

Swan View's News

Winter-Spring 2024



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"Nature and human nature on the same path."

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Swan View Coalition Celebrates 40 Years!

Incorporated in 1984 as a Montana non-profit, Swan View Coalition turns 40 this year! In this newsletter, we will look at a few recent victories and see how they fit in with our past work and accomplishments - and the work that still awaits us.

On page 2, we describe that we indeed saved a prime stand of mature hemlock forest from DNRC logging in Krause Basin, are currently obtaining Forest Service agreements to begin removing unlawful, user-created trails in Krause Basin, and have secured a Magistrate Judge's recommendations that the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service again rethink how the Flathead Forest Plan limits road densities to protect grizzly bears and bull trout.

On page 3, we provide a very brief summary of our 40 years of accomplishments, especially regarding bears and trout.

On page 4 we reprint our guest editorial that recently appeared in news outlets across Montana detailing how, in spite of the conservation community's best efforts, grizzly bears in the greater Glacier area "Remain Trapped in Their Own Endzone." The

guest editorial serves as an example of how we must keep fighting for fish and wildlife in the face of increasing human population and development.

On page 5 we invite you to our **40th Anniversary Potluck and Gathering June 9!** It will include short walks, bird-watching and time spent on the very land that gave rise to Swan View Coalition!

On page 6 we include a sampling of unsolicited praise for our work from kind people like you!

Here and on page 7 we announce that **your donations up to \$5,000 will be matched by a generous donor! So please take advantage of this opportunity to double your donation in support of our work!**

A big THANK YOU to those of you who helped us meet our budget last year and to those of you who have given this year!

Keith



Wayne Hammer's seat-of-the-pants panorama that helped defeat the Noisy Face Timber Sale in 1984.

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

Recent Victories in Krause Basin and Federal Court!

Montana DNRC at long last has completed its [Environmental Assessment](#) for the Foothills Restoration Project, which initially proposed to log one of the last mature stands of Western hemlock forest in Krause Basin (shown below). The good news is that, in light of substantial public comments and after a field review, DNRC has decided not to log or thin this wonderful stand of hemlock! Give yourself a pat on the back if you are among those people that wrote DNRC on this issue in response to our [Action Alert](#) and [Newsletter!](#)

We've been fighting illegal ATV and snowmobile trails in Krause Basin since our inception and in 1999 we secured a court order that closed an illegal snowmobile trail on Forest Service land. The order also allowed us to physically block and naturally restore the trail. Now we are being granted permission to physically block and "naturalize" unauthorized ATV and mountain bike trails in Krause Basin.

In response to our efforts and an often misdirected ["collaboration"](#) steered by the Forest Service, the agency has nonetheless rightly concluded that it cannot increase the number of trails in Krause Basin and is seeking volunteers to help "block access to user created trails." It took us nine years to get the FS to correct its maps and now those maps are being used to extend our annual Volunteer Agreement to include the blocking of unauthorized trails in Krause Basin!



It's looking like we will win the [second round of our litigation against the revised Flathead Forest Plan and the Biological Opinion](#) that permits its impacts to threatened grizzly bear and bull trout. On March 12, 2024, [U.S. Magistrate Judge Kathlene DeSoto found](#) that the FS and FWS had again violated the law in abandoning the prior Plan's Amendment 19 requirement that logging roads must be thoroughly reclaimed and have all their stream-bearing culverts removed before being excluded from limits on total road density.

Under the revised Plan, culverts can remain in place and the road simply rendered "impassable" to motor vehicles but still not count as a road. As in our first Flathead Plan lawsuit, Magistrate DeSoto found that the government again had not adequately accounted for the fact that many gates, berms and boulders have been found ineffective at stopping public motorized use. She also found abandonment of the culvert removal requirement arbitrary and a violation of law.

Brief objections to various portions of DeSoto's Findings and Recommendations have been filed by both sides in the case and District Judge Dana Christensen will now issue a final ruling. We are hopeful that, unlike Magistrate DeSoto, he will rule that the FS must return to implementing Amendment 19 while it attempts to repair the legal inadequacies in its Plan and BiOp.

What We've Accomplished in 40 Years!

What we have accomplished in 40 years won't fit on this page, so we'll stick with what we've accomplished for grizzly bears and bull trout. A more complete listing of our History and Accomplishments can be found at www.swanview.org.

We cut our teeth on the 1986 Flathead Forest Plan and the Noisy Face Timber Sale. We stopped the timber sale by creating public backlash against clear-cutting that would destroy the Flathead Valley's view of the Swan Range - hence our name.

We sued over the 1986 Plan's intention to build another 2,000 miles of logging roads on top of the existing 4,000 miles in order to log 100 million board feet of trees per year. We won big and Amendment 19 was issued to the Plan.

A19 required there be no increase in road density in grizzly bear habitat and that some 1,320 miles of road be "reclaimed" to decrease road density in areas with too many already. Reclamation required that all stream-bearing culverts be removed to protect bull trout from culvert blow-outs.

A19 also lowered the annual timber sale level from 100 to 54 million board feet in order to better protect old-growth forests, grizzly bear and big game habitat. We had to sue the Flathead several times to stop its end-runs around A19, but by 2013, 780 miles of roads had been reclaimed. A19 also became the standard for road management on other National Forests in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem.

When it revised its Forest Plan in 2018, however, the Flathead abandoned A19 and the remaining 540 miles of road reclama-

tion, claiming grizzly bears are doing just fine and don't need any more habitat protections. This then became the standard for the other NCDE Forests. We've been litigating the Plan ever since and using its abandonment of A19 as an example of how grizzly bear protections will get flushed down the toilet without continued Endangered Species Act protections.

We've now won our case against the abandonment of A19 twice. In 2021, U.S. [District Judge Donald Molly ruled](#) that

abandoning A19 "precisely because it was working . . . is like throwing away your umbrella in a rain-storm because you are not getting wet." Rather than reincorporate A19 into its revised Plan, however, the government tried to paper over the problem with more words. So we sued again and the [Magistrate Judge has recommended](#) the District Judge again

rule against the government on these same points (see page 2 of this newsletter).

A19 also set limits on the miles of motorized trails and trails receiving high levels of non-motorized use. We've used these requirements both in court and in collaborations to get more trails closed in the wildlife-rich Krause Basin and elsewhere.

Our defense of wildlife has always been to limit mortality and protect habitat. We sued over the hunting of grizzly bears in the NCDE, which was causing nearly 50% of the know human-caused mortality, and put an end to it in 1991. Now state and federal government want to remove ESA protections so they can again hunt grizzlies. We don't intend to let that happen!



Grizzly Bears Still Trapped in Their Own Endzone!

by Keith Hammer

Contrary to letters to the editor in north-west Montana, we are not "being over-run with grizzlies." On the whole, grizzly bears are still limited to about 2% of their former numbers and 2% of their former range. Under a return to Montana management and hunting, the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem's 1,163 bears will be allowed to decline to nearly 800!

The NCDE grizzly bear population of 1,163 bears is estimated to be increasing by 2.3% per year, while Flathead County's population was estimated to have grown 3.7% in 2020 and reached 112,000 people in 2022. Kalispell's population increased by 9.7% last year alone!

The twelve counties in the NCDE total 401,000 people. Even we humans in NW Montana think it's getting a little crowded around here as we struggle to find affordable housing and build more of it.

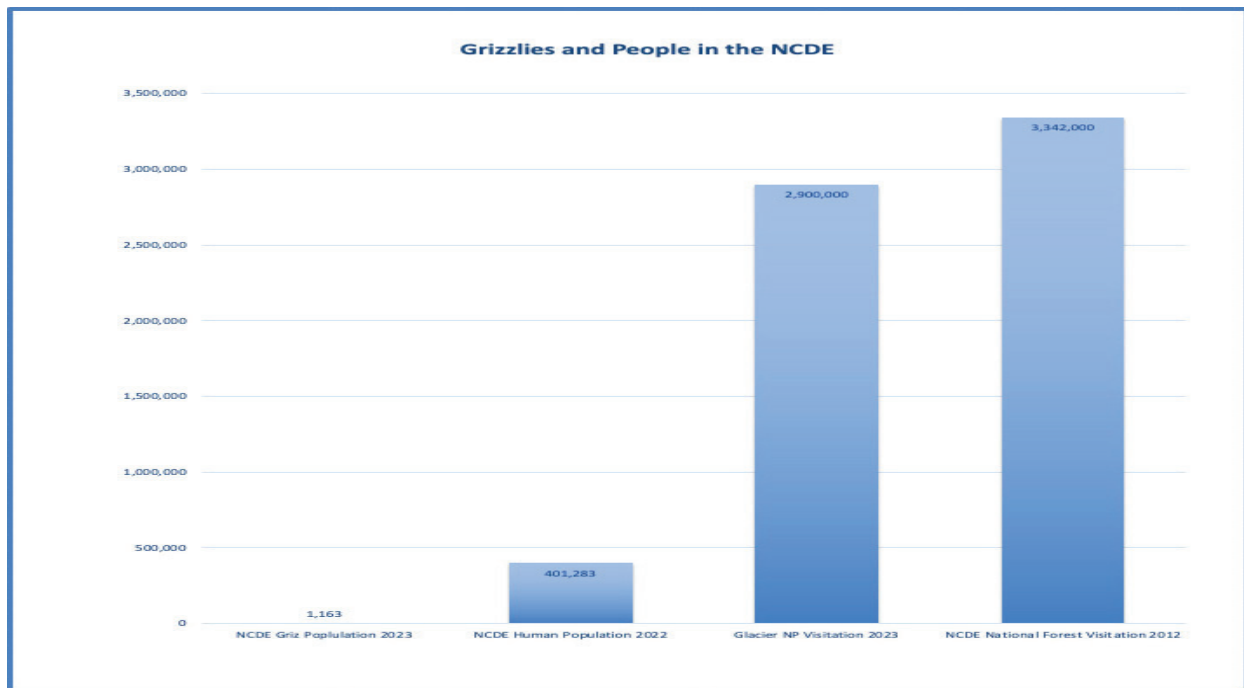
Glacier National Park received 2.9 million visitors each of the last two years and the National Forests in the NCDE host over 3.3 million visitors each year as well! Do you suppose the bears forced to share these habitats think there are too many humans?

If we use a 100-yard football field as a graph

to compare these numbers, the NCDE grizzly bear population is at their one-inch line. The human population in the NCDE reaches the 10-yard line, visitors to Glacier Park reach 70 yards downfield, and National Forest visitation surpasses that at 80 yards! Simply put, grizzly bears are still trying to get out of their own end-zone while human population and visitation are each headed for a touchdown and cumulatively have already scored one.

Population viability experts say 5,000 grizzly bears are needed, in interconnected populations, to maintain genetic diversity over the long term. Bears are no longer interbreeding between the NCDE and Yellowstone. Computer models have tried 20,000 times, unsuccessfully, to get a grizzly bear from the NCDE to Yellowstone. The bears on the ground haven't made it yet either.

We need far more than the paltry 800 bears Montana promises it will maintain in the NCDE after delisting and enough secure habitat so they can expand their range into the areas between the ecosystem fragments. Managing for 800 bears in the Glacier area and even fewer in the Yellowstone area, while killing off



(continued on next page)

“excess” bears via sport trophy hunting, will not reconnect these areas. It will not recover bears to significantly more than the 2% of their former habitat, let alone reconnect the NCDE to Yellowstone and other isolated ecosystems.

There is no clearer expression of a lack of faith in Montana to adequately manage the grizzly bear after delisting than from Montana itself. Its current plan to trap and truck NCDE grizzly bears to Yellowstone to maintain genetic diversity indicates Montana has no intention of allowing these two ecosystems to finish reconnecting naturally.

Congress passed the ESA to insure that threatened and endangered species would be

able to compete with the selfish wants of humans. We in Montana are lucky to still have grizzly bears, unlike Arizona, New Mexico, California and the other “lower 48” states west of the Mississippi, where grizzly bears once thrived before being exterminated from 98% of their range. There are examples in Montana and elsewhere showing that people and grizzly bears can peacefully and safely coexist.

It is time to show some compassion and adjust how we live, work and play in bear habitat. We're the ones crowding the bears and ourselves, not the other way around. Grizzly bears need the full protections of the ESA if we are to help them get out of their own endzone.

Join Us for Our 40th Anniversary Potluck and Gathering!

We hope you can come join us for our 40th Anniversary potluck and gathering on June 9 at the Creston Fish Hatchery pavilion on the shore of Jessup Mill Pond (shown in the USFWS photo below)! There will be cake and we get to eat it too!

The gathering will begin around 2pm with short walks on various, mostly-flat trails around Jessup Mill Pond and the Fish Hatchery. It will be a great time of year for bird-watching as the trails take us through forests, meadows and wetlands! Don't miss the views of the nearby Swan Range!

Around 4pm, Keith Hammer will provide us with a history of Swan View Coalition and its major accomplishments, as well as his time growing up at the Fish Hatchery, which instilled in him a strong conservation ethic. He'll also touch on the [history of the old Jessup townsite](#) where the fish hatchery and government offices now sit.

At 5pm, we'll continue socializing over a potluck dinner! So bring your place setting, a dish and a cooler if it needs to be kept cold during our walks and talks. There is electricity at the pavilion for a hot pot or hot plate, a nice campground-style vault toilet, but no potable water.

After dinner, a few members of the [Swan Range Jammers](#) will provide acoustic music as we unwind. The pavilion offers a large roof for shelter but bring warm clothes should the weather be inclement.

To find the pavilion, turn onto Creston Hatchery Road from either end, Hwy 35 or Lake Blaine Road, then turn onto Kauffman Lane just south of the hatchery and pond. It's about one-eighth mile down the road, toward the Swan Range.

This will not be an indoor meeting with a boring slide show. We hope you can join us for as long as suits you on the land that gave rise to Swan View Coalition!



Unsolicited Praise for Our Work and Advocacy!

"Your work is greatly appreciated. It seems endless but I appreciate you being a burr in the side of . . . the Flathead National Forest." K.G.

"We are so grateful for your stalwart, brave work on behalf of the wild – wow you have been at it for many decades!" L.W. & D.M.

"I deeply appreciate the enormously hard and perseverate work you do . . . Thank you seems trite, but it is heartfelt." K.K.

"I appreciate your ongoing quality work for the Swan and the newsletter to keep me informed." P.C.

"I live in Virginia. I wish every state had people like you to help stop development and monitor this government's miserable ways of dealing with animals that need the help of humans, not a gun pointed at them. I hope you don't give up." J.V.

"Your astute observation that the gov't is doing the same thing to wildlife advocates and wildlife that it did to Indians is bone chilling." C.P.

"This is a well written piece. The data is put into analogies that give the readers a visual picture of the impacts by humans to the grizzly population." N.S.

"I like your question about whether there are too many humans for grizzlies. Good way to turn things around in perspective." G.W.

"Couldn't agree more that Montana has dropped the ball on protecting grizzly bears. The football analogy is well placed and I also like how you compare bear to human population growth." J.K.

"Super [court] decision! You truly take on the Giants. Your doggedness is much appreciated." B.H.



Generous Donor Matching Your Donations up to \$5,000! Donate Today and Double Your Gift!

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.



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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Swan View Coalition, Inc.
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Executive Summary	page 1
Recent Victories in Krause Basin and Federal Court!	page 2
What We've Accomplished in 40 Years!	page 3
Grizzly Bears Still Trapped in Their Own Endzone!	page 4
<u>Join Us for Our 40th Anniversary Potluck and Gathering June 9!</u>	page 5
Unsolicited Praise for our Work and Advocacy!	page 6
<u>Donate Now and See it Doubled by a Local Generous Donor!</u>	page 7