PROTECTING PUBLIC LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

By Jim Posewitz

I had been living in Montana for six months in January 1954, just long enough to qualify for a resident hunting license. There was an extended deer season that included the Bridger Mountains so I borrowed a rifle, bought a box of ammo, walked into the National Forest and shot my first deer. It was my freshman year. The coach was happy, we were happy, it was a “Square Deal.”

Although hard to imagine, the gift of that mule deer doe 62 years ago remains considerably more important than the victory over the Grizzlies. On the day I shot that deer, I had no idea why I could be a hunter, why the land was open to me, or why the deer was out there and available. I left Bozeman in 1961 with two degrees in fish and wildlife management and a load of biological information on what it takes to produce fish and wildlife. However, I was totally unaware of our social and cultural relationship with the land that put that deer out there in the Bridger Mountains. Our nation’s unique democracy of the wild was still to be learned.

Passing through a career in fish and wildlife management, while helping raise six sons, produced a strong bond between the family, wild country, venison, fish, and wildfowl. State wildlife management areas provided wetlands for waterfowl, grasslands for upland birds, and brushy river bottoms for whitetails. The sweet spot was a ridge near the continental divide on the National Forest. The family simply knew it as Deer Ridge, and it produced a number of first deer, along with an essential and reliable supply of venison through multiple decades.

As the boys matured and were off to colleges and careers I finally took an interest in how the wonderful times we had were possible. At the time the National Forest had been out there about a century, and the game we pursued was a restored resource that once teetered on the brink of extinction. As the truth of American conservation history revealed itself, the beauty and power of this remarkable story enriched the wonderful memories we held.

The National Forests we hunt on and appreciate were born in the vision of a handful of early conservationists like Gifford Pinchot and empowered by one of America’s boldest leaders – Theodore Roosevelt. Pinchot had the vision and TR provided the power. A 23-year-old TR came West in 1883 to shoot one of the last wild buffalo and take up residence through 1886. At the time the Northern Plains had become the wildlife bone-yard of a continent and TR would experience a personal conservation epiphany. In 1887, TR along with Pinchot, George Bird Grinnell and others formed the Boone and Crockett Club for the introduction of the sporting code and the restoration of big game. In a short time, the Club convinced Congress to give presidents authority to set aside unclaimed public lands as forest reserves to protect forests and watersheds, and help recover devastated wildlife populations.

When Roosevelt became president he expanded the forest reserves from some 40 million acres to around 190 million acres and created the U. S. Forest Service as its custodian. During the political battles of the time Western congressmen drafted legislation to remove the president’s authority to create forest reserves in six western states, including Montana. William A. Clark was a Montana U. S. Senator at the time and among those opposing the TR/Pinchot
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
STAYING VIGILANT FOR OUR PUBLIC LANDS

By Kathy Hadley
MWF president

We need your help. Our public lands are under attack again. MWF members and affiliates have fought this conflict many times over the years, starting with the Sagebrush Rebellion (1970–1980s) then during the campaign battles brought by the Wise Use Movement (late 1980s–1990s), and again in the mid-2000s when Congress wanted to sell off public lands. What’s clear is that this issue is not going away anytime soon.

I expect most of us spent a good amount of time in January following the saga of the Bundy militants at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. Many of us waited for law enforcement to take action against the law-breaking militants and most of us were relieved when they were taken into custody, although saddened that one man lost his life. These criminal acts by these militants cost an enormous amount of tax payer money, about $3.3 million according to newspaper accounts and that doesn’t take into account the damages they did including building roads, destroying fences, digging trenches and who knows what else.

MWF took a strong stand against the Malheur occupiers, including sending a letter signed by nearly every state wildlife federation in the nation to call on federal officials to take action to arrest the occupiers and re-open Malheur.

But the threat to public lands didn’t begin or end with the Malheur occupiers.

In the last legislative session, there were numerous bills introduced to support the state takeover of public lands and all of them were defeated because of the incredible work by citizens and public land advocate groups, including MWF.

Just the other day, the fight for public lands moved from the states to Congress. H.R. 3650, a bill introduced by Rep. Young (R-Alaska) would direct the Forest Service to convey up to 2 million acres of National Forest System to states to be administered and managed primarily for timber products. A second bill, H.R. 2316, was also introduced by Rep. Labrador (R-Idaho) to turn hundreds of thousands of acres of national forest system land within each state to counties and local governments.

This issue is not going away in western state legislatures and apparently not in Congress. It’s critically important that we continue to organize ourselves in fighting to protect our cherished public lands.

Our next legislative session is not that far away and we need to be prepared for what I’m sure will be another onslaught of nasty bills. We need to keep up the pressure and we are always looking for volunteers who would like to help work on this issue.

When I was Young, a boy, I was taught that good and fine people. The bottom line is that we know that public land management is pretty complex and difficult but we also know that the majority of Montanans support keeping public land in public hands and that together we can win these battles.

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 kathyh@ncaut.org.

LEAVING A LEGACY FOR MONTANA’S WILDLIFE

WHY PLANNED GIVING?

Planned giving means leaving a portion of your estate to a nonprofit organization to help ensure their long-term stability. Your donation would allow a nonprofit organization such as the Montana Wildlife Federation to continue to serve outdoorsmen and women across the Treasure State. As a donor, there are many benefits such as tax incentives, income, and the feeling of satisfaction your donation offers.

You do not have to be wealthy to participate in planned giving. The benefits of planned giving are available at any income level. Even a modest donation can contribute to MWF’s endowment funds, helping sustain the work you care about for years to come.

Your gift helps ensure your children and your children’s children can enjoy the access to wildlife, water, and public lands that we value today.

LEAVING A LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Including MWF in your estate planning is one of the most important ways you can support our work to protect Montana’s abundant fish and wildlife, natural lands and waters, and public access for future generations.

LET US THANK YOU

If you have included MWF in your estate plans, please let us know! We want to thank you for your gift and make sure that we understand the purpose of your gift.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more, call MWF at 406-458-0227 or send an email to giving@mtwf.org.

MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
MAJOR CHANGE IN Elk MANAGEMENT DEMANDS GOOD DATA

ELK SHOULDER SEASONS APPROVED BY FWP

By Nick Gevock  
MWF Conservation Director

Now that the dust has settled and elk “shoul-
der seasons” have been approved by the Mon-
tana Fish and Wildlife Commission, it’s time

to step back and look at what it means for

the future of hunting in the Treasure State.

The commission in February approved these

additional elk seasons in 43 hunting districts

throughout the state in an effort to address

populations that are over the targeted objec-
tive laid out in the statewide elk management

plan.

That decision came after a process that was

well over a year in the works, with more than a
dozens Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks biol-

gists, game wardens and other officials meeting
to craft a proposal to address overpopulated elk

herds. And it followed a bill in the 2015 Legisla-
ture, SB 245, sponsored by Doug Kary, R-

Billings, that would have written the opportu-

nity for late hunting seasons into state law.

The bill was vetoed by Gov. Steve Bullock, but

in his veto statement he said FWP was working on alterna-

tives to address elk manage-

ment.

First off, what is a shoul-
der season, and how is it dif-

erent from the game damage and management seasons that FWP was already using?

A shoulder season is a rifle hunting season that is established outside of the regular five-

week general season and is printed in the hunting regulations. They cover entire hunting districts and can include additional permits, or use gen-

eral licenses, as well as second cow elk “B” tags. They can start as early as August 15 and run as late as February 15.

In comparison, game damage and manage-

ment hunts are held on a smaller scale, down to an individual ranch, to address either a point-source issue on a particular pro-
terty as well as an elk population that is over objective. They hap-

pen through a process laid out in state law as well as in state admin-

istrative rules set by Montana FWP. They are smaller scale, and have eligibility requirements that include some level of reasonable public access during the general hunting season for landowners to qualify.

That’s important, because the five-week sea-

son is Montana’s time-tested method of manag-
ing our wildlife populations. It has worked for decades. And the law that requires that was re-

quested more than two decades ago by lawmak-

ers who saw what happens when some proper-

ties receive no hunting pressure throughout the general season.

MWF supports private property rights, and it is every landowner’s decision whom to allow to hunt on their land. But those decisions on hunter access can have major implications for wildlife management that can lead to adverse effects on their neighbors and the public.

MWF supports private property rights, and it is every landowner’s decision whom to allow to hunt on their land. But those decisions on hunter access can have major implications for wildlife management that can lead to adverse effects on their neighbors and the public.

CONSERVING PUBLIC LAND HABITAT AND HUNTING OPPORTUNITY

VICTORY IN THE DURFEE HILLS: WHAT NEXT?

By John Bradley  
MWF Eastern Field Rep.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has decided against a land exchange that would have resulted in the loss of public land known as the Durfee Hills. Billionaire brothers Dan and Farris Wilks were proposing to exchange their Anchor Ranch, which sits just north of the Missouri River in Blaine County, along with other lands, for the Durfee Hills, a landlocked parcel of BLM property which sits inside the Wilks’ NBar Ranch in Fergus County.

MWF had opposed the land transfer on the
grounds that it was not a fair value trade. To lose Durfee Hills would have resulted in the loss of some of the best elk habitat in the state. The Wilks contended the land trade would open the Bullwhacker Road as access to the Upper Mis-
souri River Breaks National Monument south of Anchor Ranch. However, that area is already ac-

cessible by boat on the river and from roads far-
ther upstream. MWF believes that by partnering with sportsmen and other conservation groups, it can increase access to the monument without giving up public lands such as the Durfee Hills.

The victory can be attributed to local sports-

men of the Central Montana Outdoor group, along with the help of the MWF, both of whom worked tirelessly to stop the transfer. Doug Krings, speaking on behalf of Central Montana Outdoors said “you only get to keep what you are willing to fight for.”

Mark Albers, BLM’s Central Montana District Manager, said that the decision against pursuing the transfer was a result of competing priorities. The Durfee Hills is one of many important BLM-managed lands in central Montana that ro-

vide unequalled habitat for everything from sage

grouse to trophy bull elk and are available for the public to enjoy. The value of this landscape to Montanans stems from its habitat which pro-

vides for world-class diversity and healthy popula-

tions of wildlife.

The BLM is currently working on a Resource Management Plan for the Lewistown area. As the BLM’s Lewistown Field Office prepares its draft Resource Management Plan, we as sports-

men and conservationists must ensure that the BLM recognizes this opportunity to protect these lands for their habitat and wildlife value. The BLM will be accepting public comment when the draft is released; it is our duty to tell them to protect this valuable habitat for us and future generations to enjoy.

John Bradley is Montana Wildlife Federation’s Eastern Field Representative. You can send him questions or comments at jbradley@mtwf.org.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE
80 YEARS OF GRASSROOTS SUCCESS

By Dave Chadwick
Executive Director

On May 15, 1936, delegates from 42 of Montana’s counties gathered in the lobby of the Placer Hotel in Helena and voted to create the first statewide hunting and angling conservation organization in the state: the Montana Wildlife Federation. As one participant summarized it, this new group would be “a well-organized association of independent, free-thinking citizens who are unselfishly interested in wildlife conservation and who are devoted to that cause in the broad spirit of general public interest.”

The founding of MWF took place barely three months after two thousand delegates from across the nation met in Washington DC to create the General Wildlife Federation – the organization that would soon be renamed the National Wildlife Federation – and elect noted conservationist J.N. Ding Darling as its first president.

Less than a year later, the Montana Wildlife Federation would join the National Wildlife Federation and state federations all over the nation in celebrating passage of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937. The bill was introduced, passed with bipartisan support, and signed into law by President Roosevelt in less than 90 days, putting into place one of the most successful conservation programs in American history. This landmark law dedicated revenue from federal excise taxes on guns and ammunition into conservation of fish and wildlife habitat: helping finance modern wildlife management and giving sportsmen a crucial stake in conservation.

Over the decades, MWF’s dedicated members have played a vital role in nearly every major conservation victory in the Treasure State. After passage of Pittman-Robertson, the Department of Fish and Game hired their first ever Big Game Manager, Bob Cooney. Bob was a a long-time member of MWF and, in the early years, MWF volunteers helped the Department conduct some of the first wildlife population surveys.

In 1947, MWF leader Tom Messelt personally put up half of the downpayment to buy the land that would become the Sun River Game Range.

In the 1960s and 1970s, MWF worked at the Montana Legislature to pass a host of landmark conservation laws, including the Stream Preservation Act, the Montana Water Quality Act, the Montana Air Quality Act, Montana Environmental Policy Act, the Montana Water Use Act, and Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act. In the 1980s, we helped Montana pass the best stream access law in the nation, we worked to create the Habitat Montana Program, and we defeated the first “Sagebrush Rebellion” efforts to take over and sell off public lands – a fight we would return to in the 1990s. At the start of the 2000s, we led the fight to outlaw game farms.

Over the years, MWF members have also been vocal advocates at the federal level. In the decades after Pittman-Robertson, our members worked to pass legislation to fund habitat conservation, create wildlife refuges, and protect endangered species. Glance through our newsletters beginning in the 1960s, and you’ll see regular updates on grassroots campaigns to protect wilderness in order to provide security habitat for big game and hunting opportunity. That dedication to protecting wild lands and waters has continued right on up to the passage of the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act in 2014.

When you look back on MWF’s long legacy of success, you can’t help but be inspired by what we’ve accomplished over the last eight decades. We will tackle future challenges with the energy and enthusiasm of thousands of Montanans who care enough about fish and wildlife to get involved in conservation and get involved in the Montana Wildlife Federation.

When you look back on MWF’s long legacy of success, you can’t help but be inspired by what we’ve accomplished over the last eight decades. And we need that inspiration when we look at the issues that confront us today. Special interests are again pushing to take over national forests and other public lands, using the pretext of “local control” as justification to sell off our outdoor heritage. As more and more people move to the Treasure State, we see endless attacks on our access to public land and public waters. Our fish and wildlife resources are challenged by pollution, diseases, and a host of other emerging problems. Wildlife managers face increasingly complex problems and dwindling funds.

Looking ahead to future decades, we will tackle these challenges the way we have in the past: through the energy and enthusiasm of thousands of Montanans who care enough about fish and wildlife to get involved in conservation and get involved in the Montana Wildlife Federation.

Dave Chadwick is MWF’s Executive Director. Contact him at dchadwick@mwf.org.

**MWF DEPENDS ON YOU**

The Montana Wildlife Federation depends on donations from people who care about Montana’s abundant wildlife, our natural lands and waters, and our unmatched public access to the outdoors. In fact, a majority of our funding as an organization comes from individual donors – people like you who decide to chip in $25, $50, or $100 to support our work. Your support is crucial to our ability to stand up to well-funded special interest groups at the Montana Capitol and in Congress.

There are many ways you can donate to MWF:

- **By Mail:** Send a check to Montana Wildlife Federation PO Box 1175 Helena, MT 59601.
- **Online:** Make a secure donation at www.montanawildlife.org.
- **By Phone:** Call our office at 406-458-0227 and we’ll take a credit card donation over the phone.

Donating to MWF can also provide you with tax benefits. MWF is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization, and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed under federal law. Together, we can protect Montana’s wildlife, habitat, waters and hunting & fishing heritage.
CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF PROGRESS
LAUDING THE PAST AND PAYING IT FORWARD

By Collin O’Mara
President and CEO
National Wildlife Federation

Eighty years ago, hundreds of American hunters, anglers, gardeners, birders and other conservationists came together in Washington, D.C., because wildlife was in crisis. Millions of acres of habitat had devolved into dust bowls, denuded forests and degraded wetlands. Bison, bighorn sheep, deer, elk and bear were scarce, and many species of waterfowl and other birds—from wood ducks and egrets to passenger pigeons and heath hens—had been decimated or wiped out by market hunting.

The gathered leaders united not as Republicans or Democrats but as America’s conservation army: the National Wildlife Federation. Led by Jay Norwood “Ding” Darling, they demanded action from policymakers—and the results were swift. Within a year, the Federation, its state affiliates and partners had convinced Congress to pass dedicated funding for game-species conservation and to commit hunting-license revenue to wildlife management.

Flash forward 80 years and see what we—staff, members and affiliates—have all accomplished together. We’ve helped secure funding and pass legislation that has yielded cleaner waters, vast acres of protected wildlife habitat, curbs on pollutants and protections for at-risk species. In fact, we’ve helped many species, from bears to bald eagles, come roaring back.

We’ve also made big strides in environmental education through Ranger Rick® magazine and our Eco-Schools USA and Schoolyard Habitats® programs, which are now helping more than 5 million children annually gain an appreciation of nature. We are also helping hundreds of thousands of backyard gardeners—even entire cities—connect with wildlife by planting native trees, shrubs and flowers for pollinators, birds and other species.

For all of our victories together, wildlife still faces vexing challenges from habitat fragmentation, pollution, invasive species, disease, drought and climate change. But what most acutely keeps me up at night is that fewer Americans have a relationship with the outdoors than at any time in U.S. history. In this urban, electronic age, it’s essential that we connect people with nature so they will advocate on behalf of wildlife.

As we celebrate our progress during the past 80 years and prepare to confront the challenges ahead, I want to thank you for your steadfast support of our work, which will benefit future generations of children who inherit the fruits of our efforts.

When NWF Founder J.N. "Ding" Darling stood before attendees of the first North American Wildlife Conference in Washington, D.C., in 1936, he saw hundreds of seemingly disparate people, from hunters and anglers to gardeners, birders and farmers. Darling implored the groups to unite: “Out of this meeting must come a definition of our common aims.”

The assembled crowd was united by one thing: a dedication to conserving America’s fish, wildlife, and outdoor heritage. Representatives came from nearly every state, and they collectively voted to form the General Wildlife Federation - which would soon be renamed the National Wildlife Federation. The delegates also voted to elect Darling as the first president.

Eighty years later, the mutual passion of the affiliated state wildlife federations keeps them working side by side in a non-partisan approach to conservation. These groups, based in most U.S. states and territories, are autonomous conservation organizations with impressive accomplishments—from restoring degraded wildlife habitat and protecting endangered species to inspiring thousands to care about nature. Some do this work with only a handful of volunteer staff. They also elect NWF’s officers and 13 regional board members and propose and vote on conservation resolutions that set NWF policy priorities. Working together on a myriad of national environmental issues and legislation, affiliates have helped NWF change the nation’s conservation landscape.

As we celebrate our progress during the past 80 years and prepare to confront the challenges ahead, I want to thank you for your steadfast support of our work, which will benefit future generations of children who inherit the fruits of our efforts.

Collin O’Mara is the President and CEO of National Wildlife Federation. Reach him at collin@nwf.org.

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FIGHTING FOR OUR PUBLIC LAND HERITAGE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

PROTECTING PUBLIC LAND FOR MONTANANS

By Jon Tester
U.S. Senator

Almost every Montanan has fond memories tied to our public lands. It might be the valley where you bagged your first elk or the stream where your dad and mom taught you how to cast. These stories inspire, motivate, and encourage the next generation of sportsmen and women.

As Montanans, we have a responsibility to protect these treasured landscapes so our kids and grandkids have the same opportunities that we have. That’s why we can’t stop fighting to protect our public lands and increase public access to the places where we love to hunt, fish, and hike. Together, we are working to permanently reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

Montanans have used the LWCF to preserve more than 8,000 acres of elk habitat in the Tenderfoot and protect over 600,000 acres in the Blackfoot River watershed. These are places that are now ensured to be a captivating storyline for generations to come. But this isn’t just about a good campfire tale; it’s about jobs and our economy.

Montana’s outdoor economy brings in nearly $6 billion each year and supports over 60,000 jobs.

Growing up in Bozeman, I spent my weekends hunting in the Bridgers, backpacking in the Beartooths and fishing the rivers and streams of southwest Montana with my father and grandfather. Cindy and I were engaged on a 10,000-foot summit in the Gallatin National Forest. And the love of the outdoors is a tradition that I have been thankful to pass along to my kids. Ever since our children could carry little more than their sack lunches, Cindy and I have enjoyed backpacking in the Beartooths with the whole family.

While I, like many Montanans, have spent many days exploring the great outdoors, memories alone won’t protect our valuable public land for future generations. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) holds an important role in preserving Montanans’ access to public lands and we must work together to protect this valuable program.

LWCF is not only a fundamental tool that helps preserve and protect Montanans’ opportunities to enjoy hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation—it also keeps forests in productive use through the Forest Legacy Program and helps ensure Montana ranches remain in the family and working.

I have heard from many Montana small business owners, conservationists, outfitters and guides, and sportsmen who benefit from LWCF and its opportunities for outdoor recreation, which supports tens of thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of tax revenue in Montana.

While I’m pleased that a three-year reauthorization of LWCF was recently secured, I’ll continue to fight for permanent reauthorization so that this program can continue to provide outdoor recreation opportunities and increase access to our public lands for generations to come.

Along with continuing to support LWCF, finding bipartisan solutions that will help restore the health of our National Forests and increase the Forest Service’s capacity are critical components in our ongoing effort to protect our public lands and preserve our state’s strong outdoor heritage.

Unfortunately, deteriorating conditions of our National Forests have led to increased risk of devastating wildfires that threaten public safety, watersheds, wildlife habitat and access to recreation. As Montana’s only member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I’m encouraged by the strong bipartisan agreement that how we manage our National Forests needs improvement. We need to continue working together with stakeholders to address critical wildfire funding challenges facing the Forest Service, while also moving forward responsible management authorities so that Montana families can continue to enjoy the great outdoors and our state’s public lands for future generations.

As your Senator, I will continue working to ensure that Montanans’ voices are heard so that we can protect Montana’s most valuable resource—our great outdoors.

Contact Senator Jon Tester at www.tester.senate.gov or by calling (202) 224-2644.

SUPPORT MONTANA’S ECONOMY, HERITAGE:

LAND PROTECTION FUND CRUCIAL TO FUTURE

By Steve Daines
U.S. Senator

Montana’s National Forests and public lands have been a treasured part of our state’s heritage for generations.

As a fifth generation Montanan and avid sportsman, I know firsthand how valuable our public lands are and the importance of ensuring access for generations to come.

Growing up in Bozeman, I spent my weekends hunting in the Bridgers, backpacking in the Beartooths and fishing the rivers and streams of southwest Montana with my father and grandfather. Cindy and I were engaged on a 10,000-foot summit in the Gallatin National Forest. And the
WORKING TOGETHER TO SAVE AN ICON
FIGHTING TO SAVE MONTANA'S BIGHORN SHEEP

By Nick Gevock
MWF Conservation Director

The Montana Wildlife Federation has been partnering with the National Wildlife Federation in recent months to work to grow one of our most revered big game species – bighorn sheep. It’s a species that is in need of attention, with numbers low throughout many Western states despite its incredible popularity among hunters, wildlife watchers and photographers.

NWF in partnership with the Wild Sheep Foundation and MWF recently put out a report that says the future of bighorn restoration depends on reducing the risk of disease by reaching agreements with sheep ranchers. With 39 of 46 Montana bighorn sheep herds at risk of disease passed from domestic sheep, this problem is the main obstacle to future restoration.

Contact between domestic and bighorn sheep exposes wild sheep to bacteria carried by outwardly healthy domestic sheep; these bacteria cause pneumonia, typically lethal to bighorn sheep.

While several factors influence bighorn sheep restoration, pneumonia is widely considered the most important limiting factor. Pneumonia outbreaks have the potential to cause 30-90 percent mortality of a bighorn population. Additional outbreaks continue to occur within a herd several years after the initial outbreak, affecting lamb survival. Once a herd is exposed to pneumonia, it is often continually affected, making it extremely difficult for the population to recover, much less thrive.

“We need to do more to protect bighorn herds from respiratory disease because population recovery is so much harder after a pneumonia outbreak,” said Tom France, Regional Executive Director for the National Wildlife Federation in Missoula.

The solution highlighted in the report is for hunters and other wildlife conservationists to work collaboratively with domestic sheep producers to reduce risk of contact. The report, titled “Challenges and Opportunities for Bighorn Sheep Conservation in Montana,” takes the first step toward doing that by identifying domestic sheep flocks within 20 miles of established bighorn sheep herds in the Treasure State.

The risks are real. Last year, pneumonia outbreaks caused significant die-offs among bighorns near Paradise and Gardiner. Twenty-six bighorn herds in Montana experienced large die-offs between 1984 and 2015, with more than half of these die-offs occurring in the past decade.

“During winter 2009-2010 pneumonia outbreaks in the West, Montana bighorns took the biggest hit of any western state or province, losing an estimated 20 percent of our statewide total.”

PHIL TAWNEY ENDOWMENT OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS
INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

By MWF Staff

The Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) is proud to announce that the Phil Tawney Hunters Conservation Endowment is accepting applications for the 2016 round of annual grants and scholarships.

Established in 1998, the Endowment honors the late Phil Tawney. A fourth generation Montanan, lifetime sportsman, and conservation leader, Phil was dedicated to Montana’s fish and wildlife and their vulnerable habitats. His dedication to protecting Montana’s natural environment was driven by his personal enthusiasm for chasing waterfowl in the Bitterroot Valley, elk in the Great Burn and Cinnabar Basin, and trout in the blue ribbon waters of the Big Hole River and Rock Creek.

The Endowment was created to continue Phil Tawney’s legacy by educating the public about habitat and wildlife and involving young people in hunting and conservation. For more than a decade, the Endowment has supported a variety of efforts to cultivate future conservation leaders and protect Montana’s outdoor heritage through a program of scholarships and grants.

Tawney Scholarships are awarded to Montana college students who have major academic fields of study that relate to conservation, exhibit a commitment to public hunting ethics and fair chase, and support efforts to conserve habitats and wildlife. The scholarships provide $1,000 to support any expenses related to the pursuit of a college degree.

Over the years, Tawney Scholarships have been awarded to students who are studying wildlife management, forestry, and other resource management fields at colleges and universities all over Montana. Scholarship recipients have carried Phil Tawney’s legacy forward by pursuing a range of careers in conservation, ranging from natural resource management to advocacy to wildlife law enforcement.

Tawney Grants are available to 501(c)(3) groups to support one-year projects that involve young people in hunting and conservation, restore and protect wildlife habitats, support public policy changes to conserve habitat, and promote hunting ethics, fair chase, and safety. Projects typically range from $500 - $5,000. Past projects have included everything from youth hunting opportunities to on-the-ground habitat restoration.

In 2016, the Tawney Endowment will also expand its activities to include a new “Hunting for Sustainability” program at the University of Montana. This program will provide training and education in hunting ethics and conservation for students who have not hunted before.

Applying for a Tawney Scholarship or Grant is a relatively simple process. For more information and application forms, visit www.montanawildlife.org. Applications are due by April 15, 2016.
Major Change in Elk Management Demand Good Data

Elk Shoulder Seasons (Cont)

seasons. They’re called “performance based” shoulder seasons and that performance is based on guidelines the Commission adopted in October. They’re meant to make the shoulder seasons more effective, and prevent them from becoming the old late elk seasons, which were ineffective at controlling elk numbers.

Those seasons in many areas actually lead to growing elk herds, despite the length of the season running into mid-February.

The guidelines state clearly that the shoulder seasons are meant to supplement general season harvest and not replace it. Here they are, with an explanation of each:

1. The harvest of bull elk for three years during the archery and general seasons must reach half of the bull recruitment during the same time.
2. The number of cow elk killed during the archery and general seasons must also be half of the total number of cow elk recruited into the population.
3. The total number of cow elk harvested for all seasons combined, including the extended shoulder seasons, must be greater than the recruitment of new cow into a district’s population.
4. The three year harvest of all elk for all seasons combined must exceed the total number of elk recruited to a population.

The guidelines also lay out exceptions that allow for shoulder seasons in areas where hunters, landowners and FWP have worked together to reach agreement. But it is important that those are kept to a minimum.

Why are the guidelines so important? They ensure that Montana keeps its focus for harvest on our general season, to promote the democracy of hunting. This is when everyone has an equal chance to hunt elk. It’s when Montanans and their out of state guests schedule week-long hunting trips. And biologically, it’s the most ethical time of year to be harvesting elk, because cows aren’t far along in their pregnancies and calves can survive on their own.

Hunting pressure on elk in valley bottoms during the general season can help push them back to higher elevations on public land. That will help make for better elk hunting for everyone.

Montana’s Wildlife Federation is monitoring the harvest data from these shoulder seasons to ensure that FWP is sticking to the guidelines. If a district doesn’t meet the criteria, the shoulder seasons need to go away. We will be working to ensure FWP sticks with the guidelines as it works to improve elk management.

With the help of our friends and neighbors in the farming and ranching community, we can make these seasons a success and bring elk numbers back down to the objective population. Stay tuned. Please feel free to provide feedback to Nick Gevock, MWF conservation director, as well as FWP biologists in your areas around the state.

Nick Gevock is Montana Wildlife Federation’s Conservation Director. You can send him questions or comments at ng-evock@mtwf.org.

Protecting Public Lands for Future Generations (Cont)

vision. When the dust settled TR prevailed and had created a substantial public land national forest system. That system included the land where that mule deer doe fell in 1954 and the Deer Ridge that fed my family through the 1970s and beyond. Clark went to the tomb leaving us, and future generations, the Berkeley Pit.

The battle over national forest and other public lands recurs by the generation. Following the massive 1910 fires in the Northern Rockies, politicians proposed selling all the impacted lands for son harvest and not replace it. The guidelines state clearly that the shoulder seasons are meant to supplement general season harvest and not replace it. Here they are, with an explanation of each:

1. The harvest of bull elk for three years during the archery and general seasons must reach half of the bull recruitment during the same time.
2. The number of cow elk killed during the archery and general seasons must also be half of the total number of cow elk recruited into the population.
3. The total number of cow elk harvested for all seasons combined, including the extended shoulder seasons, must be greater than the recruitment of new cow into a district’s population.
4. The three year harvest of all elk for all seasons combined must exceed the total number of elk recruited to a population.

The guidelines also lay out exceptions that allow for shoulder seasons in areas where hunters, landowners and FWP have worked together to reach agreement. But it is important that those are kept to a minimum.

The father approached me and in a whisper said “we don’t want to get ahead of you.” At that moment, Theodore Roosevelt’s words on conserving forests and restoring wildlife for “generations within the womb of time,” rushed into my mind. There we were, three of those generations meeting in a public forest in pursuit of restored wildlife. I responded to the father “I think I know what I see here and I want you ahead of me.” The father told me the youngest boy could shoot a cow elk if one came his way. I gave the boy a thumbs-up and he lit up into a broad smile, his face absolutely glowing with excitement. More words from TR’s autobiography rushed to mind, addressing why the public lands were protected by a host of his executive orders. He wrote “The things accomplished were of immediate consequence to the economic well being of our people. In addition certain things were done of which the economic bearing was more remote, but which bore directly upon our welfare, because they add to the beauty of living and therefore to the joy of life.”

As I watched the three move on up the ridge, I realized I was observing generations now emerged from the womb of time to savor the beauty of living and taste the joy of life. The emotion of the moment swelled out of control. I dropped my face into my hands and quietly wept. I have never taken a trophy that can, or ever will, match that moment.

Jim Posewitz is a life long conservationist and advocate for Montana’s wildlife and hunting heritage.

Montana Shares is a federation of 40 Montana-based non-profit organizations working to promote our state’s human, animal, cultural and natural resources.

Montana Shares provides a way for people to support their favorite charities through workplace giving.

For more information, please visit the Montana Shares website: www.montanashares.org.
MOTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION TO ENJOY MONTANA’S OUTDOORS
GIVING YOUNG HUNTERS A FIRST SHOT

By George Golie
Russell Country Sportsmen’s Assn.

The 2015 hunting season saw the fourth and most successful year of the Youth Hunting Program sponsored by the Russell Country Sportsmen’s Foundation and the Montana Game Warden’s Charitable Trust. Seven ranches provided eleven young hunters with hunting access, resulting in five successful deer harvests and two elk. For several of the kids, this was their first hunting experience.

The Youth Hunting Program was started several years ago as a way to engage kids who don’t have a parent or guardian interested or able to take them hunting. The program is free, and open to twelve to seventeen year olds. The young hunters are paired with RSCA mentors who utilize the opportunity to pass on and reinforce good hunting practices, including fair chase ethics, safe gun handling, and respect for public and private land. For those who have need, the association provides the young hunters a set of basic hunting gear, the use of a hunting rifle, and game processing for those who are successful in their hunt.

But filling a tag isn’t the most important part. For the mentors who offer their time, the most important aspect of the youth hunts is being able to motivate the next generation to get out and experience all that Montana’s outdoors have to offer. For the land owners, it’s getting to foster a hunting culture with deep roots on public and private lands. And for the kids it’s the memories of adventure and mentorship that will stick with them.

It takes a lot of work to offer such a rich experience. The Montana Game Wardens do their part by taking note of landowners who express interest in providing hunting access to supervised youth hunters. The game wardens pass that information on to Russell Country Sportsmen’s Association which makes the necessary arrangements.

The mentors and youths truly enjoyed participating in the program. Landowners have been happy to give the youths the opportunity to go hunting on their property. The future success of the youth hunting program will depend upon available access, mentor participation by Russell Country Sportsmen members, and continued funding by interested organizations and individuals.

In 2015, cash operating funds and in-kind donations were provided by: Walleyes Unlimited, the Phil Tawney Conservation Endowment, Big Bear Stores, Inc., House of Meats, and members of Russell Country Sportsmen. Special thanks and appreciation goes to these supporting organizations, participating ranches and landowners, hunt mentors, game wardens and youth hunter families who helped make the 2015 Youth Hunter Program a success.

If you would like to learn more about the program, or get involved, contact George Golie at ggolie@bresnan.net.

PRESERVING OUR HUNTING AND FISHING TRADITIONS
SUSTAINING FLATHEAD VALLEY YOUTH HUNTERS

By Chuck Hunt
Flathead Wildlife Inc.

Flathead Wildlife Inc. is dedicated to sustaining wildlife and habitat in the Flathead Valley and in Montana and to providing public access to public land and water. As a sportsmen’s group, the surest way to achieve our mission is to make sure that the next generation of sportsmen is being recruited, trained, and encouraged.

We take it as a personal challenge to make sure we’re doing our part in that process. Every year, at the end of the season, we hold our Annual Game Feed & Membership Drive. For the last few years, this event has also included our Youth Extravaganza, where we celebrate young hunters. It is a great opportunity for the kids to share their stories and successes that they had out in the field.

Getting the chance to share their experience to an audience reinforces the positive skills and ethics that they’ve learned. It also helps reinforce that the true success is just being out in the great outdoors, and enjoying what it has to offer. The event includes prizes and activities geared towards the youth, and no one goes home empty handed. This last year we had 20 young, eager hunters in attendance, and all of them left with a smile.

Youth hunters are eager learners, and the habits that they form now will carry with them through their lives. If we want those habits to include steady marksmanship, fair-chase ethics, good stewardship, and a passion for being afield, then they need to get out with a mentor. That means it is up to each of us to get a young hunter out into the field.

We also run the Preserve the Tradition campaign. The brainchild of Chuck Williams, the Preserve the Tradition ad campaign serves as a reminder to all of us the impact we can have on a young hunter. Youth hunters are eager learners, and the habits that they form now will carry with them through their lives. If we want those habits to include steady marksmanship, fair-chase ethics, good stewardship, and a passion for being afield, then they need to get out with a mentor.

That means it is up to each of us to get a young hunter out into the field. Whether it’s a family member, or perhaps a youth who is unable to afford the opportunity, we can be role models and foster their love for the outdoors. The opportunity to bring a smile to their faces is truly rewarding.

Flathead Wildlife Inc. is a 501(c)3. If you would like to donate or participate in an event, please call our President Jim Vashro at (406) 270-9914 or Vice President Chuck Hunt at (406)2120621.

Preserve the Tradition

Tim Russell, 13, with a nice whitetail doe and Hannah Potter, 13, with a nice whitetail buck at the Swan Check Station. These were the first deer for these young hunters from Polson.

It’s better to take your child hunting than to go hunting for your child.”

Sponsored by Chuck Williams and Flathead Wildlife, Inc.
The Montana Wildlife Federation has released a report outlining the economic impact climate change will have on Montana’s outdoor economy if climate change continues unabated. According to the report, Montana can expect a 4-5 degree temperature rise by 2055. The projected impact on Montana’s outdoor economy includes 11,000 jobs lost and $281 million in lost labor earnings. For the fishing and the angling industry this will mean a 33% reduction in viable fishing days, 1,800 jobs lost, and $49 million lost in labor earnings. As the owner of Montana Topwater, a fly-fishing outfitter service based in Missoula, this prediction is already becoming a reality.

Montana is truly the last best place to flyfish for trout in this country. We are blessed with perfect latitude for trout and plenty of high mountain peaks that store snowfall to feed the endless miles of clear, cold water that flows down our rivers. However, over the past two decades I have noticed a shift in the patterns of precipitation and it is definitely having a negative impact on streamflows, insect hatches, water temperatures and the overall quality of the outdoor experience. Less snow and more rain are leading to earlier and shorter spring runoff events, and this means that the window for truly good fishing is getting smaller and smaller.

The summer of 2015 was a prime example of what we can continue to expect in the future. The fisheries biologists implemented hoot owl restrictions around Missoula at the beginning of July. While this is a necessary measure to protect the trout during extreme heat, these restrictions also dictate that we can only fish half a day. Because of hoot owl restrictions and the poor quality of fishing during these times I had to cancel many trips this summer. For the first time I had to actually call clients for the first time and recommend they not come to Montana. This means I don’t get paid, flights and hotel reservations are canceled and meals are not ordered.

If the climate trend doesn’t begin to shift, I shudder to think of what our precious river resource and the outfitting community will look like 10 years down the road, not to mention 50 years from now. I encourage our leaders to continue taking action on climate change, so that we can preserve our outdoor economy for generations to come.

To see the full report visit MWF’s website at montanawildlife.org/climate-impact
UPDATE AND ACTIVITIES AROUND THE MONTANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

FEDERATION NEWS

MWF VP Bill Geer and FWP’s Lauri Hanauska-Brown met with Sen. Tester, Sen. Daines, and Rep. Zinke to discuss the State Wildlife Grants program, the only program in the federal budget that funds efforts to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. Thank you to our entire delegation for their strong support for State Wildlife Grants.

Our Hunting Film Tour winner took home a CRKT Knife, signed copy of How to Hunt Everything by Andrew McKean, Sveltz sticky gloves, and an MWF camo hat.

MWF staffer Jill Feldhusen talks with prospective MWF members at the Hunting Film Tour at the Mansfield Theater in Great Falls. Our thanks to North 40 Outfitters for sponsoring this great event!

FWP Education Bureau Chief Thomas Baumeister and Jim Pozewitz were the featured speakers of the Helena Hunters & Anglers and Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) Wild Game Dinner.

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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Montana Wildlife is the official membership publication of Montana Wildlife Federation. Subscriptions to Montana Wildlife are available for $35 per year.

JOIN TODAY! VISIT US AT WWW.MONTANAWILDLIFE.ORG
CELEBRATING EIGHT DECADES AS MONTANA’S CONSERVATION LEADER

MWF 2016 ANNUAL MEETING

On May 14, 2016, MWF will celebrate 80 years as Montana’s leading grassroots wildlife conservation organization. Our 2016 Annual Meeting will include a business meeting in the morning, an awards luncheon, and engaging conservation policy presentations in the afternoon.

The 2016 Annual Meeting will take place at the Downtown Helena Holiday Inn. At the morning business meeting, delegates from MWF’s local affiliate clubs will consider policy resolutions and elect the 2017-2018 Board of Directors. Our awards luncheon will give us an opportunity to recognize some of the great conservation leaders of the last year. In the afternoon session, we’ll hear from a great panel of conservation leaders.

The day will end with a special 80th Anniversary reception in the lobby of the Placer Hotel - the very place that MWF was founded on May 14, 1936. This fun celebration will include great local beer, inspiring remarks from our Federation’s leaders, and exciting merchandise raffles.

All MWF members are encouraged to attend any portion or all of the Annual Meeting. Watch MWF’s website at www.montanawildlife.org and our facebook page at facebook.com/montanawildlife for details on the meeting.

For eight decades, MWF members have helped set our policy agenda through policy resolutions adopted at our Annual Meeting. Policy resolutions guide the Federation during the course of our outreach and advocacy activities. They help staff and volunteers set campaign goals, develop new initiatives, and respond to emerging issues. Resolutions are general policy declarations that set out an overall position on a wildlife, habitat, or access issue. They are not meant to designate specific actions or a stance on any individual policy decisions.

If you’re interested in submitting a resolution for consideration at the 2016 Annual Meeting, please contact the MWF staff at mwf@mtwf.org or 406-458-0227. The deadline for submitting a resolution is April 14, 2016. You can download MWF’s current collection of resolutions on the MWF website at www.montanawildlife.org.

MWF BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEEDS YOU

MWF depends on the engagement of a volunteer Board of Directors to help set our agenda and manage our Federation. Serving on the Board is a great way to share your talent and expertise while also getting an insider view on important issues. Board members are expected to participate in 4-5 meetings a year and serve on one or more committees.

Several Board of Director seats are open for nomination and election at the MWF Annual Meeting on May 14, 2016.

If you are interested in joining the Board of Directors, contact Board Nominations Committee Chair Corey Fisher at westtrout@gmail.com or 406-546-2979.

SAVE THE DATE

MWF CELEBRATES 80 YEARS

MAY 14, 2016
HELENA, MONTANA

MWF SEEKING 2016 CONSERVATION AWARD NOMINEES

Nominations are being solicited for the Montana Wildlife Federation’s 2016 Conservation Awards. These awards are given annually to recognize significant contributions to the conservation of Montana’s wildlife and outdoor heritage. Awards will be presented at the MWF Annual Meeting in Helena on May 14, 2016.

MWF offers an array of awards to recognize individual conservation activists, natural resource management professionals, organizations, landowners, and businesses. Any Montana citizen or organization is eligible for an award. Nominees, or those submitting nominations, are not required to be members of the MWF.

The MWF Awards Committee can help you identify the right award to recognize someone for their work to protect Montana’s wildlife and outdoor heritage. If you know of an individual, organization or business that deserves recognition, please contact Awards Committee Chair Tim Aldrich at cartim8@gmail.com or by calling 406-542-3144.