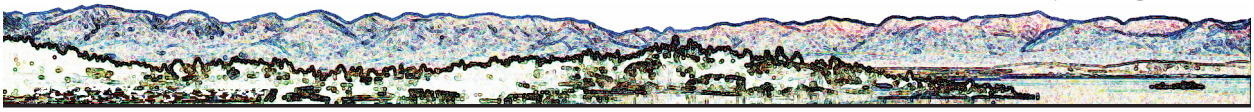
Swan View's News

Winter-Spring 2022



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"Nature and human nature on the same path."

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To Wonder or Plunder?

Scientific research is confirming what indigenous peoples and others have long known about the amazing web of life, and yet our political systems pay it no mind. Instead, our public lands are managed to maximize profits and to sustain the bureaucracy that hands those resources over to private industry.

This newsletter summarizes research confirming it is natural selection that continues to balance ecosystems, even in the face of climate change. It then looks at how the Forest Service and industry arrogantly claim it is logging that is necessary to restore ecosystems and address climate change.

Hemlock by Allie Maloney @nwmtfieldjournal

Page 2 provides resources describing how forest ecosystems function and how trees and plants communicate. Page 3 summarizes how federal, state and county governments are now in lock-step to spend billions of tax dollars to log trees that not only store carbon long-term, but turn climate-warming CO_2 into the oxygen we need to breathe and live!

Page 4 then makes it clear why the Forest Service is reneging on prior promises to reduce its road network to protect fish and wildlife. It says it needs all those roads and more to log forest ecosystems back into "health," even though it is the roads and the logging that are making ecosystems collapse! This is why we continue to champion road decommissioning as the best way to allow ecosystems to restore themselves.

Page 5 provides an update on the Krause Basin Collaborative and other projects on the Flathead NF. What emerges is a picture of an agency intent on discouraging informed public involvement while simultaneously professing to "serve people." Page 6 provides some of the unsolicited praise we receive for our work.

We want to thank all of you that helped us raise enough money to meet our budget in 2021! Of course, on page 7, we ask for your continued financial support. Last, but not least, we thank all of you that write emails and letters to the Forest Service to secure quiet and calm habitats for fish, wildlife and people! Things would be much worse without your help!

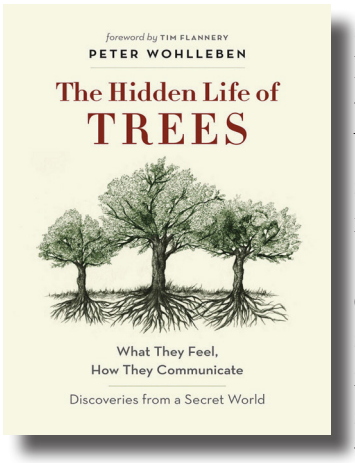
Keith

Reading a hard copy newsletter and want to access it in color with linked citations? Visit http://www.swanview.org

Books and Resources on How Forests Function!

In our last newsletter, we introduced you to Suzanne Simard's book "In Search of the Mother Tree," which describes in scientifc terms how trees communicate with one another and with other plants. You can also listen to Simard describe "How I discovered the Wood Wide Web."

Here we introduce Peter Wohlleben's book "The Hidden Life of Trees." Like Simard, Wohllben, is a professional forester and comes from a logging background. Like Simard, he criticizes modern logging practices that disrupt ecosystem function while falsely claiming to be "ecosystem restoration." Wohllben's book is less technical than Simard's in its delivery, but is fully researched. Remarkably, it is available free online as a PDF, with hyper-linked endnotes and references!



In a nutshell, these and other books describe how trees and plants shuttle carbon and nutrients between one another through their root systems and intervening threads of mycorrhizal fungi. How they provide shade and how they store carbon not only in their tree trunks, but in their roots and the soil.

It is a combination of inter-species cooperation and natural selection that keeps these ecosystems healthy, with dead trees playing an equally important role as they continue to store carbon and provide habitats for everything from bugs to birds to baby trees. The importance of dead and fallen trees is beautifully explained in the 8-minute video "Let Things Rot!"

According to the utilitarian view of the Forest Service and timber industry, however, the trees need to be thinned if not clear-cut, and dead trees need to be salvaged for the forest's own good. This is of course a smokescreen for the greedy desire to haul trees to the sawmill and turn them into hard, cold cash. And all the better if this is subsidized by government so industry makes even more money! (See next page).

Researchers including Beverly Law, Dianna Six and Chad Hanson have clearly described how logging simply cannot replicate the process of natural selection and hence results in mortality added to that already occurring due to natural fire, insects and disease. Nature knows which trees are genetically fit to survive a beetle attack, loggers don't. Nature knows which trees survive drought and wind storms because they have the best root systems and best root/crown ratio, foresters don't.

Logging to thin or clear-cut entire stands of trees does not select for the most genetically fit trees. The resulting open stands are hence more prone to wind, sun and soil drying - all of which result in more dead and blown-down trees, as well as faster moving fires.

Simply put, nature provides forest ecosystems that are resilient because they provide the right combination of shade, tree crowns, tree ages, roots and fungi. They use fire, wind, insects, and disease to naturally select for the most genetically fit trees, while leaving the vast majority of carbon stored on-site in live and dead trees.

Logging instead removes from the forest carbon stored in trees both alive and dead. Leaving a few "seed" trees after logging is most often intended to propagate trees favored for lumber, not to propagate the trees most genetically fit to keep the ecosystem resilient and adaptive. (See next page).

Government and Industry Want to "Thin it All!"

Federal, state and county agencies are in lockstep to thin and log forests in the name of reducing wildfire's threats to forests, towns and homes. Never mind the mounting evidence that thinning forests actually increases the rate at which fires spread and disrupts the natural functioning of forest ecosystems!

Most agree that a warming climate, via increased drought, heat and winds, is contributing to larger and more frequent fires. But it is government and industry that want to instead blame the problem on too many trees providing too much fuel for fires - so it can haul more trees to sawmills as a cure.

Weed Lake Landscape Restoration Project on Flathead N.F.

Simply put, their answer to the problem is to thin the forest canopy and to allow wind and sun to dry out the ground and the resulting grass and brush - which burn faster than the trees do. Indeed Firesafe Montana shows that, with 20 mph winds, fires in dense conifer forests travel at 0.5 mi/hr while open pine forests burn at 1.5 mi/hr, regenerating clear-cuts at 1.75 mi/hr, and grass at 4.5 mi/hr!

Forest researchers, on the other hand, argue that "cutting down forests releases 10 times more carbon emissions than wildfires." They find that "U.S. forests collectively absorb the equivalent of about 12 percent of the nation's annual carbon pollution, and the carbon is stored in live and dead trees and soils for centuries." They urge that President Biden establish a "strategic natural carbon reserve" by immediately protecting mature forests.

As NBC-TV points out, however, Biden's Infrastructure Bill that passed last fall will instead invest billions of dollars in federal, state and private efforts to log an area "the size of Idaho" under the guise of reducing wildfire impacts. The NBC report names Oregon's Bootleg Fire and the resulting desire to "thin it all" as key to preventing such fire damage. It fails to mention, however, that "as much as 75% of the [Bootleg Fire] land had been 'treated' with active forest management - i.e., chainsaw medicine."

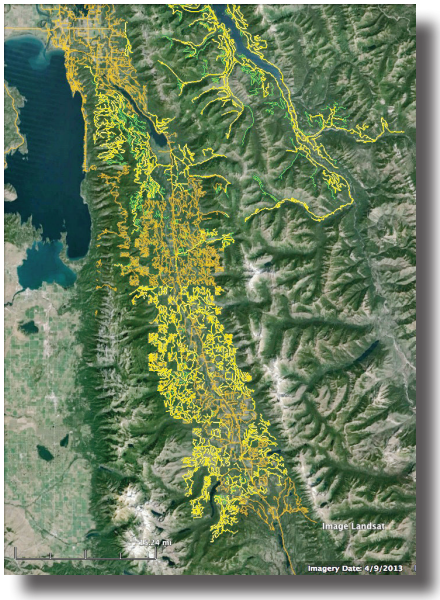
It has taken decades for the government and industry to coordinate this scam. But they have done so through Congressionally funded programs with nice sounding names like the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program and the Good Neighbor Authority, which allows States to conduct timber sale contracting on National Forests! And they have done so with the help of pro-logging "conservation" groups that include The Nature Conservancy.

The results is a nightmarish collection of logging advocates that say we can solve climate change by cutting down trees and even burning them as wood pellets for the generation of electricity, where their carbon is spewed directly into the atmosphere! See The Nature Conspiracy for more!

Forest Service Reneges on Road Decommissioning!

Now that the Forest Service has decided the only healthy forest is a logged forest, it needs more roads to haul those pesky logs away. So it is reneging on prior initiatives to reduce its road system.

In response to a lawsuit brought against the 1985 Flathead Forest Plan by Swan View Coalition and others, the Flathead in 1995 issued Amendment 19 to that Plan. It required hundreds of mile of road decommissioning to secure habitat for threatened grizzly bear and bull trout. By the time the Flathead started revising its Plan in 2013, it had decommissioned and removed culverts from 780 miles of its 3,700 mile road system and estimated it needed to decommission another 518 miles to finish implementing A19. A19 was based on sound science and dire circumstances.



Swan Valley and Spotted Bear Roads.

In 1998, Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck declared "Of all the things we do on National Forests, road building leaves the most lasting imprint on the landscape." He noted the Forest Service's 400,000 mile road system was larger than the Interstate Highway System, its maintenance severely underfunded, and he set forth a transportation policy intended to reduce the size of the road system.

National Forests in western Montana announced similar intentions. Flathead National Forest's Allen Rowley wrote "Roads that are not maintained can become an environmental liability on the watershed. . . It's not a matter of if a culvert is going to fail, it's a matter of when."

Fish and Wildlife Service wrote that reducing road miles "cannot be accomplished alone by gating, berming, or otherwise blocking the entrance to a road. . . Many miles of roads must be 'put to bed' by pulling culverts, resloping road beds, pulling fill and replanting." But that was 1998.

In 2018, the Flathead issued a revised Forest Plan that abandoned A19 and no longer requires a road to be decommissioned and its culverts removed in order to be excluded from limits on Total Road Density (TRD). It instead could now dismiss those roads by simply blocking the entrance and calling them "impassable." FWS went along with this scam that allows unlimited miles of new road to be built without increasing TRD.

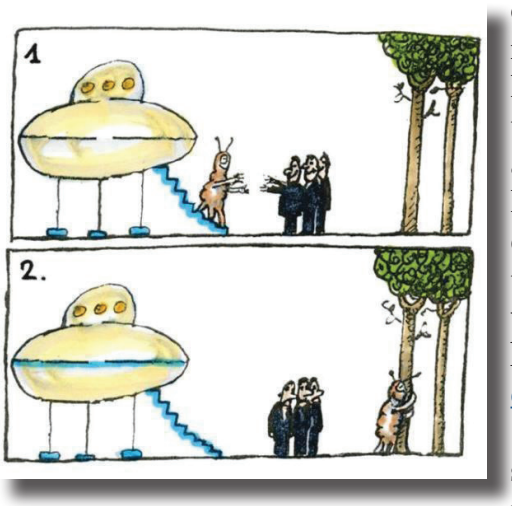
We sued and last June U.S. District Judge Donald Molloy ruled that the agencies broke the law in abandoning A19 and culvert removal requirements - after claiming they were largely responsible for increasing the grizzly bear population and protecting bull trout. In response to the Court Order, FWS on February 16 issued a revised Biological Opinion on the Flathead Plan that still allows culverts to remain in "impassable" roads and for those roads to not be counted in TRD. We will likely sue again.

In spite of the ugly existing road network shown on this page, the Flathead is currently planning to rebuild 27 miles of previously decommissioned roads and build 47 miles of new roads so it can log the forest back to health - a scam to bloat the FS budget and enrich the timber industry!

Making Public Involvement Difficult on the Flathead NF!

The Forest Service's motto is "Caring for the Land and Serving People." Our experiences with the Flathead National Forest, however, show it is intent on manipulating people rather than providing them with ample time and information to write informed comments to the agency.

The Flathead is limiting the information being fed to its Krause Basin Collaboration (KBC), for example, then turning around and asking for a group recommendation as though it is fully informed and independent from the agency. This is a clear violation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which was written to keep federal agencies from manipulating the opinion of groups advising them.



Key information being withheld from the KBC is the updated Forest Plan Biological Opinion. The KBC web page still says it is "coming soon" even though the BiOp was issued on 2/16/22. This BiOp, like the several Plan BiOps before it, finds that all trails in Krause Basin would need to be closed to motorized use to eliminate harm to threatened grizzly bears.

One would think that the KBC should know that, and know that a federal judge ruled last June that the agencies violated the law in abandoning the former Forest Plan's Amendment 19 that required such road and trail closures. But all that is off-limits for KBC discussion as the Flathead overrides the KBC facilitator and pretends its flawed Forest Plan, which reneges on getting motorized use out of Krause Basin, is rock solid and the law of the land.

The Flathead has acted similarly in other recreation matters. On April 26, 2022, the Flathead invited the public to comment by May 18 on 23 summertime Special Use Permit proposals for commercial recreational use. But it did not send the letter out to anyone until we complained, asked that the Flathead issue a press release, and asked that the Flathead extend the comment period to the end of May - both of which it refused to do.

The Flathead wasted one week of an already inadequate 3-week public comment period getting its letter sent out and its web site lacked legible maps of proposed commercial motorcycle trail tours. Only because we tipped off reporters has there been local press coverage of this!

A half dozen timber sales remain on hold due to Judge Molloy's June ruling on our Flathead Plan lawsuit saying the Fish and Wildlife Service needs to revise it legally flawed Biological Opinion on the Plan. The Flathead on 2/10/22 told us it would publicly post the revised BiOp "when we receive it," which it turns out it did on 2/16/22. On 4/11/22, however, the Flathead told us it would not publicly post the BiOp until "after notice is filed with the court," which has yet to be done. So we obtained the BiOp from FWS instead.

As frustrating as this run-around can be, don't be discouraged. It's what we are here for. We sift through all the obfuscation and do our best to let you know the key facts and when to write letters and emails to the agencies. Your help in this is essential!

Unsolicited Praise for Our Work and Ranger Reports!

"I have always admired the work you do and consider you a mentor. Your integrity is well known in the movement."

G.M.

"You did a great job. So skilled at delivering the facts in a non-confrontational manner."

C.G.

"Really, really good quote in that Hungry Horse News article. You exposed the fraudulent foundation underlying [grizzly bear] delisting."

B.H.

"Thank you for everything you do to save grizzlies."

C.H.

"Thanks for the articles about fire and logging and forest ecosystem health. I'll keep appreciating the forests around here and the people like you who help to protect them.

M.V.

"Thanks for all you do, and have long done, for the Swan and the planet. You're a mainstay sentinel."

J.S.

"He can't wait for his dad to get home to see the Ranger patch and note you sent! I told him he is officially a Junior Ranger now! We are so grateful for the welcome, positive influence that everyone has made."

P.J.

"I am no longer able to do much hiking therefore I look at your adventures with longing and true appreciation."

M.S.

"Oh my gosh, every single one of these photos are exquisite!! Well done, photographers! Thanks sooooo much!"

K.K.

"We always learn so much about the natural world from your photos. Thanks so much!"

S.G.

"Beautiful photos and writing, Thank you."

B.H.

"Thank you. A very enjoyable post. Great pictures!"

J.F.

You Helped Us Meet our Budget in 2021 - Let's Do it Again!

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 https://swanviewcoalition.networkforgood.com (or by clicking on the Donate Now button 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.

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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 _____

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Kalispell, MT 59901

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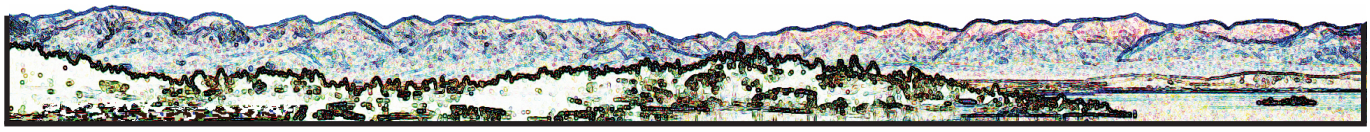

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