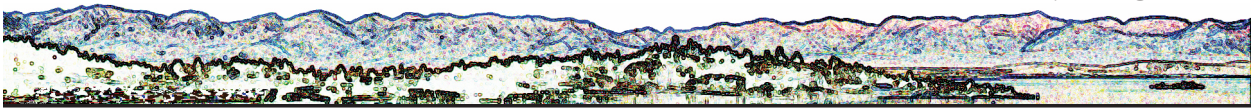
Swan View's News

Winter-Spring 2019



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"Nature and human nature on the same path."

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Revised Flathead Forest Plan Ushers in Lawlessness!

While the government was reportedly shut down last December, the revised Flathead Forest Plan and grizzly bear management amendments to the other Forest Plans ins the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem were quietly issued. All purge the Plans of previously enforceable standards for managing grizzly bear security and habitat, so we and others have filed lawsuits to restore those standards (see page 2).

The Plans were released a few days after President Trump issued an Executive Order instructing federal land management agencies to increase logging and road building on public lands. He told them to do this by creating new environmental shortcuts and by expanding "collaborative partnerships" and "20-year contracts" to accomplish his logging goals!

On page 3, we describe how the Flathead is using its revised Forest Plan, collaboration and partnerships to log and over-develop recreation in the southern Whitefish Range. It is doing so contrary to the advice of its own wildlife biologists and interagency reports on the need to restrict mountain biking and trail running in the habitats of bears and mountain lions. So, on pages 4 and 5, we recap that advice and steps we have taken over the years to discourage thrill-seeking and encourage mindful recreation on public lands.

We are a bit tardy with this newsletter, but we think it gives you a glimpse of how busy we have been! We continue doubling down on our efforts to secure good news coverage of these issues as the government becomes less transparent.

There are slivers of hope as some wildlife biologists speak up for wildlife and against human arrogance (see page 4). And, we continue to received good financial and moral support from our members and others that care about these issues (see page 6).

We hope you'll continue with that support so we can continue to speak up for those species and resources that can't speak for themselves.

Thank you for your kind attention and support!

Keith

Reading a hard copy newsletter and want to access its linked citations? A pdf version is at http://www.swanview.org

NCDE Forest Plans Purged of Enforceable Management Standards - Groups File Lawsuits!

While the government was reportedly shut down, the Flathead National Forest silently issued its revised Forest Plan on Christmas eve. Forest Supervisors for the other Forests in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem simultaneously signed grizzly bear management amendments to their Forest Plans. All purge the Plans of previously enforceable standards for managing grizzly bear security and habitat!

Friends of the Wild Swan noticed the Plans had been signed in the Federal Register and we jointly alerted the press on January 3. The Hungry Horse News reported that grizzly bear management standards that required the decommissioning of over 700 miles of old logging roads were no longer included in the revised Plan, even though they had also helped restore watersheds for bull trout through the removal of roads and culverts.

We set immediately to work with our attorneys at Earth Justice in Bozeman and on February 8 filed our 60-day Notice of Intent to file suit against the Flathead Plan in order to restore protections for threatened grizzly bear and bull trout. When the Forest Service (FS) and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) failed to respond to our Notice, we filed our complaint on April 15 in U.S. District Court in Missoula.

Our lawsuit would reinstate former Forest Plan Amendment 19 and other road and culvert management standards that the FS and FWS said were necessary to protect grizzly bear and bull trout. Our complaint cites the Flathead's new proposal to build 60 miles of new logging roads in its Mid-Swan Project as proof of the damage that will be done to bears and trout absent the former Amendment 19 standards that essentially stopped new road building and replaced it with road decommissioning in order to reduce the size of the road system.

We are focussing on grizzly bears and bull trout because they are two threatened species most sensitive to the effects of logging roads, the human impacts they bring into bear habitat, and the dirt they bleed into bull trout streams. By securing better management standards for them, we'll be securing better protects for all fish, wildlife and water quality on the Flathead!

Click here for links to our press releases, 60-day Notice and Court Complaint, as well as news articles. WildEarth Guardians and Western Watersheds Project have filed a separate lawsuit against the Flathead Forest Plan. To the best of our knowledge, no lawsuit has yet been filed against the grizzly bear amendments made to the other NCDE Forest Plans.

In its February 1 press release finally announcing its revised Plan, the Flathead included quotes of praise for the Plan from Stoltze Lumber Company and Montana Wilderness Association. Both were members of the Whitefish Ranger Partnership Agreement, which agreed to expand logging areas in grizzly bear habitat by 66% in exchange for a Plan designation that recommends 80,000 acres be wilderness.

Collaboration and Public-Private Partnerships Trashing Southern Whitefish Range!

While one hand of the Flathead National Forest feigns concern that increased human use of the southern Whitefish Range will destroy grizzly bear security and increase bear-human conflicts, the other hand proposes two new ski lifts with new service roads, 40 miles of new mountain bike trails and lots of big clearcuts in the Taylor Hellroaring and Hellroaring Basin projects. To top it off, the Flathead issued a Special Use Permit to the Whitefish Legacy Partners so it could run a 200-person ultra-marathon from Whitefish to the top of Big Mountain in October in order to raise money and promote area trails - without ever asking for public comment, as required by law!

Nowhere are the negative consequences of the tangled web of public-private partnerships more imminent than here. While the Whitefish Range Partnership secured a Forest Plan recommendation for 80,000 acres of wilderness in the northern Whitefish Range, it called for increasing logging areas by 66% and helped spawn the Whitefish Face Working Group.

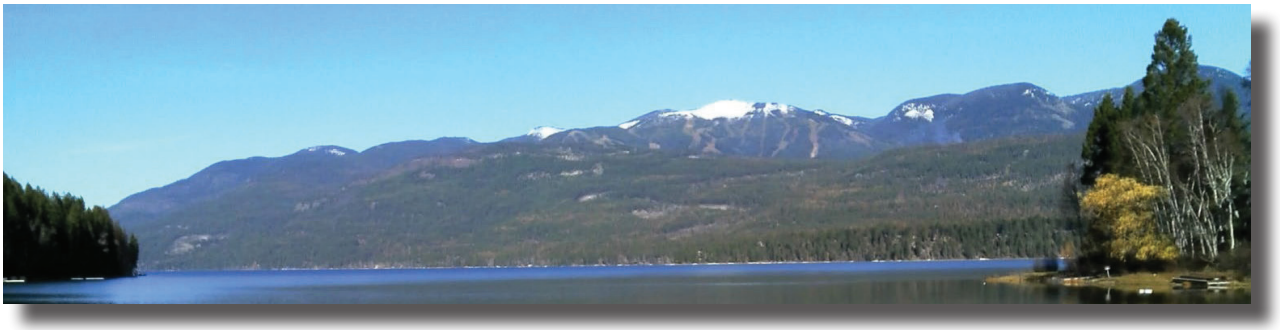
The WFWG started the collaborative ball rolling to plan more logging and recreational trails. As WRP member Michael Jamison of National Parks Conservation Association put it, "The goal is to build community license to our lands." Such privatization-by-license of public lands smells more like pigs crowding in to feed at the public trough!

The 1995 Big Mountain Ski Area Expansion Plan built new ski lifts and runs on the north side of Big Mountain and promised to offset those impacts by maintaining grizzly bear habitat security in Hellroaring Basin, one of the last roadless basins on the south side. Now the Flathead proposes two new chair lifts, their service roads and ski runs be built in the heart of Hellroaring Basin!

And, among the 40 miles of new mountain bike trails proposed, some of them run through Hellroaring Basin. The FS admits grizzly security "effectiveness would be reduced by the reduction in hiding cover, ski-area maintenance activities, and a possible increase in huckleberry picking and other human uses." Fifteen miles of the new bike trails would run through huckleberry habitats, contrary to FS and interagency recommendations against such locations and risks (see next page).

You can read our detailed comments on these proposals here. You can access the FS's Taylor Hellroaring and Hellroaring Basin projects here. You can't access FS documents about WLP's ultra-marathon permit because the FS issued the permit without any public notice - but you can read our complaint to Ranger Mulholland here.

The FS is using partnerships to greenwash development, rewarding partners with ill-advised trails, ski lifts and permits. National public interest and wildlife suffer the consequences of such privatization.



Expert Advice and Our Initiatives for Mindful Recreation

We've long tried to abide by the best advice of researchers and interagency investigations when setting forth our initiatives for mindful recreation. Though often hamstrung by politics, experts advise against trail-running and fast mountain biking in the habitats of bears and mountain lions, where people have been maimed and killed due to surprise encounters with wildlife.

Interagency advice became all the more pointed after Flathead National Forest employee Brad Treat was killed after slamming into a grizzly bear while mountain biking at high speed in 2015. An interagency Board of Review found that, while all agencies advised against trail-running, they needed to step up efforts to issue similar precautions about mountain biking. (Click here for links to the BOR reports and other statements by bear experts).

Facing relentless pressure by mountain bikers to increase their access to roadless and Wilderness lands, lead author of the BOR reports and former Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator Chris Servheen recently said "I do believe that mountain bikes are a grave threat to bears - both grizzly and black bears - for many reasons and these are detailed in the Treat report and recommendations . . . High speed and quiet human activity in bear habitat is a grave threat to human safety and certainly can displace bears from trails and along trails."

The Kalispell Daily Inter Lake also recently interviewed Servheen, Swan View Coalition and others regarding bike-bear risks. It provided urgent context by referencing independent wildlife consultant Brian Peck's written comments on the Taylor Hellroaring proposal to construct 40 miles of new mountain bike trails between Whitefish and Big Mountain, with 15 miles of those trails running through huckleberry patches preferred by bears (see also page 3)!

Servheen in 2010 also warned of running trail ultra-marathons in bear habitat, saying "It's contrary to what we tell everyone . . . It's likely to lead to injury to the runner and the bear . . . It's human arrogance about human behavior in natural systems." After an ultra-marathon runner was injured by a black bear protecting its cubs in New Mexico and the bear was subsequently killed by authorities, grizzly bear expert Tim Manley said "In my view, they should run these races in places where people live . . . not where bears and lions live." (Sources are here).

If a person wants to run or mountain bike on trails in bear and lion habitat, that is a matter of personal choice - however ill-advised. But when someone wants a Special Use Permit to run a foot or bike race in these public habitats, that's another matter. It seeks license to use public lands in order to raise private money via entrance fees, sends the wrong message about how to responsibly recreate on public lands, and increases the odds for negative encounters that will inevitably foster ill-will toward wildlife!

You can read our Code of Responsible Recreation here. You are also invited to practice the Swan Crest Crawl here and on the following page of this newsletter!

You're Invited to Practice the Swan Crest Crawl!

You are cordially invited to participate in the Swan Crest Crawl, a mindful practice to see how long you can take to hike 70 miles (the length of the Swan Crest from Inspiration Point near the Bob Marshall Wilderness to Columbia Mountain).

You can hike, walk or crawl the 70 miles wherever you wish, but you are encouraged to take your time and enjoy everything the outdoors has to offer:

- Sit in the shade by a mountain stream and listen to the songbirds.
- Look around for wildlife big and small. The outdoors is their only home.
- Walk slowly and talk to the wildlife that might be just around the corner in the trail so you don't have a surprise encounter with a bear, mountain lion or mama moose! Keep your lightweight bear spray handy just in case.
- Keep an eye out for wildflowers and definitely stop to smell the wild roses.
- Bring along kids and elders, sharing enthusiasm and knowledge.
- Carry lots of heavy plant and bird ID books to help slow you down!
- Better yet, bring a bit of camping gear and spend a night or two under the stars!

You can track your 70 miles of progress (and mindful delays) using our Swan Crest Virtual Trek at http://www.swanrange.org/index.php/info/virtual-trek/, where you'll find links to a map and a chart on which you can track your progress.

The interactive map you'll find there is also a great way to learn more about the natural and cultural history of the Swan Crest. And, it will get you thinking about even more ways to appreciate and spend time in the great outdoors wherever you are!

Check-Off	Mile-Post	Location	Miles To Next Post
☑	0	Inspiration Point	5
	5	Gildart Peak	2
	7	Thunderbolt Mtn.	11
	18	Bond and Trinkus Lakes	4
	22	Hall Peak/Sixmile Mtn.	2
	24	Quintonkin Road	5
	29	Broken Leg Mountain	7
	36	Crater Lake	3
	39	Birch Lake	2
	41	Mount Aeneas	3
	44	Wildcat Lake	2
	46	Strawberry Lake	3
	49	Peters Ridge	2
	51	Lamoose Lake	5
	56	Jenny Lake	3
	59	Doris Mountain and Lakes	4
	63	Columbia Mountain	7
	70	Highway 2 Columbia Falls	Done!

Unsolicited Praise For Our Work!

"Thanks so much for filing suit [over the Flathead Forest Plan]! It is huge that Earthjustice is [representing SVC in] this lawsuit!"

Kathy K.

"Thank you for keeping a rogue administration on notice."

Bob H.

"This is fantastic! Great work. Thank you."

Blake N.

"A creative and fun [Swan Crest Crawl] that shines the light on competitive, ego-centric wreckcreation. Every participant wins."

Larry C.

"This is great, thank you! Your site-specific knowledge is fantastic and invaluable."

Judi B.

"What an amazing document you have put together!!!!!"

Sara J.

"You're a long ways from us, but you're an inspiration in persistence and a moral compass."

Hank R.

"You fight like hell - and have done so for decades - while you dive into the mysterious gifts of the natural world. You go to the extra effort to engage others and then share what you've experienced to an even wider audience."

Cate C.

"Congratulations with your 700th outing. We have respect for your initiative to organize every Saturday this walking through the nature."

Jan V.

700th Swan Ranger Outing!

The Swan Rangers celebrated their 700th every-Saturday outing with a hike to Wolf Creek on May 18! The first outing was November 12, 2005, and 572 people have since shared not only the landscape, but the natural and cultural history of the Swan Range!

Your Financial Support is Critical to our Work!

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 for joining others in supporting our work through donations!

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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: _____

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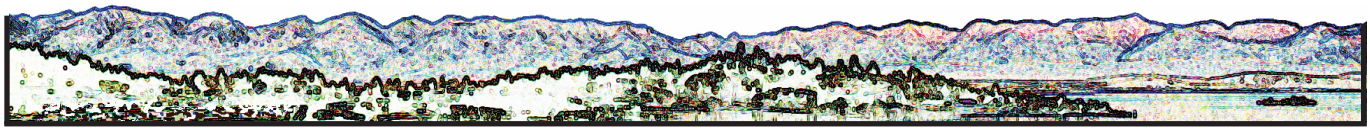

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Executive Summary **page 1**
Heartless Forest Plans Issued, so Lawsuits are Filed! **page 2**
Collaborative Partnerships Trashing Southern Whitefish Range! **page 3**
Our Initiatives for Mindful Recreation and Respect for Expert Advice! **page 4**
You are Invited to Practice the Swan Crest Crawl! **page 5**
Unsolicited Praise for Our Work as Swan Rangers take 700th Outing! **page 6**
Donate Now to Help Us Save Habitats for Fish, Wildlife and People! **page 7**