



AFFILIATE CORNER

Anaconda Sportsmen Club (ASC) ASC is celebrating the county's decision to deny an application to build a bridge across the Big Hole River near their club campground. ASC is also rallying support to purchase the Moore property which adds to the Blue-eyed Nellie WMA area which began as a 6.2 acre parcel and has grown as smaller parcels were added until it now totals over 300 acres. ASC also actively participated in the habitat manipulation – timber sale and prescribed burning to encourage bitterbrush etc, - on Mount Haggin WMA.

ASC participated in FWP Region 2 public meetings on raising elk objectives in the Pintler and Flint Creek ranges.

Big Sky Upland Bird Association (BSUBA) BSUBA has voted to contribute time and money to pursue and study the prospects for reintroduction of Columbian Sharptail Grouse, in cooperation with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, on the CSKT Reservation.

Billings Rod and Gun Club (BR&GC) BR&GC once again enlisting their landowner appreciation program for 2008. Over the years, the club has presented over 200 ranchers with steel gate-openers as a token of their thanks.

BR&GC in cooperation with Magic City Flyfishers and MWF affiliates, Laurel Rod and Gun Club and Public Lands and Waters Access Association collectively worked to secure area FWP projects: the Holmgren Ranch FAS near Columbus, Stillwater River FAS by the Riverside Inn, and Habitat Montana purchase of the 2300 acre Circle R Ranch near Pompey's Pillar which will not only provide access to the Yellowstone River, but public access into 640 acres of State School Trust lands and 4500 acres of BLM.

Bitterroot Valley Houndsmen Association (BVHA) BVHA continues to advocate for a comprehensive state-wide mountain lion plan currently being developed by FWP due out next year. Specifically, they are requesting in-depth analysis of deer and lion mortality caused by trapper's snares set in game paths. BVHA is also very concerned about opportunity for abuse related to the Missoula Special Mountain Lion Management Area. BVHA is encouraging FWP law enforcement to increase physical confirmation of lion kill-sites to ensure that any reported animals were indeed taken in the liberal MSMLMA, and not poached elsewhere with restricted kill objectives.

A March 28 seminar sponsored by BVHA, Hellgate Hunters and Anglers and Ravalli Co. F&W Association features Dr. Toni Ruth, Lion Expert, Hillary Coullie, Lion Researcher, MT Lion research leader, Rich DeSimone, Wendy Keefover-Ring, FWP Lead Biologists, Mike Thompson and Jim Williams, and new FWP Commissioner and former Univ. of Montana Wildlife Professor, Bob Ream

Custer Rod and Gun Club (CR&GC) CR&GC is furthering its work with local youth programs. NRA certificates for each youth successfully fulfilling a shotgun course have been awarded; pellet rifle instruction and competitions will be expanded to .22 rifle courses within the next year. CR&GC has also provided assistance to local Boy Scouts in earning their shooting merit badges in August. CR&GC has expanded opportunities by incorporating the local archery club into their membership.

Dawson County R&G (DCR&GC) DCR&GC has also cooperated with Bill Geer with TRCP in identifying prime hunting/fishing opportunities. DCR&GC has been providing sportsmen input in BLM-sponsored public discussions in August. Securing access opportunities, improving identification, and possible new federal acquisitions were offered for discussion by the BLM.

Flathead Wildlife Inc. (FWI) FWI has offered their support and continues to monitor the progress of a Wildlife Management Area on the North Shore of Flathead Lake. They support, in concept, a \$10 million Open-Space Bond Issue on the November ballot which potentially provides matched funds for hunting and fishing access projects and public parks.

FWI will once again sign onto a letter with various groups to protest CBM development on the North Fork of the Flathead River in British Columbia. They also are taking a proactive stance in FWP's purchase of McWennegar Slough near Bigfork.

Gallatin Wildlife Association (GWA) GWA continues to stay involved with issues relating to bison management. GWA participates in the Madison Valley Group, and has been instrumental at discouraging brucellosis-related elk test-and-slaughter recommendations from that group. GWA sponsored the Montana Bison Recovery Act in the 2009 Legislature.

GWA has been following the development of the Montana Bighorn Sheep Plan which is scheduled to be finished in summer 2009.

Great Falls Archery (GFA) GFA is developing a program to help archers become familiar with the 2009-10 archery permits instituted last spring by the FWP Commission. GFA recently hosted their "Foul Weather" shoot on March 6 and has the Safari Shoot scheduled for April 26, 2009.

Helena Hunters and Anglers (HeH&A) HeH&A had filed and was denied a formal protest to the Helena National Forest decision to permit a Montana National Guard biathlon project proposed for McDonald Pass but with four other entities filed suit in District Court. The project has high potential to do significant harm to the area's wildlife habitat and the wildlife movement corridor along the continental divide. Wolverine, Canadian Lynx, and Gray Wolf are documented to utilize the area as winter range and travel/migration route. HeH&A Filed for summary relief in federal court on March 20 to protest the USFS decision; an April 21 decision is anticipated.

Appropriate to MacDonald Pass discussions, HeH&A presented a fascinating life story of one of Montana's most secretive, rare animals, the wolverine, by Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Biologist, Robert M. Inman, at the April 1 meeting.

Hellgate Hunters and Anglers (HgH&A) HgH&AA has decided to strongly support a proposed Smart Growth Initiative for Missoula County. Typically, these types of initiatives advance benefits for not only retention but improvement of wildlife habitat. HgH&A held their "Wild for Wildlife" banquet on March 7 in conjunction with the Hellgate Rifle and Pistol Club with guest speaker, former FWP Commission Chairman, Steve Dougherty.

Laurel Rod and Gun Club (LR&GC) Laurel Rod and Gun club raised \$23,000 in a successful banquet dedicated to youth shooting education programs Sept 11. LR&GC is grateful to Outback Steakhouse who donated the entire steak banquet and Sportsmen's Warehouse of Billings for over \$600 in merchandise plus a new high power rifle.

Libby Rod and Gun Club (LR&GC) LR&GC enthusiastically supports Bill Geer and TRCP's efforts to protect hunting and fishing spots and participated in the mapping project. The county operated shooting range building/clubhouse became available for LR&GC meetings and other public events late last year. President Don Clark also sits on FWP Region 1 Citizen's Advisory Council.

Medicine River Canoe Club (MRCC) MRCC has been providing input and support for FWP's long-awaited non-motorized access site on the Sun River on the west side of Great Falls. The existing informal site has deteriorated to a point of being unusable so the anticipated new site is welcome. As they prepare the 2009 float schedule, they will start their yearly activities with their annual Sun River Cleanup. MRCC members currently have a project to take GPS coordinates for removal of junk cars historically used as riprap along the Sun River as well.

Park County Rod & Gun (PCR&GC) The Shields River drainage continues to draw attention. In addition to a proposed FAS (see Montana Wildlife May/June 2008) the EPA is conducting a stream health/particulate study which may eventually recommend closing area access roads due as sources of particulate matter. PCR&GC is monitoring the study's progress but advocates for keeping the public access intact, and suggests that other sources be addressed before losing access opportunities. PCR&GC continues support for a formal Fishing Access Site on the Shields; negotiations with a local landowner have stalled but other options exist on state land.

PCR&GC in conjunction with TU, DU, Mt Bowhunters and other organizations set up a public meeting with Representative Joel Boniek to discuss issues of concern and why he opposed HB 190, the Bridge Access Bill. Forty people attended but Rep. Boniek had a matter come up and sent his campaign manager in his stead.

PCR&GC provides significant support for area youth and hosted the FWP hunter safety program field day. Their input with the local 4-H scholastic trap team promotes youth shooting opportunities and hunting ethics.

Public Land/Water Access Association (PLWA) PLWA will host Attorney General Steve Bullock at its April 4, 2009 Annual Meeting held at the Wyndham Hotel in Bozeman. AG Bullock wrote the Attorney General Opinion on Access at Bridges in 1999 the basis for HB 190, our Bridge Access Bill. PLWA's successful lawsuit on the Ruby River in Madison County in September 2008 provided legal strength to MWF's Bridge Access Bill HB 190.

PLWA formed an action team in the Great Falls/Lewistown area which will work on access issues, especially the current controversial Mabee Road in the Missouri Breaks near Roy, MT.

Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association (RCF&WA) RCFWA recently held their annual banquet which raised \$7000 for conservation work. From that they will purchase radio-collars to be donated to Region 2 FWP for tracking mule deer movements in the Bitterroot Valley and Range. This project was christened the Gary Habeck Memorial in memory of long-time advocate, Gary Habeck, who died from injuries incurred as a consequence of falling from a tree stand. RCFWA also donated money for a mule deer population aerial survey. The last previous over-flight occurred more than 5 years ago; the results of this current flight indicated that the mule deer herd was showing signs of loss of herd vigor with less than 2 bucks per 100 does.

Rosebud/Treasure Wildlife Association (RTWA) RTWA hosted FWP Region 7 Supervisor, Dwayne Andrews and Waterfowl Coordinator Jim Hansen at their fall banquet where they discussed the status of the Yellowstone River Waterfowl Closure in place since the 1960s. Increased exclusive leasing for waterfowl hunting has reduced local hunting opportunities but RTWA prefers to keep the closure intact to protect and enhance the river's healthy waterfowl populations.

Russell Country Sportsmen (RCSA) RCSA continues its intensive participation in sportsmen's issues in the Great Falls area. RCSA has been involved in ongoing discussions between the Lewis and Clark National Forest and the handicapped community for improved access to federal lands and has facilitated key exchanges to be used by the handicapped to access gated National Forest logging roads. RCSA also helped mediate a cooperative use plan for the Pilgrim Creek trail near Monarch.

RCSA has been very active in the FWP process to purchase the Neal Ranch which would expand the Sun River WMA west of Augusta. The Game Range once provided winter range protection for the second largest herd of elk in the country. RCSA is also helping to negotiate access to the recent FWP purchased Lincoln Ranch near Shelby on the Marias River after a locked gate was found on the access road. They also participated in the public process for the Coordinated Conservation Plan for the CMR National Wildlife Refuge.