



Northern Region News

A Newsletter for Employees and Retirees • Issue 2, 2004

Recreation Fee Demo Under Review

The Northern Region has been providing over two million dollars worth of recreation services funded annually through the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. The program is only authorized by Congress through December 2005. Legislation is being proposed and hearings scheduled in April and May 2004, on whether to permanently authorize this program. The outcome will potentially affect R1's ability to provide these services.

If the fee demo authority is not extended or made permanent, the Forest Service will lose its ability to charge fees and retain receipts at the local units. Under fee demo authority, units can retain 95 percent of the fees for use on the recreation site and for cost of collection.

In 2003, the Region collected and retained \$2.4 million from fee demo receipts. Those funds permitted a tremendous variety of work to be ac-

complished. They paid for the presence of campground hosts, wilderness ranger contacts, interpretive services and program, Heritage expedition opportunities, grooming winter trails, plowing parking lots, and the renovation of historic cabins and lookouts used for the public rental program, among many other things.

R1's current projects and fees are in line with the national criteria for charging recreation fees, referred to as "The Blueprint." Implementing the national Blueprint resulted in only a few changes to projects in the Northern Region.

The Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on April 21 on the implementation of the Recreation Fee project by



Big Larch Campground Amphitheater, Lolo NF, constructed with Recreation Fee Demo funds.

the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, and on policies related to the program.

For more detailed information contact Terry Knupp, program leader, at 406-329-3603.

Lewis and Clark Gets New Supervisor
—Paula Nelson, Regional Office



Lesley "Spike" Thompson of Hamilton, MT, is the new Lewis and Clark forest supervisor. Spike comes from the Bitterroot National Forest, where he was the deputy forest supervisor for the past 3 years. During his tenure there, he served on a detail as acting forest supervisor for the Salmon-Challis National Forest in central Idaho.

Spike began his duties February 8th in Great Falls where his wife and one son joined him. Another son is married and lives in Dickinson, ND, and his third son attends classes at Minot

State University in Minot, ND.

Spike began his career in 1976 as a range conservationist on the Malheur National Forest in eastern Oregon. He has held a number of important leadership positions with the agency, including a 10-year district ranger assignment on the Dakota Prairie National Grasslands. Early in his career, Spike worked as the resource assistant for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's Unity District, and soon after served as the range staff officer on the Nez Perce National Forest.





Regional Forester Gail Kimbell

A Message from Gail...

RO units are scheduled. I've enjoyed meeting people and am impressed with the commitment and dedication I've observed, no matter the job series or grade.

We have a lot of work ahead of us. The Healthy Forests Initiative alone is taking extraordinary effort working together with communities, partners and each other to move more of our lands into healthy condition. It will not

be accomplished without challenge or controversy. But if we keep our eye on the prize—healthy ecosystems—we will make some real progress.

Also, I want to acknowledge the transition our administrative staffs are going through. There is understandably tremendous anxiety among Information Systems, Human Resources, Budget and Financial Resources employees who do not know their future or whether there will be positions for everyone as we move forward. We need to be supportive of those employees who are affected. As Regional Forester, it is my intent that we place as many of these folks in meaningful positions as we can.

Now that I've been here for 4 months, I've had the opportunity to visit nine forests and the grasslands and have visited with many units in the Regional Office. The remaining field and

Gail Kimbell New Regional Forester

On December 19, 2003, Chief Dale Bosworth announced that Gail Kimbell would be moving to the Northern Region as the new regional forester. She replaced Brad Powell who accepted the position of Wildland Fire Leadership Council coordinator, a WO National Fire Plan position based in Phoenix, AZ. Kimbell's appointment was effective February 8.

Kimbell had been associate deputy chief of the National Forest System since April 2002. Previously, she served as the forest supervisor on the Stikine Area of the Tongass, Big Horn, and Pike and San Isabel National Forests.

She began her career as a forester for the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon.

She then held a variety of forester positions with the Forest Service and was a district ranger in both Oregon and Washington before her forest supervisor assignments.

Powell, with over 33 years with the Forest Service, had been R1's regional forester since August 2001, after serving as regional forester in the Pacific Southwest Region.

Pipe Bomb Found at Trailhead Near Missoula

—Dale Brandeberry, R1 Law Enforcement

Unfortunately pipe bombs are becoming more common on the national forests of Montana. In the last few years, evidence of bombs have been discovered in recreation sites around Forest Service signs and in outhouses.

Last February, officers from the Forest Service, Missoula County sheriff's department, and Montana Highway Patrol responded to a report from a forest protection officer of a pipe bomb at the Maclay Flat trailhead on the Lolo National Forest. Officers discovered two pipe bombs and a concrete horse lawn ornament less than 100 yards from the trailhead. The bombs were made of tightly packed sparklers placed in a 12- to 16-inch PVC pipe and capped. The

bombs were about 3 inches in diameter with an explosive power approximately equal to 3 sticks of dynamite.

One of the pipe bombs had already



Pipe bomb found near the Maclay Flat trailhead near Missoula. —Photo by Don Polanski

exploded when the officers arrived on the scene. The other bomb was retrieved by the Missoula County bomb robot and rendered harmless. Missoula County sheriff's department and Forest Service law enforcement and investigations are investigating.

Bombs found on the forest the last few years have been sparkler bombs or those made by packing black powder into a metal container. One was made of a carbon dioxide cartridge filled with black powder and triggered with a high-explosive fuse. Many of these bombs are extremely unstable and should not be picked up. Employees that discover suspicious items should contact law enforcement immediately and keep others out of the area.

Removing Fish Barriers —Anne Connor, Clearwater National Forest

Since 2000, the Nez Perce Tribe and Clearwater National Forest have worked to remove and replace culverts that are barriers to fish and other aquatic organisms in the Lochsa River Basin, specifically the Fishing to Legendary Bear project area. The forest identified 13 culverts that blocked access to about 25 miles of habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms.

The replacement structures included 10 culverts and one bridge, and are designed to span the width of the channel, have the same slope as the channel, and have a natural substrate bottom to simulate conditions in the stream channel.

As of the end of 2003, 11 barrier culverts have been replaced in the Fishing to Legendary Bear streams. In 2003, we replaced a barrier culvert with a fully passable bridge on Legendary Bear Creek using CMII funds. The bridge, together with a second culvert replacement scheduled for 2004 con-



Legendary Bear culvert outlet before replacement.



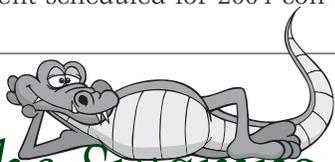
Legendary Bear culvert outlet after replacement.

struction, will open up 4.5 miles of fish habitat for steelhead trout, spring/summer chinook, bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. The Nez Perce Tribe paid for the contract design for this bridge and for the installation of the second culvert.

The project allows fish and other organisms to pass freely through the bridge, which is essentially “invisible” to the stream.

The tribe and forest have been working together since 1996 to improve conditions for fish in the Fishing to Legendary Bear drainages. Projects include road decommissioning, barrier culvert replacement and road risk inventory. The result is that we have seen the return of threatened steelhead and bull trout to several target streams.

Other partners include Idaho Transportation Department, Plum Creek Timber Company, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Forest Foundation and Trout Unlimited.



In the Swamps of North Dakota —Kathy Bushnell, Dakota Prairie Grasslands

Imagine yourself in the midst of swampy lowlands surrounded by a forest of sycamores, giant redwoods, bald cypresses, and many more exotic plants. It's hot and humid, with snails, turtles, insects, and lemur-like mammals.

You're in North Dakota's Little Missouri National Grassland, of course! Maybe this wasn't your first guess, but the proof lies in the Dakota Prairie Grasslands' McKenzie Ranger District office.

“We know this area 60 million years ago was like Florida is today,” Dave Valenzuela, district geologist, said. “The fossils from this part of the geologic record signify a dramatic climate shift from a subtropical environment to a cold, arid environment.”

The new exhibit was created through a partnership with the North Dakota

Geological Survey. The exhibit displays fossils of prehistoric animals, hands-on activities and a time period-matching mural.

Some fossils found in North Dakota have successors still living today in other parts of the United States. According to Valenzuela, “The dramatic climate shift is explained most likely by the plate tectonic theory, which suggests the North American continent is drifting away from the equator.” Climate change brought a major change in inhabitants as well. The crocodile skull displayed in the exhibit accurately represents that environmental shift.

The fossil display depicts a very unique history of North Dakota—a story that most would not believe without the fossils to prove it.

“I hope that exhibits of this kind will illustrate the importance of North Dakota's fossil resources, one of the State's important natural resources,” Hoganson said.



Skull of a crocodile that once—60 million years ago—inhabited all of North Dakota and reached a length of 12 to 15 feet.

Four-Year-Old Fires in the Grasslands

—Kathy Bushnell, Dakota Prairie Grasslands

On October 31, 1999, the Gap Fire burned more than 50,000 acres on the Little Missouri National Grassland, along with one ranch home, several outbuildings, pastures, hay bales, and many miles of fences. Mother Nature's Halloween "trick," consisting of a sudden onset of 70 mile-per-hour winds, caused embers from a fall burn to scatter across the prairie, sparking dry vegetation and igniting one of North Dakota's largest wildland fires in the past 100 years.

Today, numerous subsurface lignite coal seams continue to burn as a result of the fire. Coal beds are ignited when a wildland fire burns over lignite coal outcrops. They can burn slowly and steadily for many years.

"Burning coal seams have been a factor in shaping the landscape of the Badlands for eons, and the evidence is found in the area's red outcroppings," said Oscar Knudtson, Dakota Prairie Grasslands assistant fire management officer. "The coal seams turn sediment

into scoria, which is used for road surfacing and other decorative purposes throughout the state."



A local excavation company works to excavate one of the burning coal seams on the Little Missouri National Grassland.

For safety purposes, the North Dakota Public Service Commission contracted a local company to excavate or extinguish certain burning seams. With help from the Forest Service, the company has completed work on 8 of the

28 burning coal seams identified on the grassland.

"We're still discovering coal seam fires that have been undetected for four years," Knudtson said. "Some of these haven't grown in the past several years and some have grown considerably. They are all different shapes and forms, and they grow at different rates."

Burning coal seams offer more than the potential for innovative management methods—they serve as tourist attractions and educational opportunities for people to witness the natural process of landscape formation and learn firsthand about the intricacies of physical science.

"Often times, students turn to books for research material, but now they can turn to the Badlands to witness history in the making," Knudtson said.

Getting the Message Out: *Fire in the Ecosystem*

—Kimberly Delgado Nelson, Clearwater National Forest

Forest managers on the Clearwater National Forest developed a three-pronged strategy for vegetation management prior to the 2003 fire season—and used it successfully. The strategy provides for significant disturbance in the forested landscapes by three methods: fire, lightning, and harvesting.

A display, created by the Public Affairs staff, visually describes the benefits of the strategy. It also talks to the recently formed partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and emphasizes the importance of the Healthy Forest Initiative.

The display was recently unveiled at the National Convention for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and will be set up at many events.

Forest supervisor Larry Dawson is strongly committed to getting the word out that fire is an important part of the ecosystem. "We feel that those who love our forests and the creatures that live there must also love fire. It is just as significant as the sun, the rain and the air," Dawson said.



A tabletop photo display is part of the exhibit that includes hands-on elements. The three 10- by 8-foot-tall panels can be used together or separately.

Constructing Trails the Old-Fashioned Way

—Becky Wiles, Clearwater National Forest

Early this summer, hikers and bikers will have a new trail to use. The Clearwater National Forest's Palouse District is constructing the 4¹/₂-mile Feather Creek Trail near Bovill, ID. Open to all nonmotorized recreation, the trail is recommended for hikers of all skill levels and for mountain bikers at the intermediate or advanced riding level.

The trail is a reality because of the hard work of the Montana Conservation Corps trail crew and Forest Service trail crews from Lochsa and North Fork Districts. Two members of the Lochsa crew, Kit and Ruby, can “move more dirt in two hours than a trail crew of eight can in one day,” said Lochsa trails specialist Jim Beale. Kit and Ruby are a mule team who are learning how to pull a plow and grader for trail construction.

Although the Feather Creek Trail is not located in a wilderness area, practicing trail construction using non-mechanized tools, such as a hillside plow and Beatty grader, are valuable skills. Federally-designated wilderness areas have specific management guidelines that delineate what types of tools can be used for trail construction and maintenance.

The Forest Service is one of the few agencies in the United States that still uses this type of technology. By the early 1950s, farm equipment manufac-



Forest Service mule, Ruby, helps construct the Feather Creek Trail on the Clearwater National Forest.

turers stopped building horse-drawn equipment in favor of gas-powered equipment. Today, it is difficult to find parts to repair the crew's plow and grader. Beale said most parts come from Amish businesses. “They are some of the few people who still make quality parts for these old pieces of equipment,” he said.

Crewmembers first prepare the trail by cutting trees and clearing duff. Then the mules plow and grate the trail for several hours. After that, Kit

and Ruby are ready for a siesta in the pasture. Although the mules may be done for the day, there is still plenty of work for the crews. They finish the trail by cutting exposed roots, knocking down the berm on the outside of the trail caused by the grader, and building water bars to prevent erosion.

When you are enjoying the Feather Creek Trail, think of hard work, sweat, and bales of hay that went into its construction. Enjoy your trip!

Ultimate Makeover for Calf Creek Cabin

Calf Creek Cabin is located along Sheep Creek Road in the Little Belt Mountains 25 miles northwest of White Sulphur Springs, MT. It was built in 1953 to house field crews. The Forest Service started renting the cabin to the public in the 1980s, which proved to be very popular.

During the summer of 2000, the district decided to remodel the building and convert it into a well insulated, vermin-proof, two-room cabin that could



Calf Creek Cabin before its transformation.



sleep six people. Because of the extreme fire seasons of 2000 and 2002, the project was not completed until spring of 2003. Facility and Fee Demo funds financed the construction. Contractors installed the cabin's new roof, flooring and siding, as well as the woodshed and outhouse. In late June, the Belt Creek and White Sulphur Springs Ranger Districts organized an employee workday to do the finishing touches and cleanup.

The cabin is now equipped with a propane cooking stove and lanterns, wiring

and lights for a generator, a wood heating stove, and bunk beds sleeping six.



The newly restored Calf Creek Cabin.

Outside, along with a new sweet-smelling toilet and shed, there is now also a picnic table, fire ring, and barbecue grill.

Calf Creek Cabin is open year round, but accessible only by snowmobile from December 15 to April 15. The rental fee is \$40 per night and we provide the propane and firewood. The White Sulphur Springs District is very proud of the facility and hopes it will provide an excellent recreational opportunity to the public.

Restoration Project in the Great Bear Wilderness

—Timothy Light and Denise Germann, Flathead National Forest

The Flathead National Forest Heritage Team and the Spotted Bear Ranger District completed a Passport in Time (PIT) project at the Schafer Meadows Guard Station last summer. The project's focus was the restoration of a one-and-half-story log carpenter's shed. The building was constructed about 1930 and used as a

wood shop and tool storage. Over time, the foundation failed, one sill log rotted and the porch wore out.

The guard station is located in the Great Bear Wilderness on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. The team, including six PIT volunteers, hiked 14 miles to reach the facility. Volunteers from Florida, California, Oregon, and

Montana, as well as a member of the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, each contributed 70 hours of labor to the project, as well as their travel time and expenses.



PIT crew in front of the finished shed.



PIT volunteer, Tom Darnell, crawls out from under the carpenter's shed.

Work included removal of the porch, pulling out the rotten sill log, removing the old foundation, dropping trees to serve as the new sill and porch joists, digging and pouring new footers and piers, using hand tools to cut and insert the new sill log, and reconstructing the porch. The volunteers learned the fine art of crosscut sawing and how to properly drop a tree.

One of the highlights was making the last dovetail notch and watching the new sill log slide into place just like it grew there. The facilities at the station are valuable and the team was pleased to add more years of productive life to the carpenter's shed.

Restoring a Treasure

—Cindy L. Schacher, Nez Perce National Forest

Hidden in the trees near the Gospel Hump Wilderness is a beautiful two-story log cabin. Built in 1933 by Elbert Cully and Paul Warden as the Adams Ranger Station, the cabin was crafted with exquisite workmanship. Former Forest Service employee, Horace Henderson, skidded logs to the site with mules. Dovetail corner notching accentuates the cabin's exterior. Although time and the elements have taken their toll, the cabin's logs are in exceptionally good condition.

As early as 1862, Adam's Camp served as a way station along the Milner Trail, an old toll wagon road leading to the once booming mining community of Florence, ID. The Forest Service established the area adjacent to Adam's Camp as an administrative site in 1919. Ranger station employees administered grazing permits, evaluated homestead and mining claims, timber and boundary surveys and camp supplies, managed fire protection programs, and administered several lookouts. In 1933,

the log ranger station was constructed as the home for the district ranger and his family. In the 1960s, the Forest Service moved the district's administration to Slate Creek Ranger Station. Since that time, the cabin has slowly deteriorated.

Project sponsor Bob Hafer and several local individuals and groups presented a proposal to restore the cabin to the North Idaho Resource Advisory Committee (RAC). RAC accepted the proposal and restoration work began last summer. Workers removed an old add-on porch on the east side of the cabin. Local contractor and historic building specialist Bruce Dreher then jacked up the building to remove a badly decayed and broken sill log and replace it. Contractor Arden Lytle and Forest Service employees installed a French drain around the building to help keep water and moisture from causing further damage.



Historic building preservation specialist, Bruce Dreher, prepares a new sill log.

In 2004, the Forest Service and contractors plan to replace the west elevation sill log, remove damaged interior fiberboard, replace the roof, install a new chimney, and replace the concrete foundation. The cabin will become part of the Forest Service Cabin Rental Program, so anyone can experience a little piece of the past.

Avalanche Center Celebrates 14 Years

—Doug Chabot, Gallatin National Forest

The Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center opened this past winter for our 14th season. Based in Bozeman, MT, the center encompasses the Bridger, Gallatin, and Madison Ranges, the Lionhead area near West Yellowstone, MT, and the mountains around Cooke City, MT.

Through a partnership between the Forest Service, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Gallatin County Search and Rescue, and other agencies and businesses in the National and local outdoor community, we put out daily avalanche advisories. We also teach high-quality education programs to all outdoor recreationists.

Last season, users accessed our advisories 1,577 times a day—a 22-percent



Gallatin NF employee, Karl Birkeland, investigates the remnant of a slab avalanche in the Bridger Range.

increase over the previous year and a 340-percent increase from 5 years ago.

Montana had four fatalities last year, three of them in our advisory area and

all of them snowmobilers. As of mid-March 2004, there were none.

Last winter, there were an unprecedented five live recoveries using avalanche beacons. Three of the recoveries were in our advisory area—proof of the effectiveness of avalanche training. In 2002–2003, we taught 60 avalanche education programs that reached 3,700 people. As well, over 700 snowmobilers attended avalanche center lectures and classes.

This winter, we erected two new remote weather stations. Fire donated a station in the Cooke City area. Friends of the Avalanche Center purchased the Lionhead area station. Log onto our Web site and click on *Real Time Weather Conditions* to access these stations.

A Novel Approach to Support Education

—Liz Burke, Helena National Forest



From snowshoes to wildflowers, the Helena National Forest and Helena Forest Foundation teach environmental education programs.



Outdoor and environmental education activities are on the rise on the Helena National Forest as the partnership between the forest and the non-profit Helena Forest Foundation grows. While the private 501(c)3 organization was founded in 1999 with the principle objective of conserving and enhancing environmental resources on the forest, education programs have increased dramatically in recent years.

Last winter, 530 participants enjoyed

SnowSchool, a new program made possible by a partnership between the Montana Wilderness Association and the foundation. For hosting this winter's ecology program, the foundation received 50 sets of snowshoes for outdoor enthusiasts young and old.

Participants learned the basics of snowshoeing while sharpening their skills in winter tracking, plant identification, and snow structure. SnowSchool classes were offered to scout troops, af-

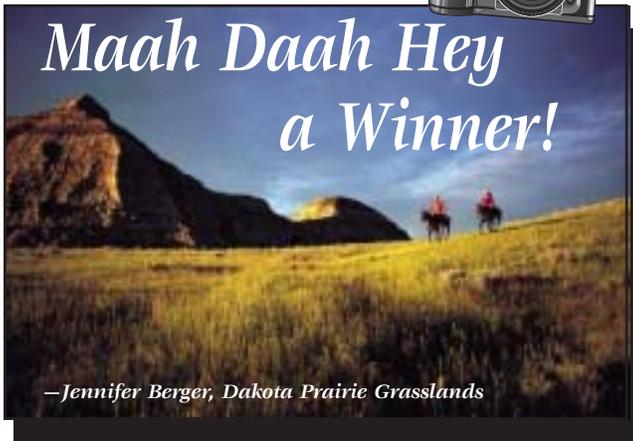
ter-school groups, home schoolers, and the general public at sites throughout the Helena National Forest. Next year, an avalanche awareness component will be added in the Lincoln area.

Working together, the Helena National Forest and the Helena Forest Foundation are able to offer education programs on a variety of themes, from fire ecology and outdoor skills, to plant and animal science. In 2003, over 3,000 participants and 178 volunteers participated in education programs. The focus of spring activities will include Leave-No-Trace skills and a wildflower walk up historic Lewis & Clark Pass.

The long-term vision of these two organizations is for the foundation to assist in coordinating new programs, training volunteers, and aiding in program instruction while drawing upon the resources and expertise of Forest Service employees. The result will be hands-on experiences in nature that lead people to value and protect our natural resources and communities.



Maah Daah Hey a Winner!



—Jennifer Berger, Dakota Prairie Grasslands

Chuck Haney's award-winning photo of the Maah Daah Hey Trail.

A first-ever Photo Contest for National Recreation Trails (NRTs) was sponsored recently by American Trails. The goal of the contest is to celebrate

these outstanding trails and to make more Americans familiar with them. Awards in various categories highlighted the diversity of the NRTs.

Two photos of the Maah Daah Hey Trail taken by photographer Chuck Haney of Whitefish, MT, captured the contest's Mountain Biking and Scenery and Natural Features divisions!

The trail is a 96-mile-long multiuse, nonmotorized trail that winds its way through the rugged badlands and rolling prairies of western North Dakota. It is R1's latest addition to the NRT system.

Over 800 trails in all 50 states have been designated as NRTs on Federal, State, municipal, and privately owned lands.

The Maah Daah Hey Trail Association was formed to help manage, maintain, and promote the trail. According to the association's Bob Shannon, "The trail setting and outdoor experience are world class, contributing to rave reviews and awards from throughout the country. For instance, the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) bestowed the Maah Daah Hey Trail with their most prestigious award, that being an IMBA Epic Ride of 2001. And most recently, a national women's sports magazine named the Maah Daah Hey Trail among their top 18 outside sport destinations in the country."

Seeing the World by Snowshoe

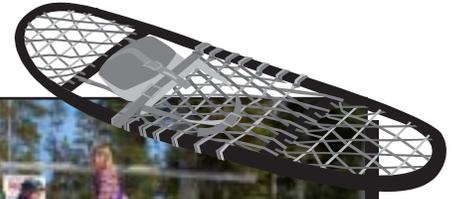
—Patti Johnston, Wisdom Ranger District

On March 10, the Wisdom Ranger District on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge and the Bitterroot National Forest teamed up to host a winter ecology day at Chief Joseph Pass. Students from Wisdom and Jackson Schools snowshoed to the Gordon Reese Cabin where four stations were set up featuring winter survival, animal adaptations, wildlife tracking and predator-prey relationships. The students ranged from preschool age through 8th grade.

The Bitterroot National Forest received a post-fire State and Private Forestry grant for the purchase of snowshoes to utilize for educational programs on the forest. This is the third winter that the Bitterroot forest has offered snowshoe programs for school students in the Bitterroot Valley.

Instructors included Julie Shreck and Sherry Ritter, Bitterroot National

Forest; Leslie Nyce, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; and Patti Johnston, Arlee Staley, and Mikal Reese all from the Wisdom Ranger District.



Young folks having a fun winter ecology day at Chief Joseph Pass.

The day was well received by the kids and parents who attended—we had many comments that it should become an annual event.

The Wonders—and Fun—of Winter

—Samsara Chapman and Debbie Anderson, Helena Forest Foundation



In November 2003, we received an opportunity to partner with the Montana Wilderness Association to become a site for winter science and recreational learning in Helena. The byline of the Helena Forest Foundation is “connecting nature & community through education” and we saw this program as another vehicle, muscle powered to be sure, for providing educational opportunities.

One of the more exciting aspects of this program is that this partnership has brought together two local non-profit organizations and the Forest Service to share a common goal: a desire to expose all ages to the fun and wonder of their winter environment. Hel-

ena SnowSchool sites will include the Helena National Forest, regional parks, and local open spaces.

We had an outstanding mentor in Becky Smith-Powell of the Tally Lake Ranger District. She and her assistants graciously spent two days teaching us how their program is run and one day observing the program in Glacier National Park. Armed with these examples, we returned to Helena and launched our own program.

Our kickoff event took place on January 31, 2004, at the Tenmile Creek Environmental Trail on the Helena Ranger District. With the assistance of nine community volunteers and two Forest Service employees, we had about

100 adults and kids taking snowshoe walks and discussing various aspects of winter ecology including plant, track, and snowflake identification.

Between January and mid-March, we hosted two volunteer training workshops, and 13 SnowSchool events with over 500 participants. The groups attending events included the general public, the local Audubon chapter, home school groups, public and private school groups, and Girl Scout troops.

With the success we had for this winter, we are sorry to see the snow leaving and cannot wait until December when we will kick off Helena SnowSchool 2005!

FireStorm 2000 Quilt Show

—Julie Schreck, Bitterroot National Forest

Twelve FireStorm quilts decorated the halls of the Bitterroot National Forest supervisor's office in Hamilton, MT, last fall. More than 10,000 individuals from 49 states and three foreign countries (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) supported the firefighting efforts in the Bitterroot Valley in 2000, putting their lives on the line each day. A desire to recognize these hard working folks served as the inspiration to create these amazing quilts.

The Bitterroot forest asked people interested in participating to create a quilt block of their own design and send it to the forest. In response, the forest received more than 290 quilt blocks. These blocks, as well as over 50 photographs, were quilted together on a back-



An example of the quilts in the FireStorm 2000 quilt show.

ground of red, yellow and green to create 12 quilts about 54 by 60 inches. Pat Ritchie, as well as a small group of Bitterroot Valley quilters, worked years, literally, to create these gorgeous quilts.

The quilts have traveled around the country and been displayed in Texas, California, Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Arizona, and numerous locations in Montana. Presently, Pat Ritchie is looking for a permanent location to house the collection.

The quilts are a tribute to those who lost their homes and possessions during the fires, to those fire personnel who fought day in and day out, and to the people of Montana who came together in a time of crisis to assist and support one another.

Plum in Luck!

—Bill Jones and Christine Bradbury,
Clearwater National Forest

On December 23, 2003, the Clearwater National Forest completed the third of four phases in acquiring trail easements and fee title to all Plum Creek-owned lands the Lewis and Clark trail crosses. Initial discussions began in March 2001 between Plum Creek and the Forest Service. Certain properties Plum Creek agreed to sell, while others they wanted to retain, but were willing to sell the forest a trail easement.

Phase I was completed in July 2002. The forest acquired 776.47 acres, a por-

tion of which is also within the Wild and Scenic River corridor. The forest also acquired additional acreage near Glade Creek Camp near Packer Meadows, and 80 acres near Star Meadows.

The partners completed Phase II in September 2003. The transaction provided the forest with about 696,000 feet or 16 acres of trail easements crossing eight different Plum Creek parcels. The easements grant certain rights to the public for the use of these trails.

Phase III was completed in December.

The forest acquired 212.5 acres, including the remaining portion of section 21 near Glade Creek Camp, and 160 acres near Star Meadows in section 27.

This cooperative effort has allowed the forest to meet its objective of securing either total or partial ownership of all private lands in which the Lewis and Clark Trail is located. If funding becomes available, the partners hope to complete Phase IV in FY 2005, when the forest will acquire the remaining portion of Star Meadows south of U.S. Highway 12.

