefish Range Partnership are going along with eliminating grizzly bear protections in order to expand logging, providing political cover for the FS and timber industry to do so (see page 4).

The revised Plan recommends only 30% of wilderness-suitable lands be designated Wilderness. It reduces the size of the recommended Jewel Basin Wilderness to allow mountain bikes on nearby trails.

While our Objection to the Forest Plans contends largely with grizzly bears, we incorporated the Objections of others that have expertise in bull trout, lynx, wolverine, old growth forests, etc.. And some of them incorporated our expertise on grizzly bear issues.

You can find this coalition of Objections on our web site. You can find all the Objections on the Flathead's web site.

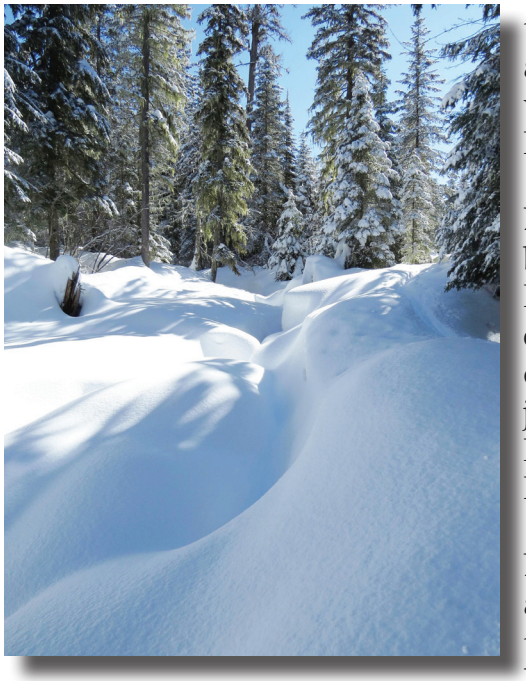
All Objections were filed by February 12. The Forest Service then has 90 days to respond to the Objections, though it can grant itself extensions. When that is done, the Plans will be signed and the only recourse will be to go to court.

23 Objections Filed to Protect Krause Basin!

In response to our email alerts, 22 of our members and others filed objections to the revised Flathead Forest Plan in order to protect Krause Basin. With our objection 23!

The 1985 Forest Plan intentionally increased protection of Krause Basin from the lesser Management Situation 2 in its draft Plan to Management Situation 1 in its final Plan. This is top priority habitat wherein "Management decisions will favor the needs of the grizzly bear when grizzly habitat and other land-use values compete."

Wildlife biologists from Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service visited Krause Basin. They found it riddled with old ATV trails, requiring in 1988 that the majority of the trails be closed to ATVs immediately and that a remaining handful be phased out by not marking them on the ground.



A serene ski trail in Krause Basin.

The FS sought to garner public support for these efforts by designating Krause Basin a "wildlife management area" and explaining the importance of the seasonal area closure to motorized use. While grizzly bear garnered most of the attention, elk calving grounds in Krause Basin were also being protected.

We supported this as a first step in the right direction. In 1995, Forest Plan Amendment 19 applied new grizzly bear research requiring that the remaining ATV trails in Krause Basin, along with the Peters Ridge Trail and Strawberry Lake Trail, be closed to motorized use.

The revised Forest Plan, however, wants to renege on all of these promises, designate and promote Krause Basin as a Focused Recreation Area, and mark the ATV trails on the ground! The 23 objections want the Flathead to honor its prior promises!

Swan View Coalition and a number of the objectors stand ready to help manage the area as a non-motorized wildlife area adjacent to private property and residences seeking to maintain a quiet neighborhood. We already maintain the Krause Basin Nature Trail and help maintain other trails through a volunteer agreement with the Swan Lake Ranger District.

We have helped DNRC install physical barriers to ATVs on its Krause Basin lands. An excavation company has offered in one of the objections to help do so on Forest Service lands in Krause Basin.

Designating Krause Basin a Focused Recreation Area where motorized vehicles are allowed is a prescription for disaster. It is a huge advertisement for where motor-sports rental companies can send their clients and machines.

Krause Basin is an area where human use can best be made compatible with wildlife by keeping it non-motorized - as the Forest Service promised. Krause Basin also contains some of the most unique hemlock forest on the Flathead, which deserves protection from logging. Thanks for your help in protecting Krause Basin!

Whitefish Range Partnership Agreement Boosts Logging, Looks Forward to Grizzly Bear Delisting

Like many collaboratives, the Whitefish Range Partnership Agreement concedes to more logging and fewer protections for wildlife in exchange for the promise of a bit more wilderness recommendation. The WRPA goes a step further, however, and essentially agrees to the removal of Endangered Species Act protections for grizzly bears in the NCDE to provide more certainty for the timber industry!

We feared this was the case when we first read the Agreement in 2013 and its promotional brochure in 2014 (see inset snipit). Our fears have been confirmed. Not a single WRP "conservation" partner objected to the revised Flathead Forest Plan's intent to do away with its grizzly bear habitat/road management program!

TIMBER AND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

The Partnership recommends landscape-scale management to help ensure ecosystem resiliency and integrity, and commercial certainty for the timber industry. This recommendation would increase the potential "Suitable Timber Base" from 54,000 acres to 89,500 acres an increase of about 66 percent and potentially available once the grizzly bear is removed from the endangered species list.

Whitefish Range Partnership Agreement

Contrary to the wording in the inset at right, the revised Forest Plan expands the timber base and relaxes grizzly bear protections whether the grizzly bear is removed from ESA protection or not! Our objection to the Forest Plan in fact demonstrates how the Flathead has been relaxing these protections since 2011, the year it says we had enough bears in the NCDE (see page 2).

To make matters worse, the timber industry partners in the WRP have filed objections to the Forest Plan saying it does not want logging levels constrained by Forest Service budgets. That means they want even bigger taxpayer subsidies for their piece of the public pie. But it gets worse.

If you thought the couple dozen folks that signed the Agreement represented their diverse constituencies, they don't. National Parks and Conservation Association and Headwaters Montana claim folks signed only as individuals. The Agreement brochure that Headwaters and Montana Wilderness Association distributed in 2014, however, clearly lists the business and group affiliations for each of the signors, as does the Agreement on page 3.

In other words, the snowmobile association and mountain bike club didn't sign the agreement even though their representative did. Now the Flathead Snowmobile Association is objecting to the Forest Plan recommendation for wilderness designation of the Tuchuck area, contrary to the Agreement. And MWA, Headwaters and the Flathead Area Mountain Bikers have filed objections and are arguing over whether mountain bikes should be allowed in areas recommended for wilderness.

The WRP Agreement has been falsely promoted as a broad consensus by listing each signor alongside the group they represent. When we asked for the signature page of the actual Agreement, we were told that the couple dozen people actually signed as individuals and now learn that their groups aren't bound by the Agreement. What slight of hand! We've provided the relevant Agreement documents to the FS and intervened in the WRP objections.

*CORRECTION: An Objection filed by Debo Powers on behalf of the North Fork Preservation Association does challenge the Plan's removal of grizzly bear protections. NFPA participated in the WRP.

Collaborative Abu$e of Mother Nature!

Unfortunately, collaboration is being used broadly by the Forest Service and industry to increase its extraction of public resources. As Pyramid Mountain Lumber's Loren Rose told the Missoulian, "Everyone who collaborates does so with the expectation they will get something out of it. We got logs on trucks. Our conservation partners got very little out of this Southwest Crown of the Continent work. But they supported it wholeheartedly."

Colville National Forest Supervisor Ron Smolden told Evergreen Magazine that the near doubling of his logging program was due to "collaborative support" that provides political cover for the Forest Service and members of Congress who support "forest restoration" through logging.

Indeed, the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program was designed by Congress to buy support for the premise that forest ecosystems suffer from too many trees instead of too many roads. A recent CFLRP report found "Over 90% of survey respondents and inteviewees said the program should continue and most said they would reapply for [CFLRP] funding."

Editorial cartoonist Milt Priggee used to champion The Lands Council for its criticism of public lands logging, which it now largely supports through collaboration. A recent Priggee cartoon depicts The Lands Council as a lapdog for the timber industry, seated at a desk with documents saying "The Lands Council receives annual contribution$ from Vaagen Brothers Lumber."

Elmer Sprunger cartoon.

Unsolicited Praise For Our Work!

"I'm glad to see your objection's insistence on straightening out the grizzly's security situation. That's always been a critical feature of habitat, and security on public lands only gets more critical as security on private lands continues to get whittled away via real estate sales." *Lance O.*

"Right on Target as always." *Brian P.*

"Thanks for managing the objections through the links on your website, that was a very efficient way to incorporate each other's objections. I appreciate your diligence on the roads issues, your objection was excellent." *Arlene M.*

"Can't tell you how much I appreciate everything you are doing on this [Forest Plan Objections]! Thanks!" *Matthew K.*

"Wow! How cool! Love your [Swan Ranger] emails [of wildlife tracks]." *Jessica S.*

"Thank you. I do care about what Swan View Coalition is doing for the forests in Montana, for the hemlock forest and the grizzly bears. Thank you for all you do to make this planet a better place." *Margaret D.*

"I thoroughly enjoy your Swan Ranger ski tour documentaries for the subtle humor as much as the photography and information they provide." *Jim G.*

"Fabulous letter [on collaboration]!" *Denise B.*

"Enclosed is a donation to help with the current push to hold onto Montana's wild places and wild critters." *Pat H.*

English Nursery Rhyme circa 1764

They hang the man and flog the woman
That steal the goose from off the common,
But let the greater villain loose
That steals the common from the goose.

The law demands that we atone
When we take things that we do not own,
But leaves the lords and ladies fine
Who takes things that are yours and mine.

It's a Lot of Work Trying to Keep the World Honest!

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 www.swanview.org or www.swanrange.org, by clicking on the Donate Now button found there (or 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.

THANK YOU to those of you who helped us meet our 2017 budget! Won't you join them so we can continue our work in 2018?

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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 _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

Swan View Coalition, Inc.
3165 Foothill Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

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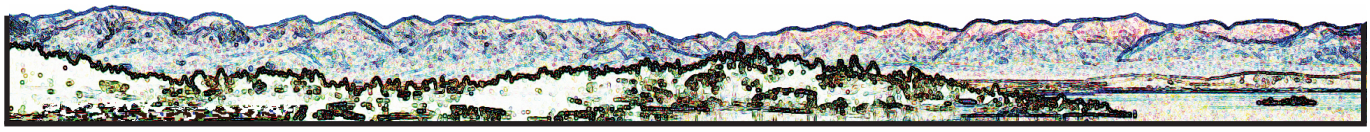
Winter-Spring 2018



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