

# MONTANA WILDLIFE

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## PUBLIC ACCESS: DEFENDING A MONTANA TRADITION

Montana is consistently rated one of the best places to live in the country, and it's no secret that easy access to the outdoors is one of the main reasons why. Nowhere else in the world can match the opportunities we have here to hunt, fish, camp and enjoy the great outdoors. Polls consistently show that the ability to get outside and enjoy fresh air, wild country, and clean water is the number one reason people choose to live here.

Montana's rich outdoor opportunities depend on our national forests, national parks and other public lands. These lands – totaling more than 28 million acres, or about a third of the state – provide ample opportunity for hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and other recreational activities. It's no surprise that Montanans visit public lands at a higher rate than almost anybody else

in the nation. One poll from 2015 found that 96 percent of Montanans reported visiting public lands in the last year—with more than 43 percent visiting more than twenty times.

Public lands are particularly important for Montana hunters. Montana has one of the highest rates of hunting participation in the nation – and many of our hunters depend on public land, where the do-it-yourselfer can chase just about any game species imaginable. Because of our diverse public land offerings, Montana hunters can stalk world-class bulls and giant bucks on national forests, and they can chase pheasants, grouse, and pronghorn on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. National wildlife refuges around the state provide the opportunity to hunt everything from waterfowl to elk to bighorn sheep.

Montana anglers also benefit from our state's great public access. In addition to our public lands, Montana also has some of the most public waterways in the nation. Under state law, the

streambed of every Montana river belongs to the public, no matter who owns adjacent lands. Unlike many other Western states, anglers can wade anywhere in Montana's rivers as long as they stay below the high water mark. This unmatched public access for fishing is part of why anglers from all over the world seek out opportunities to fish in Montana.

Public land and public access for hunting, fishing, and other recreation are also good for the economy. Of course, our recreational access directly supports billions of dollars in economic activity from outdoor and tourism related businesses. It also gives Montana a competitive advantage in attracting other job-creating businesses to our state. In an increasingly global economy, businesses can locate anywhere. Many entrepreneurs who have started in or moved businesses to Montana say that the number one draw was the mountains, rivers and prairies. Those landscapes, and their abundant opportunities to hunt, fish, watch wildlife, hike and pursue other recreational activities create a powerful amenity for attracting and retaining employees.

Montana's great public land and public access didn't happen by accident. Our national forests were some of the first ones set aside by President Theodore Roosevelt a century ago because these lands were being unsustainably managed and subjected to harmful levels of logging and mining. It took decades of effort to protect Montana's wilderness areas and other recreational lands. Our best-in-the-nation stream access law was also the result of decades of legal and legislative effort. We enjoy great outdoor opportunities because previous generations fought to secure our public access, and we can't take that access for granted.

### *Public access and public land face a host of challenges*

Yet even today, public access and public land face a host of challenges.

**Public Land Takeover:** Over the last few years, a small cadre of politicians has revived the idea that our national

public lands should be transferred to state ownership in order to speed up the pace of logging, mining, and other development. Some have even advocated selling off these lands for private development. So far, public opinion has defeated these proposals, but their well-funded political backers continue to push them at the state and federal level.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## HONORING A CONSERVATION CHAMPION



By Kathy Hadley  
MWF president

Fundamental to the protection of fish and wildlife resources and the habitats on which they depend is an engaged citizenry who step up whenever threats to our public resources occur. If you are reading this, you probably know people who are on the front lines of conservation and protection of our fish and wildlife resources.

These people and their actions are the very foundation of protecting what many of us hold dear. They are the people who spend endless hours going to meetings, writing letters and emails, volunteering to serve on a wide variety of committees that take immense amounts of time, energy and travel in our huge state. They are the ones that we all should thank for raising their voices on behalf of keeping public lands public, clean water, wildlife habitat acquisitions and protections, and proper federal land management. They are our conservation heroes, and we rarely take enough time to acknowledge their good work.

Dr. Bob Ream is one of those to whom I'm referring. Bob has spent most of his adult life researching, teaching and advocating for wildlife and wild places in this state. He is a Professor Emeritus of Wildlife Biology, College of Forestry and Conservation at the University of Montana, Missoula. While at the university, he founded the Wilderness Institute and its interdisciplinary Wilderness and Civilization academic program and taught wildlife management to thousands of wildlife biology students over his career. He served as a mentor to hundreds of students and helped launch the careers of many talented conservationists, perhaps his greatest accomplishment of all.

He started working on wolves in his Wolf Recovery project in the early 1970s, mapping sightings and helping identify the home ranges of wolves. The goal of that study was to determine whether or not wolves naturally still existed in the state and whether or not reproduction was occurring. Few know that Bob is also a gifted pilot and flew many, many hours looking for wolves as part of his wolf recovery project. He is also a volunteer pilot for Light Hawk, an aviation conservation organization that provides flying opportunities to conservation groups. He drafted the first wolf recovery management plan for MT FWP in 1995 although nothing was done with it at the time because of uncertainties about funding and agency responsibilities.

Bob successfully ran for the legislature and served eight sessions from 1983-1999. In 2009 Governor Schweitzer appointed Bob to the MT Fish and Wildlife Commission as the Chair. While on the Commission he dealt with many controversial issues including delisting of wolves and setting hunting and trapping regulations, the Tongue River railroad wanting easements through the Miles City hatchery, disputes in management of Flathead Lake between the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes and the state, issues associated with brucellosis in elk, and migrating bison from Yellowstone National Park.

Many of us cheered when Bob was nominated for a second term on the Commission by Governor Bullock in 2013. The cheering turned to sorrow for us when he abruptly resigned from the Commission right before his confirmation hearing in the legislature. Bob was quoted in the papers at the time that he believed it would be a sham hearing, and he did not want to subject himself to a predetermined, partisan outcome. Governor Bullock was disappointed that Bob was leaving the Commission and said, "As an educator, a legislator and a commissioner, Bob Ream has dedicated his life to public service and ensuring that Montana is a better place for the future generations. He's been a powerful advocate for resident hunters and anglers and a tireless supporter for the rights of everyday Montanans to access public lands, rivers and streams."

Although Bob is retired from the

University, he continues to be on the road, doing his very best to help educate people and communities about the threats of climate change to wildlife and wild places in Montana. When he is not on the road, Bob continues to spend time, mostly in the outdoors doing the things he loves: hunting, skiing, sailing and canoeing.

Few of us can come close to the record of lifelong contributions that Bob has made in Montana. He has been and continues to be a tireless activist for hunters and anglers and a strong supporter for the rights of everyday Montanans to access public, lands, rivers and streams.

Bob is a kind, gentle man with an inner resolve and strength of character that inspires others. The world is a much better place because of his work. We are all deeply in his debt.

*Kathy Hadley is MWF's President. A lifelong hunter, angler, and conservationist, Kathy has been a*

*member of MWF for 27 years. Contact her at [kathh@ncat.org](mailto:kathh@ncat.org).*

*Bob is a kind, gentle man with an inner resolve and strength of character that inspires others.*



Bob Ream

# MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

## THE BLACKFOOT CLEARWATER STEWARDSHIP PROJECT PROTECTING MONTANA'S "BACKYARD"

By Dave Stalling  
MWF Western Field Rep.

It's not often you see the Blue Ribbon Coalition – an organization that promotes off-road vehicle use – working with the Montana Wilderness Association and the Montana Wildlife Federation. But the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project (BCSP) is that kind of project. Hunters, anglers, outfitters, guides, snowmobilers, ranchers, loggers, local businesses, county commissioners and numerous others have joined forces to cut through the contentious divisiveness that hinders public land management today and reach common ground. As Connie Long of Bob Marshall Wilderness Outfitters puts it: “This is a grassroots, made-in-montana, collaborative project.”

For hunters and anglers, that's good news. The West Fork of the Clearwater River, the North Fork of the Blackfoot, Monture Creek, the Wild Swan Front, Grizzly Basin . . . this beautiful landscape and its rivers sustain wild elk, mule deer, whitetail, bighorn sheep, native westslope cutthroat, bull trout and an abundance and diversity of other wildlife. The BCSP will help ensure it remains that way, protecting and enhancing Montana's hunting and angling heritage while also helping to maintain and create

*The project has already created 138 jobs bringing \$33 million to the local economy.*



Dave Stalling

jobs in the forest and recreation industry and support a healthy, viable community. The project has already resulted in the creation of 138 jobs, bringing \$33 million into the local economy through forest health and restoration efforts, reducing noxious weeds, restoring streams and selective, sustainable logging. It also entails the creation and maintenance of about 2,000 miles of multiple-use trails and the addition of 83,000 acres to the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat and Mission Mountain Wilderness areas. In other words, there's something for everybody. This cooperative effort will help ensure the

Blackfoot Clearwater area remains a good place to live, work, visit, hunt, fish, hike, backpack, snowmobile, and otherwise enjoy. It helps keep Montana . . . well, Montana!

This is why the Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) has supported this effort for nearly a decade and is part of the coalition calling for congressional action to make the BCSP official.

How can you help? We're asking everyone who supports this effort to contact the Montana Congressional delegation – Senators Jon Tester and Steve Daines, and Congressman Ryan Zinke – and urge them to introduce and support legislation that will implement the BCSP.

“It's a project we all agree on,” says Loren Rose of Pyramid Lumber. “It's time to get it done.”

To learn more about the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project and how you can help, please check out: <http://www.blackfootclearwater.org>

## GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES NEW AGENDA EXPANDING AND PROTECTING PUBLIC ACCESS

BILLINGS, Mont. – Near the banks of the Yellowstone River, Governor Steve Bullock announced details of his public lands and access agenda, saying it's his “responsibility as governor” to uphold the Montana value of protecting the state's outdoor heritage.

The Governor was joined by sportsmen, conservationists, recreationists, and members of Montana's outdoor recreation and tourism industries as he unveiled his plans to expand and protect public access to public lands and waters throughout Montana.

“Public access to public lands is a fundamental part of what it means to be a Montanan,” said Governor Bullock. “And it's my responsibility as governor to uphold this Montana value – now and in the years to come.”

Governor Bullock announced the following plans to expand and protect public access to public lands in Montana:

- To create the “Montana Office of Outdoor Recreation,” housed in the Governor's Office of Economic Development;
- Create and hire a new position, a “Public Access Specialist” for Montana within the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, whose role will be to troubleshoot specific issues preventing full public access to public lands (as of today the position is currently accepting applications);
- Ask the legislature to fully fund Habitat Montana, which uses license fees to increase access to public lands but was recently frozen by lawmakers;
- Call on Montanans to solicit ideas about how to improve access to public lands throughout Montana by utilizing [thekeepitpublic@mt.gov](mailto:thekeepitpublic@mt.gov) email address; and
- Recommit his unequivocal stance against transferring or selling of public lands.

Bullock was joined by the Billings Chamber of Commerce, The Base Camp and the University of Montana's Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Initiative, which recently conducted a statewide survey about the growing importance of public lands in Montana.

Groups from across the state praised Governor Bullock's announcement.

A 2013 report by the Center for Western Priorities, a Denver-based think tank, identified 4 million acres of Forest Service, BLM, state and other public lands, in six Western states, that were completely inaccessible. Montana had the largest share – nearly 2 million acres – of this “landlocked” public domain.

Governor Bullock believes these plans will improve access to Montana's public lands and water and will strengthen Montana's robust economy and the Montana jobs that rely on outdoor recreation and tourism.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR CONSERVATION



By Dave Chadwick  
Executive Director

A new survey from the University of Montana's Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Initiative demonstrates yet again the extent to which Montanans value our natural resources and outdoor heritage.

The poll found that fully 88 percent of us say that issues like clean water, clean air, and public lands are important when we're deciding whether to support an elected official.

Public opinion polls also frequently show how much Montanans love to get outside and enjoy our great outdoors. We visit public lands more often than residents of any other state for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and wildlife watching. When it comes to hunting and fishing, more than half of Montanans report enjoying those activities: one of the highest rates of hunting and fishing participation in the country.

Given how much time we spend outside, it's no surprise that the quality of our natural environment, and our access to it, are among the most important things we think about in an election year. Importantly, support for conservation is nearly universal across party lines, with Republicans, Democrats and Independents all identifying it as a top factor in their voting decisions. It's clear that we want to protect the outdoor heritage that makes Montana such a great place to live, and we want our elected officials to put aside political differences and do everything they can to help protect our public lands, clean waters, wildlife, and access.

Those of us who live in Montana sometimes say we're lucky to live here. But it's not just luck: it's also because of decades of hard work by Montanans who have fought to protect our natural environment and our right to enjoy it. For the last 80 years, members of the Montana Wildlife Federation have been at the forefront of many of those efforts. Our strength as an organization has come from the many people from all walks of life who work together to defend Montana's abundant wildlife, our lands and waters, and our unmatched access to the outdoors.

The challenges to our outdoor heritage keep growing. As you'll see throughout this newsletter, we need to keep up our efforts to protect our outdoor heritage and public access so that future generations can continue to enjoy what we love about the Treasure State. As you read these stories, I hope you'll consider ways that you can get involved. Our future depends on people stepping up and speaking up for our outdoor heritage, and MWF is here to help you make that happen. Working together, we can continue to help preserve what's best about Montana.

*Dave Chadwick is MWF's Executive Director. Contact him at [dchadwick@mtwf.org](mailto:dchadwick@mtwf.org).*

## CREATING JOBS WHILE PRESERVING OUR OUTDOOR HERITAGE

## MADE-IN-MONTANA JOBS &amp; CLEAN ENERGY

By Orion Thornton  
Partner/Owner OnSite Energy

For over ten years, I have been involved in the Montana solar industry as an industry professional, a business owner, and as an advocate through education and community outreach. Over this period of time, I have seen solar and renewable energy boom. The growing solar industry provides many advantages worldwide, nationally, and in our home state of Montana. Job creation is one big benefit, as is giving consumers the ability to generate their own power with solar energy. Offering an alternative to a fossil-fuel dependent energy industry that jeopardizes our climate is another, critically important benefit.

As the solar industry grows, job creation does too. Nationwide the solar workforce is now over 200,000 strong, and just this year the United States hit a big milestone with one million solar installations, enough to power 5.5 million homes. In Montana, around 200 people are employed directly by solar developments and there are more than 1,500 customers generating their

own power with solar energy.

Since 2012, our business alone has installed over 100 solar electric systems on Montana homes and businesses, and we employ five people in skilled, high-paying jobs. I also have the privilege of working as a trainer for people seeking employment in the solar industry, and it's always encouraging to see how eager people are to pursue a career in this clean, made-in-America energy industry. Additionally, as a percentage, more veterans are employed in the solar industry than any other industry in the United States. There's no contesting the positive impacts solar has had and continues to have on our economy and communities.

Climate change affects every place on earth, and Montana is no different. A changing climate presents an enormous threat to Montana's natural history and our outdoor recreation. I have seen first-hand the effects climate change is already having on our recreational opportunities. From lower than normal snowpacks in the mountains that subsequently limit fishing opportunities in the summer, to longer more intense wildfire seasons that limit hiking and backpacking trips, our outdoor heritage is at stake if we don't begin to take climate action seriously.

Growing up in Northwestern Montana, in the heart of the timber industry, I clearly remember

signs displayed in our neighbor's windows that proclaimed, "This home is supported by timber dollars." My family owned and operated a reforestation business, so the food on our table also came from timber dollars. I want the sign in my family's front window to read, "This family supported by solar dollars." Much like the dedicated coal miners, oil field technicians, and loggers who have worked hard to build families and communities throughout Montana, we have an opportunity to create the next generational industry: an industry our grandchildren can be proud of, an industry built on environmental ethics, hard work, and sound financial investments that are both local and secure.

It is time for Montanan's elected officials, both state and federal, to recognize the changing energy economy that's in front of us, and to see the new sign in the window. We need to start working on a plan that helps Montana transition to a clean energy future, but this doesn't mean we have to abandon our past. We absolutely must help vulnerable communities like Colstrip, as we expand our energy portfolio, but the worst thing we can do for future generations is ignore the right to live in the Montana we know and love. Montana truly is our most precious resource.

*MWF Member Orion Thornton and his family live in Bozeman. He is a partner/owner of OnSite Energy, a solar design and installation company.*

**The solar workforce is now over 200,000 strong.**

## HEALTHY, BALANCED HERDS AND AMPLE HUNTING OPPORTUNITY

# THE IMPORTANCE OF ELK HABITAT SECURITY

By David Stalling  
MWF Western Field Rep.

For those of us who chase elk around the wilds, the last word we might use to describe these wily animals is “vulnerable.” But when elk lose too much habitat security, or are too easily accessible for too many hunters, or technology evolves beyond the ability of elk to easily escape and evade bullets and arrows, elk can indeed become overly vulnerable. When hunted elk – which often means bull elk – become overly vulnerable, it can have negative impacts on the health of the herds and result in reduced hunting opportunities.

Concerns about bull elk vulnerability originally sprang not so much from high mortality in the bull segment of herds, but from low calf numbers. In the late 1960s, wildlife biologists noticed that widespread declines in pregnancy rates and spring calf counts coincided with reduced mature bull-to-cow ratios in many herds. Although yearling bulls are capable of breeding cows, serious questions arose about their reproductive efficiency and the social and ecological consequences.

In 1969, concern over a proposed timber sale in the Lewis and Clark National Forest, along the Middle Fork of the Judith River in Montana’s Little Belt Mountains, proved a catalyst for change in elk management. Forest Service officials viewed the sale as critical to the forest’s planned program of timber harvest. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks biologists feared disastrous effects on elk. In an effort to resolve conflict, the two agencies met in March, 1970, and agreed to the Montana Cooperative Logging Study. This 15-year research project involved five government organizations and a timber company. About the same time, similar research began in the Blue Mountains of Washington and Oregon. The two research projects produced a wealth of crucial information concerning the effects of logging and roading on elk, elk habitat and elk hunting – spawning concepts

such as habitat security and elk vulnerability.

Here are some of the findings from that extensive research:

In the absence of older bulls, a lack of social order may lead to more fighting among young bulls and increased harassment of cows throughout a more extended rut. Spending even more energy on the rut saps vigor in both bulls and cows, increases susceptibility to predators and tough winters and makes for less healthy calves. Since young bulls tend to breed later than old bulls, their calves are born later in the spring. Such late comers can miss out on prime growth-boosting spring forage and do not have enough time to gain adequate body weight before their first winter. In addition, calves are born over a longer period of time, instead of mostly all at once (what biologists refer to as “the flooding strategy”). All of this makes calves more susceptible to predation, disease and winter kill.

Because a large rack suggests a bull’s ability to adapt and survive, and put excess energy into antler growth, cows – when given a choice – pick larger, more mature bulls to breed, ensuring the best genes are passed on. A lack of mature bulls inhibits this adaptive genetic selection process. Wildlife biologists have noted that in herds that

lack mature bulls, overall pregnancy rates are often reduced, conception rates are delayed and the rut can be extended by a month or more.

*In a game of hide and seek, elk were increasingly the losers.*

In other words: There are reasons elk herds evolved with a certain number of mature bulls in their herds and related social structures and breeding behaviors. Healthy herds need healthy, big bulls. So in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s wildlife managers and

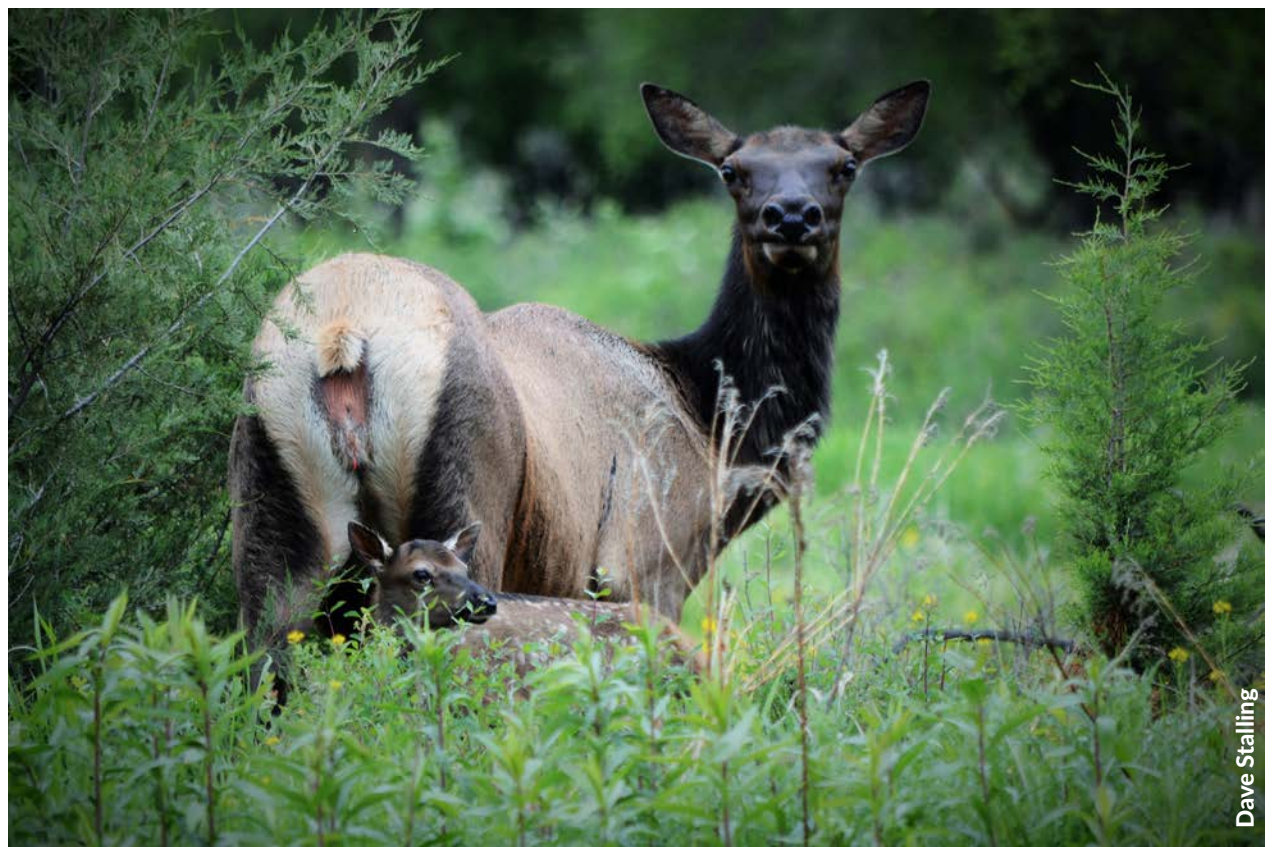
land managers worked together to improve habitat security, reduce elk vulnerability, maintain and enhance hunting opportunities, and ensure natural bull-to-cow ratios and numbers of mature bulls in our wild elk herds.

As Olaus J. Murie, considered the “father of elk management,” wrote in his monumental book, “Elk of North America,” published in 1951:

“Looking to the future, in view of the needs of elk and exacting requirements of recreation based on multiple use, the safest course is to model elk management along natural lines, so far as reasonably possible, to preserve its distinct habits as well as its habitat.”

Controlling elk vulnerability is key, and main-

*continued on page 10*



Dave Stalling

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## SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE IN HELENA PROJECT PEAKS TO CREEKS OFFERS URBAN ACCESS

By Peggy O'Neill  
Communications Coordinator  
Prickly Pear Land Trust

Driving by Fort Harrison, there is really not much to see if you look east of the campus. Just an overgrazed pasture plagued with weeds. But thanks to the imagination of Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT) and funding from the Army Compatible Use Buffer Program and a loan through The Conservation Fund, the 205-acre parcel of land will soon be populated with hikers, bikers, veterans, children and families enjoying Helena's newest park.



The property along Tenmile Creek is part of a larger project PPLT calls Peaks to Creeks. In addition to the parcel across Williams Street from Fort Harrison, PPLT purchased a 353-acre piece of land along Sevenmile Creek, less than a mile away. The Tenmile parcel provides the first public access to the creek within the Helena urban area, while the smaller piece includes a mile-long stretch of Sevenmile creek.

The Peaks to Creeks parcels are ideally located. Not only is it close to Fort Harrison and the VA medical center, it also borders the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts and Spring Meadow Resources, which provides independent living, recreational and other services to people with developmental disabilities.

"This project has literally something for everyone," said PPLT Executive Director Mary Hollow. "Prickly Pear Land Trust looks for projects that bring the community and conservation

together, and this project has brought together so many diverse interests in one place."

The vision for the property includes providing access to various types of trail users including patients and visitors to the VA hospital and the residents at Spring Meadow Resources. Some of the trails will be built to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

"The Prickly Pear Peaks to Creeks Project is incredibly exciting for VA Montana," said Mike Garcia, the public affairs officer for VA Montana Health Care System. "The proximity of such an incredible undertaking to the Fort Harrison VA campus will undoubtedly have long-term health benefits for our veterans recently returning with battlefield injuries as well as our older veterans and employees needing increased opportunities to remain active."

Jim Bissett, executive director of Spring Meadow Resources, is equally excited about

Peaks to Creeks.

"This project will greatly benefit the residents of Spring Meadows in that it will open up the pathways to a more extensive trail system to enjoy the outdoors and our natural waterways," Bissett said. "On our property, we have a limited trail system that will now become part of a bigger system allowing more access to nature and outdoor recreation. Many of our residents require mobility assistance and this trail system will accommodate them in this need, which will have a great impact on their overall health and well-being."

Trailwork, including the ADA trails, on the Tenmile parcel takes place this summer and fall. Sevenmile Creek trailwork is slated for next year.

For more information on Prickly Pear's Peaks to Creeks project, go to [pricklypearlt.org](http://pricklypearlt.org) or call them at 406-442-0490.

### OPEN LAND IS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION!

In July, people across Montana will celebrate Montana Open Land Month. This home-grown, month-long celebration honors all that open land means to our way of life and our economy.

Open land fuels Montana's multi-billion-dollar tourism and agricultural sectors, and entices entrepreneurs to locate their businesses here. Open land provides us all - hikers, bikers, hunters, anglers, boaters, photographers and more - places to get out and do what we love.

#### EXPLORE:

[Share the Big Sky](#) is an online collection of photographs, writing, video and art celebrating open land!

#### ATTEND AN EVENT:

Have fun at one of the many activities and events around Montana

#### GET SOCIAL:

Use the hashtag [#openlandmt](#), follow [@openlandmt](#), and like [facebook.com/openlandmt](https://www.facebook.com/openlandmt)

#### THROW A PARTY:

Celebrate your own way!

Learn more at [openlandmt.org](http://openlandmt.org).

MONTANA  
OPEN  
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JULY 2016

## MANY ACCESS OPTIONS PROVIDE OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

# MONTANA FAMILIES THRIVE ON PUBLIC LANDS

By Becky Edwards  
Mountain Mamas Director

Summer is upon us...and every mom in Montana knows what that means. Our local playgrounds, swimming pools, trails and rivers become classrooms for our wee ones for the next three months. The longest days of the year are spent catching frogs, roasting marshmallows on camping trips, and dodging elementary-aged neighborhood biker gangs pedaling off to their next adventure.

Moms across Montana wouldn't have it any other way.

I beam with pride at the end of the day looking at my three little ladies from across the dinner table: knees scraped, hair a tangle of knots and pine needles, and faces flushed from a day of playing under the big sky...instead of having spent the day indoors glued to an iPad screen. Their memories will be peppered with urban adventures right out our backdoor, thanks to public lands and rivers.

The Montana Mountain Mamas spoke out early and often in support of programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, because we rely on public lands every day to raise our kids. Even if we aren't on a backpacking trip in the Bob Marshall, riding the Going-to-the-Sun

Road in the springtime on bikes, or running the rapids on the Gallatin River - our public spaces positively affect our kids every single day. And as parents, we'll protect their right to access public spaces that enable them to scrape knees and get muddy.

LWCF supports vital local urban spaces like community parks, trails, playgrounds, swimming pools, fishing access sites and soccer fields. Our public lands are so much more diverse than national parks and big game hunting grounds on forest service land. Our public lands are all around us, every day.

Programs such as LWCF are a win-win for all Montanans. LWCF is not a tax that we see; instead the funding is derived from offshore oil and gas exploration. It tackles big-picture conservation issues such as checker boarded public lands that effect wildlife migration, but also closer-to-home solutions such as funding for a local lacrosse field and urban connector trails so that kids can take a trail from their homes all of the way to their school.

For most Montana parents, our public lands are where we raise our children. We depend on fishing access sites to float and fish our blue ribbon trout streams, we hold birthday parties in our neighborhood parks, and we make home purchases based upon proximity to playgrounds.

Kids who grow up in Montana get the best of both worlds. They understand the need for big country for big game, and often spend every autumn weekend hunting on our public lands with family and friends. However they also enjoy the local, close-to-home benefits public lands of-



Brett French

fer...like that evening casting session for trout in urban waterways across Montana.

The Montana Mountain Mamas are dedicated to raising our kids with plenty of fresh air, clean water, and access to it all. We are proud to speak out on behalf of our kids and our public lands. Visit [www.montanamountainmamas.org](http://www.montanamountainmamas.org) to sign up for our newsletter, check out our latest gear review, or read our most recent blog post from gals across Montana.

*Becky Edwards lives in Bozeman with her husband and three daughters, and is the Director of the Montana Mountain Mamas.*

## ENGAGING WITH YOUR FOOD, EXPERIENCING THE OUTDOORS

# EXPERIENCING THE JOY OF HUNTING

By Anne Kania

On a bright November day, unable to stay indoors a minute longer, I'm guiding two colleagues on a pheasant hunt - standing in as hunt master for my husband, Bruce.

Passing the last dense patch of winter berry, we're near the end of the first push. Mark is en-

joying the scenery. "Be ready!" I rasp, and, right on cue, a rooster explodes between us. Mark takes a fast shot, and connects.

Bird in hand, we're relaxed, chatting, as we amble through short grass where there "are never" any pheasants, and a huge rooster flushes at our feet. We empty our guns and the bird flies out of range behind a tree. "Any sign of a hit?" I ask. Mark and Sam shake their heads glumly. I had glimpsed two tiny feathers in the air after my shot.

Believing the bird lost, we proceed. Below me, at the bottom of a spring creek, my dog, Violet, is digging into the brush. Suddenly there's a squawk, and her face emerges full of pheasant. Since I had seen the feathers, I claim the bird!

My pre-Montana self would not recognize the person I am today. I grew up in the urban sprawl of northeast England; moved to New Zealand in my twenties, where I sang opera, enjoyed Shakespeare and frequented art-house movies.

And I was anti-gun. Until I met Bruce. It took him roughly five minutes to explain why he hunted; I was won over instantly. I'd always felt guilty about eating meat without engaging in the killing process, but here was an opportunity to source my own food - in an ancient, natural and sustainable way, in tune with the rhythms of life.

It didn't hurt, either, that the first time I tried his 12 gauge, I hit the target, three times in a row. Shooting was fun!

Then the hard part began. I'd go out bird hunting, and make one mistake after another - I'd shoot from afar, swing my gun through someone when I stumbled. I'd be behind the push, or in front, not quite in sync and got yelled at a lot. When I did shoot, other people shot as well so I never knew if the bird was "mine". Many times I'd want to run away in tears but I loved it too much to quit.

Eleven years later, I am an experienced and avid hunter, with more wild birds bagged than I care to recount. I am keen to pass on my skills to others. We have a beautiful property with wildlife galore. I am confident I can teach newcomers to become "safe and savvy hunters" more quickly than I did by trial and error. We've named our hunting school "Joy of Hunting". We teach in a style that is conducive to women but are open to co-ed classes as well.

"Joy of Hunting" sums up why I hunt. Behind the sadness of taking a life is exhilaration, gratitude and joy. For me, it's not about trophies but about a deep connection with Life.

*Anne Kania is a professional classical singer who moved to Montana in 2007 and has re-invented herself as a hunter. She and her husband, Bruce, own a 340-acre property on the Yellowstone River in Shepherd, which is stewarded for uplands birds and fish, and from which they operate two businesses - Floating Island International, Inc. and Joy of Hunting.*



## ILLEGAL ROAD CLOSURES DENY MONTANANS ACCESS PUBLIC ACCESS NEEDS STATE/COUNTY ACTION

The Public Land Water Access Association has been dealing with road and trail access to public land and water for more than thirty years. We are aware of some unresolved problems with roads and their status as we have fought many of these access battles.

There are a number of roads that exist as established county roads, yet they have been blocked, gated or have other obstacles. Many have been blocked for years. This is a violation of state law. Short of an emergency such as flood, fire, or



needed repairs, county commissioners have no authority to allow any man-made obstructions to exist on county roads.

In the court case on the Tenderfoot Road in Meagher County where commissioners claimed it was within their authority to allow a county road to be closed, the judge said state laws prohibited obstruction of county roads, and the attorney general of Montana retained the final responsibility to enforce state law. The judge also made it clear that lack of maintenance or use does not void the road surface or the 60-foot easement. Only a formal abandonment process can change the status of a county road.

Several laws deal with encroachments on county roads, including:

7-14-2135 says: "Notice to remove the encroachment immediately, specifying the breadth of the highway and the place and extent of the encroachment must be given to the occupant or owner of the land or the person owning or causing the encroachment."

7-14 2134 states: "If an encroachment obstructs and prevents the use of the highway for vehicles, the road supervisor or county surveyor shall immediately remove the encroachment."

PLWA requests that action be taken to open these roads as soon as possible and that fines be imposed as written into the statute, both for closing the road and possibly for damage to the road surface and the easement behind the closure.

*This is a violation of state law.*

Ignorance is no excuse for violating the law. County commissioners are subject to this pronouncement as well as the violator who installed the locked gate. Commissioners were elected to manage the road systems in their county. This is part of their job.

A second problem exists with roads that have never been designated as county roads but have long been used by the public as if they were. Some have a history of substantial public investment, including maintenance with taxpayer money. Many also have culverts and bridges installed with public funds.

These roads are vital to the transportation system within the county, especially now that fire seasons are longer and more severe and might require evacuations.

Yet these same roads are vulnerable to private closure.

PLWA cannot afford to challenge these closures, such as the Bodle Road in Teton County. We encourage counties to inventory these roads and identify those that are needed to protect life and property.

The Montana Wildlife Federation supported legislation during the last two sessions to do just that. But those bills failed to get out of committee. We will try again next time.

*John Gibson, of Billings, is president of PLWA.*

## LEWISTOWN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN PROTECTING HABITAT, ENSURING WILDLIFE

By John Bradley  
MWF Eastern Field Rep.

With the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument at its heart and surrounded by intact backcountry including the headwaters of the Judith River, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lewistown District oversees some of the greatest public wildlife habitat in the world, and with it one of America's strongest hunting heritages.

When access to first-rate big game, waterfowl and upland bird hunting has become more elusive, this landscape – a collection of mountains, coulees, wetlands, and sagebrush – is more important than ever. That is why, as the BLM's Lewistown Field Office drafts a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for 750,000 acres of public land, MWF is collaborating with conservation partners and local sportsmen to ensure the agency recognizes the need to protect this spectacular habitat for wildlife.

The CMR Wildlife Refuge and the Upper Missouri River Breaks are the core of these wild

lands. But these places can only provide world-class habitat if the public lands that surround them remain intact and undeveloped. There are hundreds of thousands of acres of prime, undeveloped habitat surrounding the Refuge and the Monument, including Blood Creek, West Crooked Creek, and the Dovetail area above the Musselshell. These places with their naturalness still intact, contain premier habitat and provide necessary security for wildlife. The BLM should manage them accordingly to protect and enhance the role they play as a buffer to the Refuge and the Monument.

There are several other important backcountry areas that extend from the river corridors. In these areas, the BLM should manage the land under Backcountry Conservation Areas, a new tool that prioritizes responsible recreation access, habitat restoration and management-including weed management, and maintains traditional uses of the land that benefit rural communities. The areas around Arrow Creek, Little Crooked Creek, and Drag Creek are a few examples that would benefit from this kind of prioritized conservation.

The BLM has an opportunity to apply smart, landscape-scale conservation in the Lewistown RMP, with wildlife and habitat- as well as the hunting opportunity that they provide - recognized as the highest value of these extraordinary public lands. Whether you have explored or hunted these lands first hand or dream of doing so, it is crucial to protect and conserve this landscape for its habitat and wildlife value for future generations of outdoor enthusiasts and sportsmen to enjoy.

To get involved with the Lewistown RMP process, contact John Bradley, Eastern Montana Field Rep, at [jbradley@mtwf.org](mailto:jbradley@mtwf.org) or 320-583-8461.



Carol Haverlandt



## BARBLESS HOOKS

# WHAT'S THE POINT?

By Jim Vashro  
Flathead Wildlife Inc.

In summer 2015 there was a proposal to require single barbless hooks on catch and release cutthroat streams in the Western Fishing District. The Montana Wildlife Federation opposed that terminal gear restriction. Why would MWF oppose what seems to be a common sense wild trout conservation measure? The answer is based on a number of factors, some surprising.

MWF strongly supports the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation which stresses scientific management of populations. Management is based on setting population goals, identifying limiting factors, developing strategies to address those limiting factors with meaningful changes in the population, and involving the public in the choice of preferred alternatives.

In the case of the above single barbless hook proposal none of the targeted fish populations had management goals. There was little or no data to show population trends. And there was no

evidence that angling mortality was negatively impacting the fish populations. The proposal seemed to be a solution in search of a problem. But single barbless restrictions are popular and help fish survive, why oppose it?

Many fisheries in Montana require that you release most or all the fish you catch to maintain quality or protect native fish. More than 60 scientific studies have shown that use of bait results in deep hooking with an average 40% mortality of released fish. The same studies show that use of artificial lures average only 5% mortality. Therefore, most restricted waters in Montana require artificial lures only. Some groups advocate for adding single barbless hook restrictions.

Here's the surprising part. Those same studies show no benefit between barbed and barbless hooks or single hooks versus treble hooks. That

seems to defy logic but the results have been upheld in many different study scenarios. A main factor in survival is the hooking location, particularly in the gills or throat. Treble hooks cause more hooking scars but due to size aren't taken as deeply. Angler skill in not overplaying fish and in fish handling comes into play. Squeezing a fish, rubbing slime off and not reviving exhausted fish all reduce survival, even fish that swim away may die later. Holding a fish out of water over thirty seconds really reduces survival. Drought-stricken waters often have "hoot-owl" closures during the afternoon when high temperatures can kill stressed fish. And sheer probability says that the more fish you catch the more likely you are to kill one or more.

But even if single barbless hooks don't help they can't hurt so what's the fuss? Fish and wildlife are held in the public trust and should be managed in the least restrictive way to meet goals while maximizing availability to the public. Most fishing equipment does not meet single barbless hook requirements so anglers will have

*studies show  
no benefit  
between  
barbed and  
barbless hooks*

to cut off extra hook points or pinch or file barbs down. That makes game wardens the judge of when a barb is no longer a barb and turns many anglers into unwitting violators when they tie on a new hook and forget to pinch the barb. If the restriction really makes a difference in fish survival then the inconvenience is worth it. In this case the science doesn't support it.

So the single barbless hook restriction, while well intended, was not supported by science, did not address any known problems, would not make a meaningful improvement in the fishery and needlessly impacted anglers. That is why MWF opposed the measure.

Most people care about successfully releasing fish. This is a prime case for education rather than regulation. Don't overplay fish. Don't squeeze, wet your hands to not rub slime off. Use soft mesh landing nets. Most importantly, don't take the fish out of water or only out for a quick photo. Let the fish revive before it swims away. You can certainly voluntarily use single barbless hooks and they will come out of your own hide and clothes easier. Take some time to enjoy your surroundings and companions, simply catching as many fish as you can, and killing a few,



Mark Dostal

doesn't necessarily determine the quality of the fishing trip.

Forty years ago stocking catchable hatchery trout in streams was popular. Scientific surveys by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks showed that dumping loads of hatchery trout forced resident wild trout into less optimal habitat, resulting in higher mortality. Once the hatchery trout played out there were less remaining fish to provide long term sport. In a very controversial move at the time, FWP followed the science to drop hatchery plants and concentrate on maintaining habitat and managing fish populations through regulations. Subsequent scientific surveys confirmed that wild trout management, as it became known, maintained higher fish densities and better age structure for better fishing in streams. It freed up hatchery fish for stocking in lakes and reservoirs and provided more sport. Overall management costs were reduced.

Managing based on science and not on a popular strategy that provided no benefit is what has made Montana river fisheries justifiably famous world-wide. The FW Commission should hold to the same standard of following the science and not enacting a restriction that seems popular but provides no benefit to the fishery or to anglers.

*Jim Vashro is the president of Flathead Wildlife Inc.*

## ACCESS (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

**Landlocked Public Lands:** Many of our public lands are "landlocked" behind private lands, making access impossible without landowner permission. In fact, a 2013 study found that Montana had more than 1.9 million acres of public land that is entirely surrounded by private land. Although many landowners allow the public to cross their private land, some see the opportunity to maintain their own exclusive access to public land. We need to continue to offer private landowners financial incentives and find other ways to secure access to landlocked lands.

**Roadblocks on Public Roads:** For generations, Montanans have enjoyed access to public

land via county roads that run through rural areas. These roads don't receive a lot of maintenance, but they are crucial to public access. Unfortunately, some people selectively close public roads that run adjacent to their own property in an effort to keep the public out of large swaths of public land. By gating and otherwise blocking these public roads they're cutting off hunters, anglers, and other outdoors enthusiasts from public land.

**Stream Access Barriers:** Access to Montana's waterways also faces challenges when adjacent landowners assert ownership claims over public streambeds or attempt to block le-

gal access at bridges and other public stream crossings. These disputes often lead to long legal battles to re-open public access. The public is almost always successful, but areas remain closed for years while the issue plays out in court.

Tackling these challenges to public access take a lot of hard work, time, and dedication, but everyone who lives in Montana knows that it is worth it. Preserving public access to public land and public water is what will help us keep our hunting and fishing heritage alive for future generations.

*Dave Chadwick is MWF's Executive Director. Contact him at [dchadwick@mtwf.org](mailto:dchadwick@mtwf.org)*

## MONTANANS RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS MWF CONSERVATION AWARDS

At the Montana Wildlife Federation's Annual Meeting on May 14, 2016, we recognized several Montanans for their achievements in protecting Montana's wildlife, habitat, and public access to the outdoors. Awardees included Lorry Thomas (Anaconda), John Borgreen (Great Falls), Alex Diekmann (Bozeman), Laura Lundquist (Bozeman) and Alan Charles (Helena).

"Montana's unmatched conservation legacy is the result of dedicated people from all walks of life who put in long hours fighting for wildlife, habitat, and access to the outdoors" said Tim Aldrich, a past president of the Montana Wildlife Federation. "Future generations will be able to experience the outdoor opportunities we enjoy today because of these conservation leaders."

### Montana Conservation Heritage Award Lorry Thomas



A resident of Anaconda, Lorry Thomas has spent his entire life leading and helping in protecting our public lands, waters and wildlife and assuring public access to these public trust resources for the benefit of future generations. For decades, Lorry has rallied the Anaconda Sportsmen's Club to fight – and win - for wildlife and public lands. He was a founder of the Coalition for Stream Access and the Coalition for Access to State Lands and has been an influential voice at the Legislature.

### Montana Conservation Heritage Award John Borgreen



John Borgreen has spent a lifetime devoting his knowledge, skills, experience and time to conservation of wildlife, waters, special places and the public's opportunity to be involved in fair chase hunting and fishing. His obvious appreciation and love of all things wild and free have connected him with a number of organizations whose missions were based on deeply-held conservation values and a commitment to civic engagement.

### Conservation Communicator Laura Lundquist



A resident of Missoula, Laura has covered environmental and outdoor issues in Montana as an award-winning newspaper reporter and freelance writer. Laura's investigation of conservation issues is always thought-provoking and well-documented, educating people about the issues and helping them get involved in the decision-making process.

### Les Pengelly Conservation Professional Alex Diekmann



As a project manager at the Trust for Public Land, Alex was involved with the conservation of 93,351 acres in Montana with a value of over \$168 million and donations of nearly \$73 million. Alex's many projects in Montana and the complexities involved in them demonstrate his amazing abilities to identify strategic landscapes and work with entities to achieve outstanding conservation outcomes for all of us for all time. Alex passed away earlier this year. Alex passed away last February. His son Liam and wife Lisa accepted the award on his behalf.

### Special Achievement in Landowner-Sportsmen Relations Alan Charles



Alan works as the landowner-sportsmen coordinator for the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, where he facilitates a variety of programs to bridge the divide between these two important communities. Over the years, Alan has worked tirelessly to help form positive relationships between landowners and hunters and find common ground that facilitates much-needed solutions where problems exist.

## ELK SECURITY (CONT. FROM PAGE 5)

taining and enhancing habitat security is inversely related. As security declines, vulnerability increases. For example, easy hunter access by too many open roads can make elk less secure, thereby increasing vulnerability.

Ironically, many state wildlife agencies once supported road-building projects for that very reason. In the early 1960s, expanding elk populations throughout the West appeared to be growing too large for available winter range. Logging and road-building on federal land seemed good for elk and elk hunting – the large openings in the forest produced forage and the roads provided access for hunters to kill more elk. By the early 1970s, however, wildlife biologists throughout the western United States and Canada noticed some disturbing trends – a decrease in calf production, accompanied by low bull-to-cow ratios

despite apparent improvements in the quality and quantity of forage. Hunters simply killed too many mature bulls and wildlife biologists began questioning the impact of logging and roads on habitat security. In a game of hide and seek, elk were increasingly the losers because places to hide decreased and the density of hunters increased.

Vulnerability encompasses a diversity of factors, including hunter access and numbers, habitat, timing and duration of hunting seasons, terrain, weather, hunting equipment technology and hunting regulations. Managers attempt to strike a delicate balance between elk being too vulnerable to hunting, which may result in excessive harvest, and being vulnerable enough to permit the desired harvest levels and types. Because habitat security can influence vulnerability

as much as hunter numbers and hunting equipment technology, relying solely on state wildlife agencies to solve the problems through hunting seasons, bag limits and methods of take is not often effective. Hunting regulations, habitat conditions and the type of access allowed for hunters has increasingly become a shared responsibility of land managers, wildlife managers and hunters.

The Montana Wildlife Federation encourages all hunters to get involved in public land habitat management and travel plans to ensure habitat security is protected or enhanced to ensure healthy, balanced elk herds and ample hunting.

*David Stalling is the Western Field Rep. of Montana Wildlife Federation. Reach him at [dstalling@mtwf.org](mailto:dstalling@mtwf.org).*

# UPDATES AND ACTIVITIES AROUND THE MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION FEDERATION NEWS



MWF Conservation Director Nick Gevock joined MWF affiliate Hellgate Hunters and Anglers for their annual Wild Night for Wildlife. This annual fundraiser is wildly successful thanks to the hard work of Hellgate Hunters and Anglers' dedicated volunteers.



In early May, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell spoke at Devil's Elbow Campground outside of Helena. MWF's own Chris Marchion spoke at the event in support of our sporting heritage and outdoor economy. Thanks to all the federation members who came out!



MWF affiliate Flathead Wildlife, Inc. members Tony Anderson, Chuck Hunt and Jim Vashro helped at the Flathead Fishing Fair sponsored by Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Snappy Sport Senter. The event offers kids fishing as well as other educational opportunities.



## PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBER!

Dave Stalling has joined the Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) staff as our new Western Montana Field Representative and brings a lot of leadership, experience and passion to the job. After serving in a Marine Force Recon unit, Dave earned degrees in wildlife and journalism from the University of Montana.

He has worked for the U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Trout Unlimited, National Wildlife Federation and served two terms as president of MWF. He also helped found MWF's Missoula affiliate, Hellgate Hunters and Anglers.

In 2003 he was the recipient of MWF's Les Pengelly Professional Conservationist Award. Dave is also an award-winning writer and photographer, and served on the board of the Outdoor Writers Association of America. He lives and works from Missoula, and is an avid hunter, angler and backpacker who spends much of his free time roaming remote, wild places.

You can reach Dave at 406-274-8579 or at [dstalling@mtwf.org](mailto:dstalling@mtwf.org)

## WHAT IS THE MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION?

The Montana Wildlife Federation is a statewide conservation organization dedicated to promoting wildlife, wildlife habitat, and sportsmen's interests. Our 5,000 members include Montanans and others around the nation.

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# CELEBRATING EIGHT DECADES AS MONTANA'S CONSERVATION LEADER MWF 2016 ANNUAL MEETING & CELEBRATION

On May 14, 2016, MWF celebrated 80 years as Montana's leading grassroots wildlife conservation organization.

On May 14, 1936, a small group of conservationists gathered in the lobby of the Placer Hotel in Helena to launch Montana's first citizen's organization dedicated to protect our state's fish, wildlife and outdoor heritage: the Montana Wildlife Federation. This effort followed the creation of the National Wildlife Federation two months earlier in Washington, DC.

Eighty years later, another lively crowd of MWF members again gathered in the lobby of the Placer Hotel to celebrate our organization's legacy of conservation success! This exciting celebration followed MWF's 2016 Annual Meeting, which gathered delegates from local organizations around Montana to discuss issues, review the organization's growth, and elect new members to the Board of Directors.

Thank you to everyone who attended our 80th Anniversary Celebration and Annual Meeting -- and thank you to everyone who was there in spirit! It is your dedication, energy, and knowledge that makes Montana Wildlife Federation a leader in Montana's conservation community.

We would also like to congratulate and welcome the new members of the MWF Board of Directors. These dedicated volunteers have signed up to help lead our organization and continue to grow our impact on Montana's fish, wildlife, and outdoor heritage:

- Gary Hammond - Billings
- Annie McLaughlin - Helena
- Harey Nyberg - Lewistown
- Tom Puchlerz - Stevensville
- Mark Sweeney - Helena

To stay up-to-date on MWF news, events and more go to [montanawildlife.org](http://montanawildlife.org).



Dave Stalling



## THANK YOU 2016 DONORS!

# MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION