

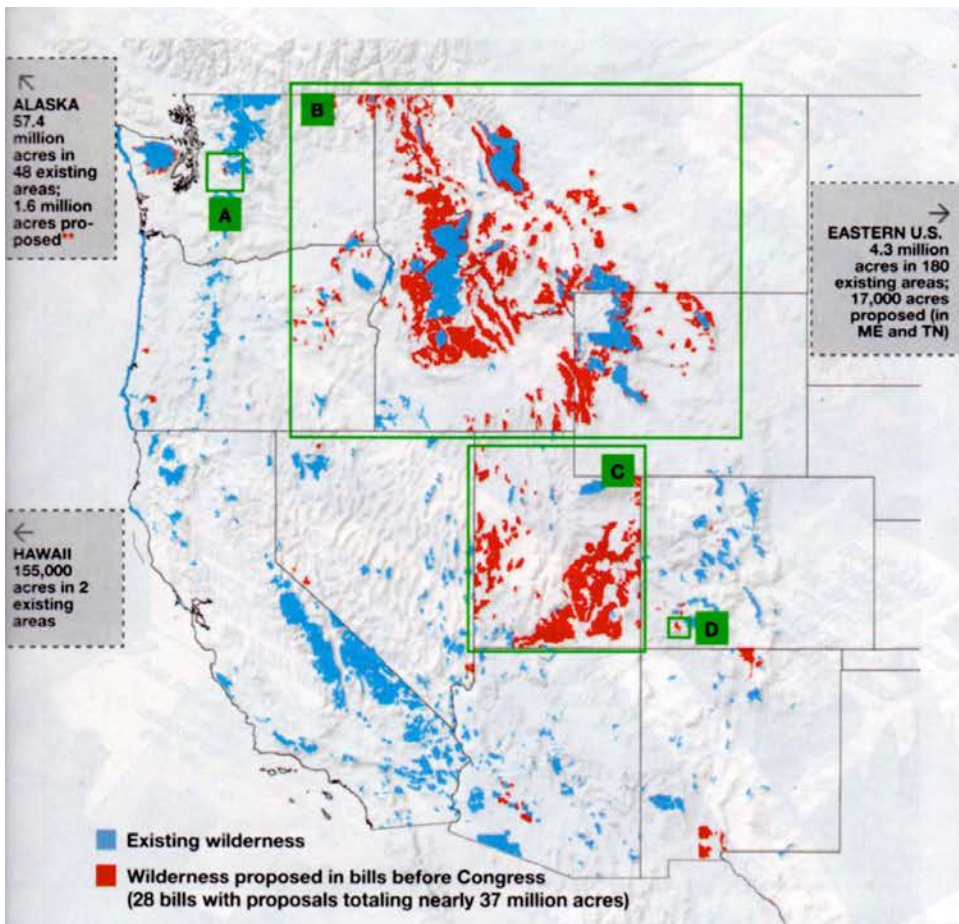
Keith Hammer's Presentation
Panel Discussion "Future of Wilderness Advocacy in the Big Sky State"
Mansfield Center Wilderness 50th Conference
Missoula, MT – Sept. 12, 2014

The Future of Wilderness Advocacy in the Big Sky State relies on all 50 states, not just Montana and its western neighbors. Where would America be today if it had left the issue of civil rights up to the block of Southern States, which voted nearly unanimously, Democrat and Republican alike, against the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

Where would we be today if the formation of Glacier National Park were left up to the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce, which opposed the designation of Glacier Park in 1910 because it would "lock up exploitable natural resources?" Should this have instead been resolved "collaboratively" so the big cedar trees along Lake McDonald and Avalanche Creek could have been logged in exchange for out of the way Park designations further up - along the rocks and ice of the Garden Wall?

Not likely, and our advocacy for the continued protection of the most pristine of America's public lands should take note. There is nothing wrong with recognizing the substantial prejudice that still exists against Wilderness designations in the Rocky Mountain states and turning to the rest of the nation to help us do the right thing.

And that is what the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act does. It would designate about 23 million acres of federal public lands as Wilderness in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Washington, and Oregon. This would include essentially all Inventoried Roadless Areas on Forest Service and BLM lands. It would include the backcountry areas of Glacier, Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, though the map in Backpacker magazine is in error in that regard in the following graphic:



Backpacker

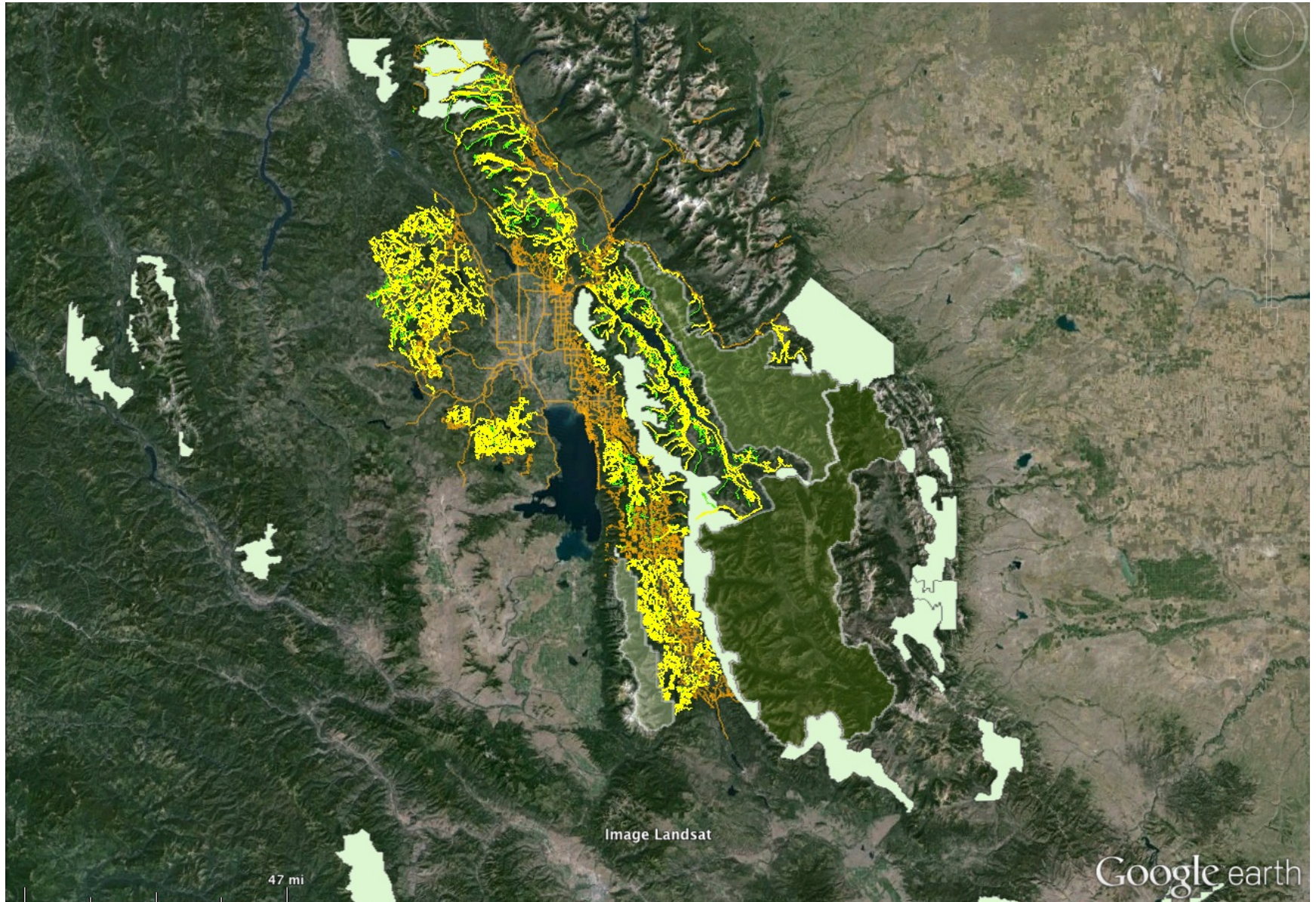
September 2014

National Geographic

The map on the right is from National Geographic and does not show either NREPA or America's Red Rock Wilderness Act. Were I a young person, I'd probably get pretty excited about the map on the left because it shows there's a lot of wild country left in the West worth fighting for. In fact, I find it exciting as an old person - but I can't say the same of the map on the right.

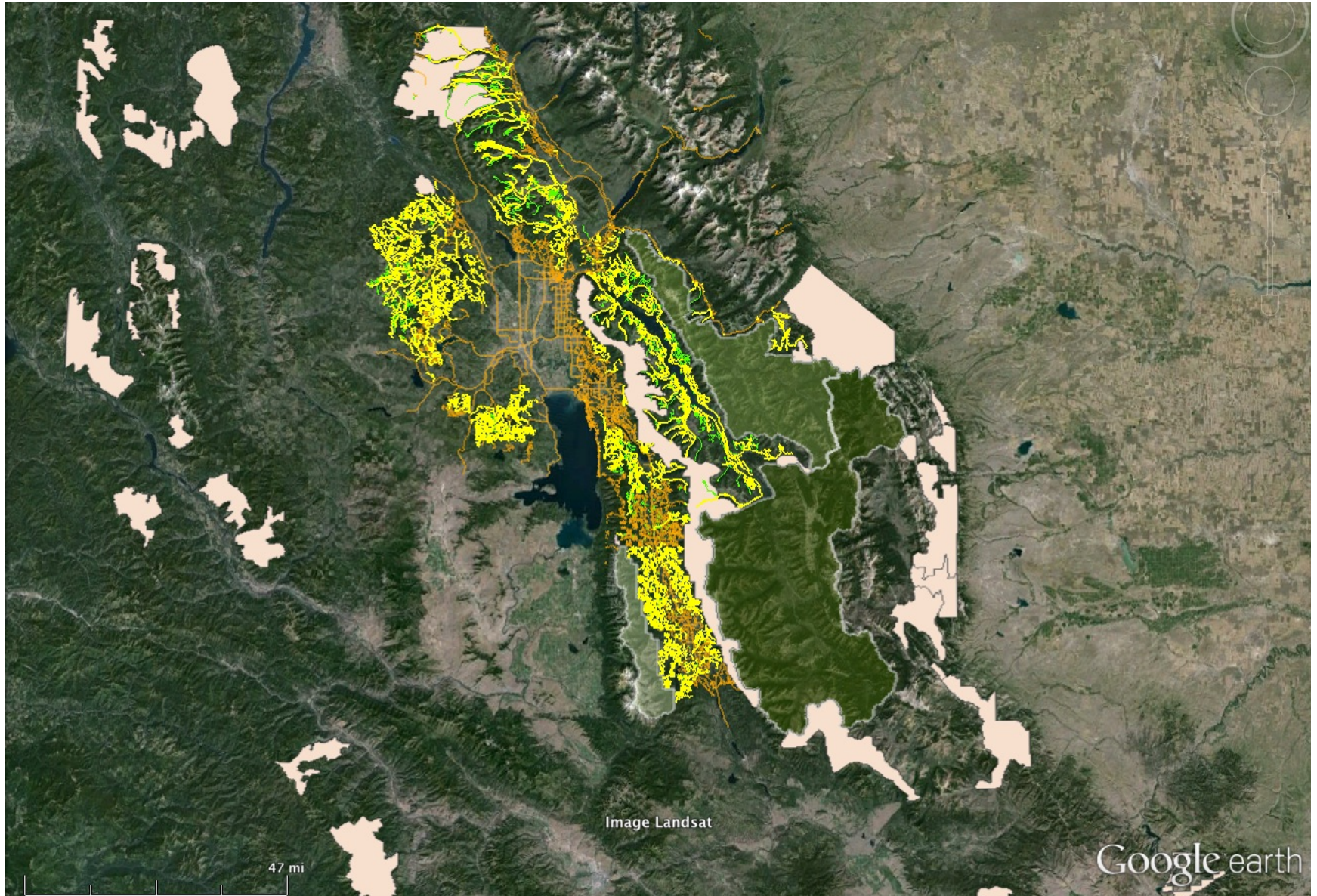
Indeed, the map on the right signifies a hasty retreat from the lands that would have been designated by the 1988 Wilderness Bill vetoed by President Reagan in the follow map of the greater Bob Marshall country known as the Crown of the Continent:

1988 Wilderness Bill



Proposed Wilderness, shown in creamy-green, improved in Congressman Pat Williams' 1994 bill (next map):

1994 Wilderness Bill



Proposed Wilderness is shown in beige, above. There is hope for even better proposals!

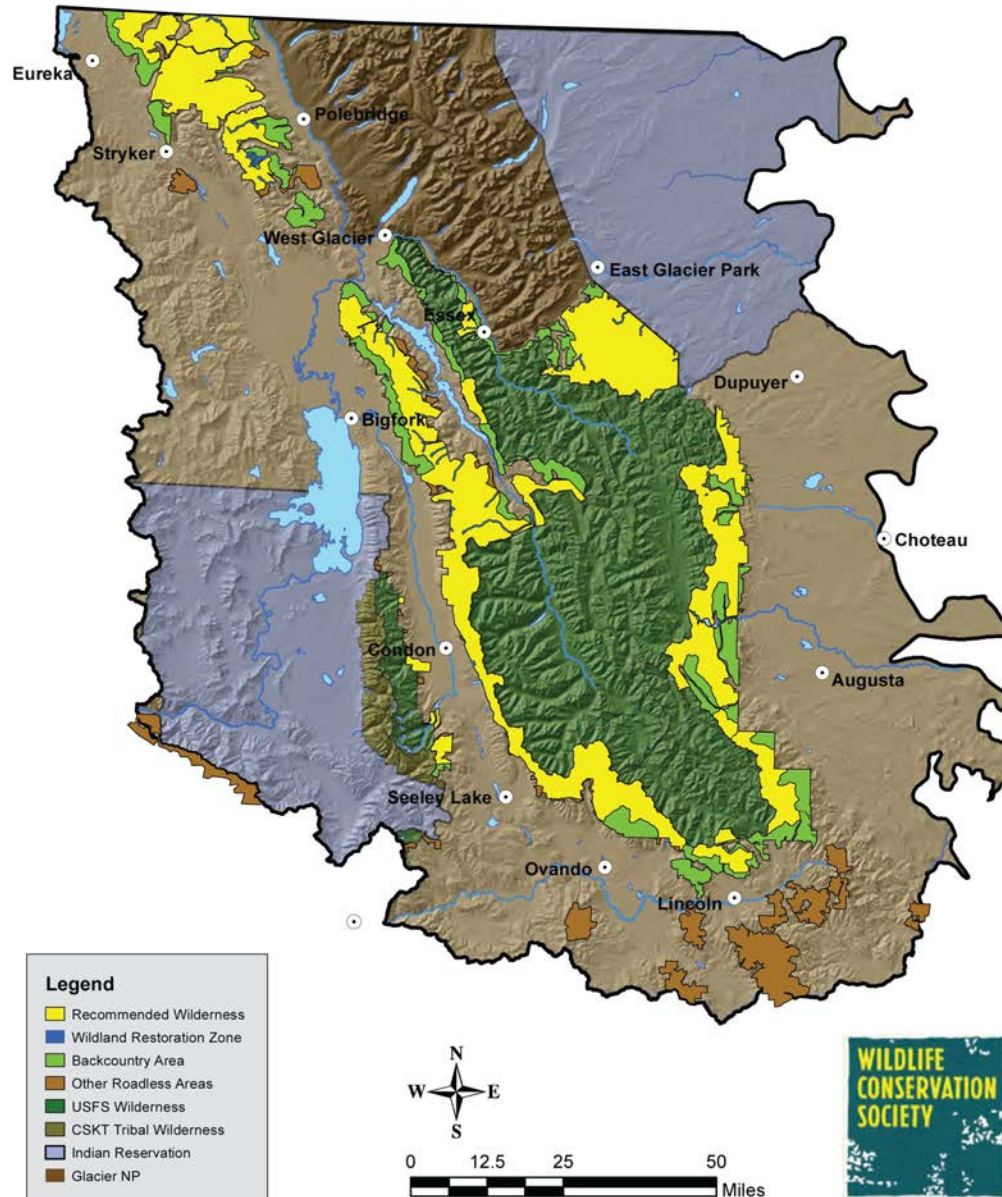
Wilderness is about a lot more than the human endeavors of logging or recreation. It is also about the fish and wildlife that would have no voice at the table were it not for conservation laws and their advocates. NREPA is based on the principles of conservation biology.

The map on the following page is Dr. John Weaver's recommendations for Wilderness in the Crown of the Continent area as a member of the Wildlife Conservation Society. It is based on the habitat needs of five species: grizzly bear, wolverine, mountain goat, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout.

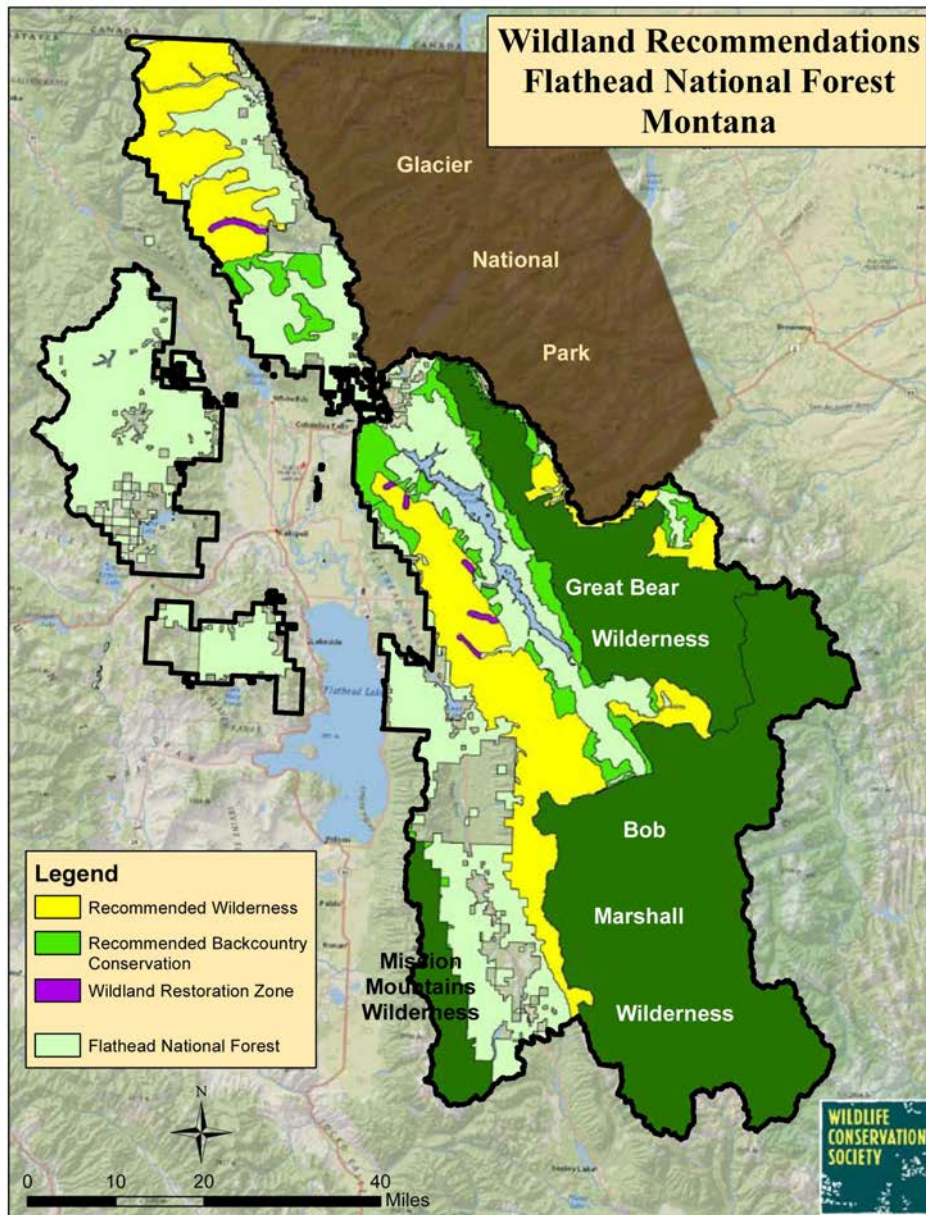
These types of recommendations are made all the more feasible by the new Forest Planning regulations, which require the Forest Service to evaluate the wilderness potential of recovering wildlands. This may include some old logging roads, not just the formal Inventoried Roadless Areas that must be reviewed under the Wilderness Act.

Note that Dr. Weaver's Wilderness recommendations shore up protection for fish and wildlife by expanding public land protections outward from the heart of the Glacier National Park and Bob Marshall Wilderness areas. This I like to refer to as the "Ring Around the Bob!"

Weaver's Crown of Continent Report



Weaver's Flathead N.F. Report

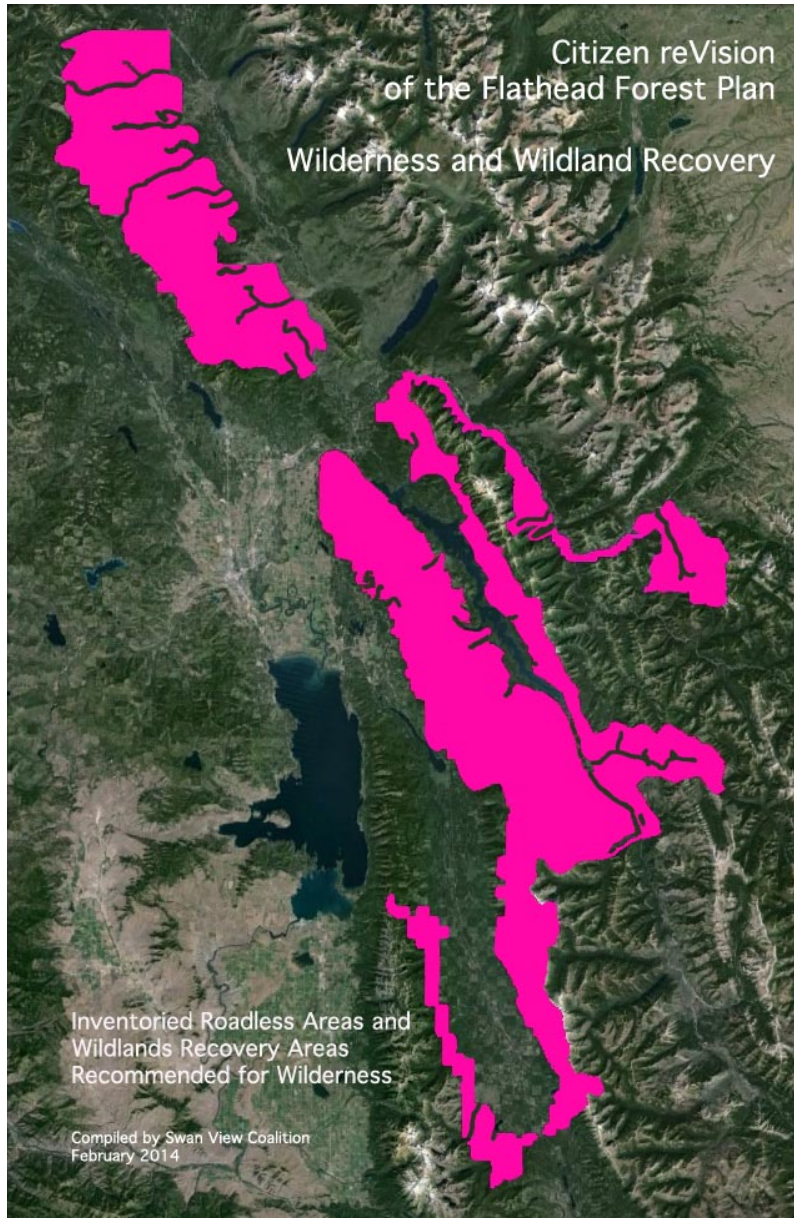


With Forest Planning in mind, Dr. Weaver fine-tuned his recommendations for the Flathead National Forest as shown here.

Collaborative efforts on the Flathead have thus far produced a formal proposal for the two northernmost areas in the Whitefish Range to be recommended for wilderness designation during Flathead Forest Plan revision. It is known as the Whitefish Range Partnership.

This bit of wilderness nearest the Canadian border is proposed in trade for nearly doubling the area to be scheduled for logging by delisting the grizzly bear, increasing logging in its security core habitats, and challenging limits on logging in threatened lynx habitat. That's a darn risky way to reportedly provide more certainty for the logging community!

Citizen reVision of Flathead Forest Plan



This is the Citizen reVision of the Flathead Forest Plan we and others have proposed to the Forest Service.

It would protect all formal Inventoried Roadless Areas as Wilderness and utilize the new Forest Planning provisions to recover additional wildland recovery areas.

This would reconnect severed wildlife corridors and form more efficient management area boundaries.

It includes considerations for numerous species not accounted for in Dr. Weaver's recommendations.

The Wilderness Act was passed in 1964 to protect public lands from “an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization.” Those threats have increased and so should our efforts to protect and recover America’s public lands for the benefit of America’s fish, wildlife and people. The Wilderness Act called for a continuing review of America’s wildlands, not a one-time shot at designating Wilderness.

We should take heart from the history of the Civil Rights Act that was also passed in 1964. We should be bold in our proposals and reach out to the rest of the nation; for these are their lands too. We should boldly announce that “we have a dream;” not half a dream, not one-tenth of a dream remaining after years of collaborating with the enemies of wilderness.

Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of the bus and the nation stood by her side. We must likewise insist that fish, wildlife and public wildlands not be relegated to the back of the bus. And we cannot allow advocates for fish, wildlife and wildlands to instead be thrown under the bus!

As Bob Marshall and his cofounders of The Wilderness Society wrote into their founding documents in 1935:

“We want no straddlers, for in the past they have surrendered too much good wilderness and primeval which should never have been lost . . . Above all we do not want in our ranks people whose first instinct is to look for compromise.”

The following two photos show just a bit of what’s at stake; in this case the high, wide and handsome northern Swan Range – the largest contiguous chunk of wild roadless country remaining on the Flathead National Forest!

Swan Crest: Sixmile Mtn. to Bob Marshall Wilderness



Swan Crest: Warrior Mtn. to Columbia Falls

