



Quiet trail users unite along the Divide

The 3,100 mile-long Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) is America's longest and most rugged quiet trail. Benton Mackay, founder of the Appalachian Trail, first envisioned the idea of the CDNST in 1966, and in 1978 it was established by Congress under the National Trails System Act. In Montana, the portion of the trail largely follows the backbone of the Rocky Mountains for approximately 820 miles.

The intent of the CDNST is to provide scenic, high-quality, primitive hiking and horseback riding experiences on a non-motorized trail while also preserving the trail's significant natural, historic, and cultural resources.

Portions of the trail remain as primitive roads, but efforts continue to re-route the CDNST off primitive roads or other routes where motorized travel is allowed and to link non-motorized trails. As noted in a 1997 Forest Service memo about trail use, "Allowing motorized use on these newly constructed trail segments would substantially interfere with the nature and purpose of the CDNST."

Recently a mix of quiet trail user groups negotiated an agreement called the Montana High Divide Trail System about trail use on and around the CDNST, extending from the Anaconda-Pintlar to the Scapegoat Wilderness. While the groups were in agreement about the need for motor-free trails, there was less agreement about which areas should be proposed for wilderness.

Under the 1964 Wilderness Act, bi-



John Gatchell climbs Nevada Mountain, which is proposed wilderness on the Continental Divide Trail. (MWA file Photo)

cycles, along with hang gliders, skateboards, and other "mechanized transport" are prohibited, the exception being wheelchairs.

Out of respect for the American Wilderness Act, the approach taken was to add more quiet trails rather than reducing the amount of proposed wilderness. In the end, the groups reached an agreement that provides hundreds of miles of single-track trails for bicycles as well as blocks of new wilderness.

The nine groups signing the agreement include the Highlands Cycling Club of Butte, Mile-High Back Country Horsemen of Butte, Helena Bicycle Club, MWA Wild Divide Chapter, Last Chance Back Country Horsemen of Helena, Prickly

Pear Land Trust of Helena, Helena Trail Riders. Great Divide Cycling Team, Helena Outdoor Club and the Continental Divide Trail Alliance.

The groups are urging the Helena National Forest to adopt the agreement as part of the travel plan.

The Lincoln Ranger District is just beginning a travel planning process to address trail use in the Lincoln area including a portion of the CDNST. A priority for MWA will be to keep the CDNST motor-free, to provide quiet trails for bicycles and preserve options for wilderness. If you have an interest in trail use on the Lincoln district of the Helena National Forest, please contact the MWA office in Great Falls, 453-9434.



MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

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Comments due Aug. 22

BLM revises Resource Management Plans for south central MT

The Bureau of Land Management is in the beginning stage of a process to develop two Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for lands in south central Montana. One plan is specific to Pompeys Pillar National Monument (PPNM) and adjacent BLM lands covering 51 acres along the Yellowstone River.

The other, much larger plan covers approximately 427,290 acres of federally managed surface land and 906,084 acres of federal subsurface mineral estate.

These BLM lands are scattered across south central Montana and even dip into Wyoming, from the Pryor Mountains on the south to the Big Snowy Mountains on the north. They include four wilderness study areas, nine Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), one Natural Area, segments of the Lewis and Clark and Nez Perce National Historic Trails and the administration of 6,340 acres of public land inside the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range in Big Horn County, Wyoming.

RMPs are important because they articulate a vision and set standards for managing various uses. These two RMPs are expected to take three years to develop.

At this stage of the process – called “scoping” – the BLM is seeking public comments on what issues to address in an environmental impact statement (EIS). The BLM will accept comments beyond the official Aug. 22 due date, but sending a comment now will ensure that important issues are addressed in the EIS and that you will receive future information about the proposed plan.

Here are some issues of concern to include in your letter:

Wilderness Study Areas

The Pryor Mountain, Burn Timber Canyon, and Big Horn Tack-on Wilderness Study Areas are adjacent to each other, separated only by primitive roads. All three of the WSAs were recommended by the BLM for Wilderness designation in 1991. To ensure they remain a viable option for consideration as wilderness, ask the BLM to identify any illegally created roads or other changes which might degrade the character of the WSAs.

The Twin Coulee Wilderness Study Area, bordering the Forest Service managed Big Snowy WSA was NOT recommended for Wilderness by the BLM in 1991.

Since then, the Forest Service has eliminated motorized vehicle use in most of the WSA improving its wilderness character. Ask the BLM to reevaluate the wilderness character of the Twin Coulee WSA and develop a plan to protect, restore and improve its wilderness values so that it is compatible with management of the Big Snowy WSA and can be recommended for Wilderness designation.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Ask the BLM to inventory the nine ACECs to determine whether they are managed in accordance with the values for which they were created and also to identify other areas for special management consideration that possess natural, remote, and/or primitive characteristics.

Ask the BLM to identify and inventory resources and other values, and use its authority to designate or increase the special management areas (such as ACECs) as a component of the planning process.

Range Management

Range management should be addressed in the RMP and the guidelines and indicators for healthy range conditions should be described in the RMP. Ask the BLM how range conditions will be monitored, when corrections are needed, and how will they be implemented.

Quiet Trails

Ask the BLM to provide a balance in use by creating quiet trail opportunities for hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers.



Photo by Margaret Webster

Weatherman Draw ACEC– assessment of special areas to be included in RMP

Oil and Gas Drilling

The RMP should explain how the public will be informed. If it is determined an area is appropriate for oil/gas drilling, the RMP should explain what stipulations will be placed on leases to limit the damage and restore the area to a more natural setting.

Send Comments to:

Email: Billings_PompeysPillar_RMP@blm.gov Fax: (406) 896-5281

Mail: Bureau of Land Management

Billings Field Office

Attn: Billings/PPNM RMPs

5001 Southgate Drive

Billings, MT 59101

Contact Kim Prill, BLM, 406-896-5199 or the web site for more information:

http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/billings_field_office.html

Remember to use your Albertsons card

If you have an Albertsons Preferred Savings Card, you won't need to also use the Community Partners card to credit your purchases to the MWA Island Range Chapter. But you will need to give the cashier your Community Partners Card first, so they can credit the MWA account. From then on you will only need to use the Preferred Savings Card.

If you need a Community Partners Card to establish an account, it can be obtained by contacting the chapter office, 453-9434.

The MWA Island Range Chapter participates in the Albertsons Community

Partners program to raise funds for the chapter. Each quarter the chapter receives a refund based on the amount of purchases.

stops to observe the prairie's blooming flowers.

The hike is 3.6 miles and is considered moderately strenuous with a route that includes a steep descent to the river's edge and a climb back up to the bluff. Bring rain gear, bottled water, snack and appropriate footwear.

This hike was not listed in the Wilderness Walks book, to make reservations, contact Schaller at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, 727-8733.



LAND TRANSACTIONS OFFER PROMISE

Off-road vehicle use out of control; comment by Sept. 11

Tenderfoot Creek drainage remains one of the most scenic roadless areas in the Little Belt Mountains. The clean cold water of Tenderfoot Creek also provides a critical fishery for the Smith River.

In an effort to maintain the wild character of the drainage and protect habitat, the Lewis and Clark National Forest has prohibited ATV use on most trails in the drainage since 1988. The new travel plan is even more protective, designating most the Tenderfoot drainage as a quiet, non-motorized block of forestland.

Despite the restrictions, the lower segment of the trail has changed from single-track into a two-track road. Even worse, ATV tracks are now visible through established patches of spotted knapweed. Unless the patterns of use change, the qualities which allowed this canyon to be included in past wilderness bills will be lost.

The good news is that two proposed actions, a land acquisition and a land exchange, if completed, will allow the Lewis and Clark National Forest to finally control motorized access into the area and manage the area in a manner which is consistent with the travel plan.

Currently, land ownership along the Tenderfoot is a mix of private and public lands. Last year's travel plan is an improvement, but motorized vehicle use has continued as vehicles access the canyon through private land, which the Forest Service does not control. So far, the private landowners have been reluctant to close off motorized access through their property.

With assistance from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), the Lewis and Clark National Forest is trying to acquire private land owned by the Bair Ranch Foundation. The RMEF is working to secure an option to purchase 8,200 acres of land in the Tenderfoot drainage from Bair with the intent of turning it over to the Forest Service. The Forest Service would in turn apply for funding to the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to reimburse the RMEF. Consolidating this land is key to controlling use in the area.

Complimenting the land acquisition is a land exchange with another landowner, the Zentner Ranch. The land exchange includes 151 acres in the "Taylor Hills" also located in the Tenderfoot drainage. Like the land acquisition, it would further consolidate ownership for both parties and



MWA File Photo

ATV road through a patch of spotted knapweed.

allow the Forest Service to control trail use across private land through an easement, while also assuring road access to the trailhead. The Lewis and Clark National Forest is asking for comments on the land exchange. Comments are due by Sept. 11.

The Tenderfoot drainage is one of only three large blocks designated as non-motorized in the Little Belt summer travel plan decision. These two land transactions are critical to protecting the wilderness character of the Tenderfoot.

WRITE THE FOREST SERVICE

Tell the Forest Service you support the Taylor Hills land exchange if:

The motorized vehicle route down Taylor Hills is not extended onto the land acquired through the exchange.

The trail easements crossing private land are non-motorized, consistent with the travel plan.

Some enforcement action is taken to ensure that the travel plan is adhered to.

E-mail: comments-northern-lewisclark@fs.fed.us

Please type "Taylor Hills Land Exchange" in the subject line

Write to:

Forest Supervisor Spike Thompson

Lewis and Clark National Forest

Box 869

Great Falls, MT 59403

Wilderness License Plates

Ride on the wild side by proudly sporting the Montana Wilderness Association's "Wilderness" license plate. This design shows your support of Montana's wild creatures and open spaces, our blue skies and clean waters.

You can order your wilderness plate for just \$40. Twenty-five dollars of the fee will help the Montana Wilderness Association protect wilderness and traditional recreational opportunities for everyone. In subsequent years, your wilderness plate can be renewed for just \$25.

To order a new wilderness license plate now, drop by your county licensing bureau. To purchase a new plate when your current plates expire, look for a check box on your mailed renewal notice. Enclose \$40 with your renewal payment, or stop by your county licensing bureau.



New members donate through Montana Shares

The following are new members who made donations to MWA through the Montana Shares Workplace Giving Campaign. Thank you for your support of MWA and Montana Shares.

Vicky Barsness	Great Falls
Alan Burley	Great Falls
Joel Carlson	Great Falls
Jana Carter	Great Falls
Tim Lorenz	Great Falls
Wilbert Arle Mangold	Great Falls
Lance Olson	Great Falls
Lindsey Peebles	Great Falls
Quincy Walker	Great Falls
Ann Watson	Great Falls

CHAPTER NEWS

New officers, board members elected

A new MWA Island Range Chapter board of directors and officers were elected at the August annual meeting, held at Oddfellows Park, Aug. 7.

The new officers include Scott Friskics, president; Gerry Jennings, vice president; Joanne Bernard, treasurer; and Dan Bennett, secretary. As past president, Keith Gebo will continue to serve as an officer.

Dan Bennett will also continue to serve as the Chapter representative to the Montana Wilderness Association state council.

Board members Tom Crane and Scott Friskics serve as at-large members of the MWA state council.

New MWA Island Range Chapter board members include: Cindy Asthalter, Chris Forzley, Don Griffith, Jim Heckel, Lindsay Love, Colleen

Mercer, Dodger Newhall, from Great Falls, and Jay Eklund from Geraldine.

The following members will continue on the board: Tom Crane, Aart Dolman, Lisa Easton and Katie Kotynski, Great Falls; Sally Lydon, Sand Coulee; Roy Jacobs, Choteau; Larry and Betty Salois, Cut Bank; Jim Brenna, Havre; and Dave Mari and Dave Byerly, Lewistown.

A big thanks also goes out to Helen Comer, Richard Fisher, Randy Gray, Gene Johnson, Tom Kotynski, and Cathy Lewis and who stepped down from the Board. Their efforts are much appreciated.

A special thanks is extended to Keith Gebo who served as president over the past year. The Chapter by-laws limit the Chapter president to a one-year term.

ISLAND RANGE CHAPTER
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President:

Scott Friskics 727-6335

Vice President:

Gerry Jennings 452-9072

Treasurer:

Joanne Bernard 781-2627

Secretary:

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Visit us on the web at
www.wildmontana.org



**Recycle to
support
the Chapter**

MWA has an account at Pacific Recycling for members to donate the earnings from their recycled materials.

Just let the attendant know that you want to credit the Montana Wilderness Association account.

Pacific Recycling has two locations: 1700 12th Ave. N, and 1403 3rd St. NW in Great Falls.

Mark Your Calendar!

Great Falls Conservation Council

Noon – Thursday, Aug. 21

Penny's Gourmet To Go

815 Central Ave, Great Falls

Starting Sept. 4, the Conservation Council will meet every Thursday.

Island Range Board Meetings

Wednesdays, Sept. 17 and Oct. 15,
5:30 p.m.

Great Falls Education Assn.

511 13th Ave. South

Great Falls

Welcome New Members

Don and Margaret Beatty

..... Great Falls

Bart Ekren

..... White Sulphur Springs

Marianne Schappek

..... White Sulphur Springs

Noy Holland and Sam Michael

..... Choteau

David Tonkovich

..... Choteau