



# Private & Federal Programs ~ DNRC in the news

# Taking a look inside the 2014 LaMarche Timber Harvest

James S. Rosien  
Leader Reporter

A \$200,000 state grant meant 1,550 tons of logs, 4,042 tons of pulp and 2 million feet of material were harvested from the LaMarche Creek area west of Deer Lodge, a half-million more feet than were expected according to the Montana Department of Natural Resource Conservation (DNRC), which hosted a tour of the harvest area late last month.

The 470-acre project, which started in August of 2015 and wrapped up last fall after its approval in 2014, was made possible by a Forests in Focus grant awarded to Sun Mountain Lumber, explained Roger M. Ziesak, forest practices specialist with Montana DNRC. The grant, he said, is "targeted to areas that need it."

The project was undertaken through Montana Correctional Enterprises – a self-funded enterprise that employs correctional inmates – and the harvest itself was on the Montana State Prison Ranch.

"It was a good collaboration," said Sean Steinbach, DNRC forester and foreman on the project. "We couldn't have done it if there weren't a saw mill locally."

Steve Flynn with Sun Mountain Lumber said one of the project's primary goals was to improve the timber stand and reduce fire hazards in the area by cutting trees that weren't usable and clearing out the dead wood.

"I'm really happy we got that dead lodgepole pine out of there," Steinbach said.

Part of the fire hazard



Clockwise from top: **Sean Steinbach**, second from right, Department of Natural Resource Conservation forester and project foreman for the 2014 LaMarche Timber Harvest outside of Deer Lodge, points to a section of the LaMarche Creek area that was improved by the harvest. **The Deer Lodge Valley** as seen from within the harvest area. **A slash pile** sits below young trees in the harvest area. **Cattle from Montana State Prison** graze along the road in the harvest area, which is part of the prison's ranch. Leader photos by James S. Rosien

reduction included "nutrient recycling," which is done by leaving material that could not be harvested on the ground so its nutrients get absorbed into the soil and so if a fire does come through the area it goes straight to the ground, lessening its severity, Steinbach said.

The diverse ages of the forest – with trees ranging from 20 to 80 years old – also helps reduce the fire hazard and risk from insects, he said.

"The prison has always been really proactive up here, they've done some real good

work. They're really into the management of their land up here," Flynn said.

Other improvements included increasing the water quality of LaMarche Creek, as grass was seeded in the area to reduce sedimentation, as well as road reconstruction.

"They did an exemplary job... The high quality of work helps us tell the story. It's not exciting, it's just straightforward forestry as we practice it today," Ziesak said. "It does make a significant difference. We're doing a lot of this in counties that don't

normally see this kind of work."

Forests in Focus grants are awarded every two years, and in the period the LaMarche Creek project was approved it was one of only 10 out of 33 proposals to get the go-ahead, Ziesak said.

"I was amazed at the quality of the grant proposals," Ziesak said. "Scoring them is hard, that's why we score them individually – it would be too hard to score them against each other."

About 4,000 acres of forestland statewide will be treated by the grant by the time it runs its course, Ziesak said.



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## Justice Court

The honorable Larry Pahut presiding:  
 • Christopher Mark Surges, 213 Locust St., pleaded guilty on July 11 to a charge of operating without liability insurance in effect, first offense. The defendant was fined \$250 plus \$35 surcharge, sentenced to 10 days in jail suspended and ordered to pay \$2,091.10 restitution to the victim, minus the \$1,000 deductible for a total restitution of \$1,091.10.  
 • Christopher Lee Scott, 511 E. 5th St. No. 11, pleaded guilty Aug. 5 to a charge of theft – obtaining or exerting unauthorized control over property, first offense. The defendant was fined \$1,000 plus \$85 surcharge, sentenced to six months in jail suspended and ordered to pay \$7.98 restitution to the victim.  
 • Carla Ann Marshall, 600 Elm St., was found guilty for a bench trial on Aug. 18 for a charge of operating without liability insurance in effect, first offense, and reckless driving, first offense.

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See JUSTICE COURT on page 7



Courtesy photo  
DNRC Eastern Land Office Area Manager Chris Pileski leads a tour of the Ashland Forest Products Mill in Ashland, which is utilizing Forest in Focus funds.

## Forests in Focus funding helps prevent and alleviate the cost of fighting wildfires

By Kelley Hirning,  
Communications  
Department of Natural  
Resources & Conservation

Forest restoration, fuels treatments and wildfire prevention/reduction activities are ongoing in the Southeastern part of Montana. Last month, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) organized a tour of different Southeastern Montana fuel reduction projects to highlight all the work that is being done in the area to reduce wildfire risk and its threat to the public and property.

In addition to DNRC staff, other attendees included a Rosebud County

commissioner, U.S. Forest Service, Northern Cheyenne and Bureau of Indian Affairs staff, local landowners, and members of the Rosebud Conservation District and local forest industry.

DNRC Eastern Land Office Area Manager Chris Pileski showcased some of the projects that were a result of the partnership of those involved, as well as the various state and federal grants that provided funding. Pileski also recognized Bobbi Vannattan of the Rosebud Conservation District for her work in managing most of the projects. She and the Conservation District collaborate to complete these projects.

The group toured the Ashland Forest Products

Mill in Ashland and saw the work the revitalized mill is undertaking. Reopened in the fall of 2014, the mill is producing lumber products out of logs from trees killed in the wildfires of 2012, including logs from projects that were on the tour.

After touring the mill, the group visited projects on state trust land, U.S. Forest Service land and on the property of two private landowners.

Since 2009, DNRC has used state and federal funds to help restore forest land on 30 properties, totaling approximately 4,000 acres of private, tribal, and state lands in the southeast region of Montana. One of the fund-

See FUNDING Page 6

# Crow Fair Photo Contest

Submit your entries to the Big Horn County News Office between August 22 - 29.

Judging will be in four categories!

- Best Parade
- Best Powwow
- Best Rodeo
- Best campground

Winning photos will be announced and printed in the Sept. 1 issue of the Big Horn County News.

For complete rules go to [www.bighorn-countynews.com](http://www.bighorn-countynews.com)

Not open to professional photographers

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## BIG HORN COUNTY COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Photo by Levi C. Flinn

Kristi Dorn's K Bee Honey Farms booth also offers artwork by her daughter Kristin at last Thursday's River Valley Farmer's Market. The market will be open from 5-7:30 p.m. Thursdays on the 200 Block of Center Avenue in Hardin until Sept. 8.

### MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

**Friday, Aug. 12** - Hardin E & R Church will be holding a bake sale in the Little Horn State Bank parking lot starting at 7:30 a.m.

**Friday, Aug. 12** - The next Healthy Hardin meeting is scheduled from noon to 1 p.m. in the Big Horn County Memorial Hospital Board Room to talk about the River Valley Farmer's Market and other action plan items. For more information, call Shelly Sutherland at (406) 665-8720.

**Monday, Aug. 15** - A community meeting will be held in the Hardin Historic Depot at 7 p.m. to discuss Little Big Horn Days, the Reenactment and the Hardin Chamber of Commerce as a whole. For more information, call (406) 665-1672.

**Saturday, Aug. 20** - The annual Lodge Grass potluck picnic will be held at noon at the Big Horn County Historical Museum in Hardin.

**Tuesday, Aug. 23** - The Hardin Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office's No-Till Gardening Workshop has been cancelled.

**Friday, Aug. 26 through Saturday, Aug. 28** - Gateway Christian Center, located 9.5 miles north of Hardin on Highway 47, will hold their annual Chuckwagon Gathering with

Pastor Mike Morrison at 7 p.m. Friday, all day Saturday and 10 a.m. Sunday. **Saturday, Sept. 3** - The 22nd Annual Chief Plenty Coups Day of Honor starts at 11 a.m. in Chief Plenty Coups State Park in Pryor. Speakers, vendor booths, tours and free barbecue will be available. For more information, call the park at (406) 252-1289.

### MONDAYS

- Hardin AA meets at 8 p.m. at 619 Division. For more information, call 679-0681

- The Two Rivers Authority meets at 5:30 p.m. at the Two Rivers Detention Facility in Hardin (1st Monday).

- Pryor Al Anon Family Group meets at 7 p.m. at the St. Charles Mission multi-purpose room.

- The Historical Preservation Commission meets at noon. For more information call 665-2137 (2nd Monday).

- On the third Monday of the month, Debby Warren of First Interstate Bank will teach a budget class at the HRDC building from 1-3 p.m. Call 665-3500 to register.

### TUESDAYS

- The Helping Hands Food Bank is open from noon to 4 p.m. for emergency food services. Their flavor of the month is boxed macaroni and cheese. (Tuesday and Thursday).

- Al-Anon Experience

Strength and Hope group meets at 7 p.m. at 619 Division. Alateens are welcome.

- Hardin City Council meets at 7:30 p.m. at the Public Utility Facility across from City Hall (1st and 3rd Tuesday).

- All City Committees are scheduled to meet at 6:30 p.m. every 3rd Tuesday of each month, at the Public Utility Facility (across from the City Offices at 406 N Cheyenne Ave.).

- Jasmine Chapter #65 of Eastern Star meets 7 p.m. at the Masonic Hall (2nd and 4th Tuesday).

- Hardin Chamber of Commerce meets 12, noon at the 3 Brothers Bistro (second Tuesday).

- Weight Watchers: Bullis Family Center at 524 N Cheyenne Ave. Weigh-in, 5 p.m., meeting, 5:30 to 6 p.m.

- Hardin District 17H & 1 School Board meets at 5:30 p.m. in the school administration building (2nd and 4th Tuesday).

### WEDNESDAYS

- BHC Library Story Hour at 10:30 a.m. Crafts included; children must be accompanied by an adult.

- Kiwanis meets at noon at Three Brother's Bistro in the back room. All visitors are welcome.

- Hardin AA meets at 8 p.m. at 619 Division. For more information, call 679-0681

- Hardin's Rod and Gun Club meets at the 4-Aces Joker Room at 6 p.m. 665-2712 (2nd Wednesday).

### THURSDAYS

- Recovery meetings are being held at 6:30 p.m. at the Spirit of Life Church in Crow Agency. For more information, call 406-459-4371.

- Hardin Hope for Today Al-Anon group will meet at 7 p.m. at 323 N. Crawford Ave. This group includes literature study. Alateens are welcome.

- The Women's AA group meets at 5:30 p.m. For more information, call (406) 679-2954.

- St. John's Lodge #92 meets at 7:30 p.m. at the Masonic Hall (2nd and 4th Thursday).

- Lodge Grass Al-Anon meets at 8 p.m. upstairs in the Our Lady of Loretto Church.

### FRIDAYS

- Hardin AA meets at 8 p.m. at 619 Division. For more information, call 679-0681

### SATURDAYS

- Welcoming Comfort Al-Anon group meets at 10 a.m. at 323 N. Crawford Ave. Breakfast is served at meetings. Alateens are welcome.

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## ARRESTED AND BOOKED

### August 1

Richard Shawn Schiedel was arrested on two Big Horn County district warrants and for driving a motor vehicle while the privilege to do so is suspended. Total bond was set for \$15,285.

### August 2

Fred Thomas Belly Mule III was arrested for purchase/possession of intoxicating substance by a minor, driving without a valid driver's license and driving under the influence of alcohol. Total bond was set for \$1,105.

Duran Littlelight Sr. was arrested for criminal endangerment of a child and driving a motor vehicle while the privilege to do so is suspended. Total bond was set for \$55,000.

Robert Peter Standish was arrested for theft – pickpocket. Bond was set for \$1,085.

Marion Yvonne Mountain Sheep was arrested for obstructing a peace officer or other public servant. Bond was set for \$585.

Matthew Robert Hill was arrested on two Big Horn County

justice warrants. No bond and \$185 bond was set respectively.

Brandy Rose Old Horn was arrested on a Big Horn County justice warrant. Bond was set for \$1,500.

Zeldine Beatrice Tartsah was arrested for probation violation. No bond was set.

### August 3

No arrests made.

### August 4

Erlis Jean Hugs-Harold was arrested on a Big Horn County justice warrant. Bond was set for \$100.

Jonathan Wayne Big Lake was arrested on a Big Horn County justice warrant. Bond was set for \$1,500.

Paul Brian Lande was arrested on a Big Horn County justice warrant. Bond was set for \$585.

Samuel Ross Tillman was arrested on a Big Horn County justice warrant. Bond was set for \$1,000.

Elmer Burpee Yarlott Jr. was arrested on a Big Horn County justice warrant. Bond was set for \$585.

Dylan Leigh Rude was arrested

for probation violation. No bond was set.

### August 5

Lucrecia Carol Little Nest was arrested for partner or family member assault – non-aggravated and obstructing a peace officer or other public servant. No bond and \$335 bond were set respectively.

Holland Drew Plainfeather was arrested for theft – obtain control over stolen property, third offense. Bond was set for \$2,085.

Elmer Burpee Yarlott Jr. was arrested on a district warrant. Bond was set for \$2,500.

### August 6

Delray Lynn Medicine Horse was arrested for partner or family member assault – aggravated. No bond was set.

Nicolette Claire Rogers was arrested on a city warrant. Bond was set for \$1,500.

### August 7

Gerald Littlelight Jr. was arrested for disorderly conduct. Bond was set for \$185.

Hiram Vine Armajo was arrested on a city warrant. No bond was set.

## FUNDING

ing sources was the Montana Forests in Focus Initiative, which has disbursed \$4 million for projects on tribal, state and private forests and \$2 million to USFS lands for fuel reduction and forest restoration.

Tom Trusler Jr., a fifth generation rancher and grant recipient said, “By uti-

lizing the Forest in Focus money, this advanced us at least 20 years...with the Forests in Focus program, it's here now.”

The Ash Creek fire in 2012 was one of the largest Montana had seen in many decades. It scorched almost 250,000 acres of Southeast Montana in less than two

Continued from pg. 2

weeks. The tour included areas that were affected by this quick-moving and devastating blaze.

Brian and Maggie Dice remember that day like it was yesterday, and just talking about it brings tears to their eyes.

Through the Rosebud Conservation District, they also utilized the Forests in Focus funds. As Maggie stated, “it's just nice after a catastrophic fire to have the resources we need, because we couldn't have done this without them.”

## ALONG

ing the river.

**BHCN: Have the return ditches started being a problem again? The last time we talked, you said they were doing a better job.**

Joe: Yes, they still are. I've got to hand it to them, they are doing a whole lot better than last year.

**BHCN: Since the county has closed all their garbage dumps on the reservation, how has that affected the Big-horn River Foundation's**

## ON THE BEAT

During the week of August 1, a total of 186 calls came in to the Big Horn County Dispatch Center.

### August 1

Manager of Taco John's called to report an incident between two employees. Caller said when a female employee came to work a male employee had shaken her and then, later, that same male employee slashed the tires on the female employee's bicycle. The manager has it all on camera. Disposition: Report taken.

Female caller reported a white vehicle hit another vehicle by the post office in Hardin. Disposition: Report taken.

### August 2

Caller said there is male on the corner of 5th Street and Lewis Avenue in Hardin. Caller said he is wearing a white shirt and blue or black pants and is just lying there. Disposition: Arrest made.

Caller reported a male and female fighting near Dollie's in Hardin. Caller said the male is wearing shorts and a blue shirt and is riding a bike. Disposition: Arrest made.

### August 3

Male caller requested a deputy check on a vehicle that is parked blocking the garage door of Bullis Mortuary in Hardin. Caller said the vehicle is making it impossible for them to get their vehicle out for business. Disposition: Assisted.

BIA called to report a rollover accident on Hwy. 451 mm 6. Caller said the vehicle is on its side, unknown injuries and occupants. A baby was reported still inside the vehicle. Disposition: Assisted.

### August 4

A call was received from Flying J in Hardin reporting a male individual sleeping between their doors. A deputy was requested to come move him as they cannot wake him up to move him along. Disposition: Warning (cite/verbal).

Female caller requested deputies to remove a male who is jumping into the back of people's trucks as they leave L&B's Last Stop in Hardin. Disposition: Advised.

### August 5

Male called to report a semi on fire on Hwy. 212 mm 2. Disposition: Assisted.

Female called to report a beer theft at Flying J in Hardin. Caller requested the removal of the individual who was with another person sitting outside the entrance flipping customers off and yelling at them. Caller said he has the beer between his feet. Disposition: Arrest made.

### August 6

Caller reported a little girl crying on the side of the road near the Lariat in Hardin. Disposition: Checks ok.

Caller reported a male beating another male with a stick at Wilson Park in Hardin. Disposition: Assisted.

### August 7

Caller reported his neighbor's dog keeps whining and he can't get any sleep. Caller requested a deputy come to Rangeview Dr. in Hardin and talk to the neighbor as the caller is “ready to put a bullet into the dog.” Disposition: Warning (cite/verbal).

Female caller requested a deputy check on a group of people on the 1200 block of N. Cody Avenue in Hardin who are drinking and being loud. Disposition: Arrest made.

## SENIOR

Continued from pg. 4

### Hardin Senior Center Menu

**Thursday, Aug. 11** – Tater Tot casserole, vegetables, dessert

**Friday, Aug. 12** – hot beef sandwich, potatoes, gravy, vegetables, dessert

**Monday, Aug. 15** – meatloaf, potatoes, gravy, vegetables, dessert

**Tuesday, Aug. 16** – macaroni salad, sandwich, dessert

**Wednesday, Aug. 17** – turkey roast, potatoes, gravy, vegetables, salad, cake, ice cream

**Thursday, Aug. 18** – biscuits and gravy, eggs, fruit

### Lodge Grass Senior Center Menu

**Friday, Aug. 12** – coleslaw, corn meal roll, brownie

**Monday, Aug. 15** – spaghetti, tossed salad, garlic bread, apple cake

**Wednesday, Aug. 17** – Swiss steak

### SCHOOL DISTRICTS 17-H & 1 NEW STUDENT ENROLLMENT AUGUST 11-12 & 15-18, 2016

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Crow Agency Public School, Grades K-5

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Hardin Intermediate School, Grades 3-5

Hardin Middle School, Grades 6-8

Hardin High School, Grades 9-12

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Student

Birth Certificate

Current Immunization Record

Social Security Number

May be required to provide proof of residence

# EMPLOYMENT

## RECRUITMENT BULLETIN

BIG HORN COUNTY P.O. BOX 908 HARDIN, MT 59034

**RECRUITMENT NO:** 16-10      **OPENING DATE:** AUGUST 11, 2016      **CLOSING DATE:** AUGUST 26, 2106

**POSITION:** PART-TIME ASSISTANT DEPUTY CLERK OF DISTRICT COURT

**LOCATION:** BIG HORN COUNTY DISTRICT COURT

**SALARY:** \$12.60 PER HOUR

**DUTY HOURS:** 30 HOURS PER WEEK, MONDAY – FRIDAY, 9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. (ONE HOUR LUNCH BREAK)

**MAJOR DUTIES:** PERFORMS A VARIETY OF DUTIES IN SUPPORT OF THE DISTRICT COURT OFFICE.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** ANY COMBINATION OF TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE EQUIVALENT TO GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL WITH COURSES IN BOOKKEEPING AND OFFICE SKILLS; ONE YEAR EXPERIENCE UTILIZING OFFICE SKILLS AND MEETING WITH THE PUBLIC REQUIRED; COMPUTER EXPERIENCE HELPFUL. MUST POSSESS A VALID MONTANA DRIVERS' LICENSE AND MUST BE AN INSURABLE DRIVER.

**TEST:** A WRITTEN TEST AND ORAL INTERVIEW WILL BE ADMINISTERED.

**PRE-EMPLOYMENT TESTING:** THE SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT MUST UNDERGO PRE-EMPLOYMENT DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING

**DISTRIBUTION:** COUNTYWIDE.

**HOW TO APPLY:** SUBMIT CURRENT RESUME OR BIG HORN COUNTY APPLICATION TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE, ROOM 302, COURTHOUSE OR TO THE MAILING ADDRESS LISTED ABOVE (ATTN: HUMAN RESOURCES).

**DEADLINE:** APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED OR POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS ON THE CLOSING DATE SPECIFIED ABOVE.

BIG HORN COUNTY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER. NOTHING IN THIS RECRUITMENT BULLETIN IS INTENDED TO GUARANTEE CONTINUED EMPLOYMENT. IF YOU ARE CLAIMING PREFERENCE, PLEASE SUBMIT PROOF WITH YOUR APPLICATION.

**project of turning the St. Xavier dump into a park?**

Joe: Well, we're on hold for a variety of reasons. We're still on it, but it's on hold right now.

**BHCN: With with the dump closed, it doesn't seem like it's so important anymore to move the dump away from the river. Are people still dumping garbage at the site, even though it's closed?**

Joe: Yeah, there is a canister there now, but there is a big “closed” sign there also. I see some people have dumped their garbage, which looks like the remains of a building they tore down or something. They just dumped it over the edge of the dump area and let it all slide down into the wetlands area. Instead of putting it into the canister that was there, they just decided to dump it over the bank into the wetlands and made a real mess out of it. It looks terrible and is now getting into all the surface water there.

**BHCN: My understanding is that the Crow Tribe is signing an agreement with somebody in Billings to start hauling trash. I wonder if that canister is a result of that agreement and that they may be opening up the dumps on the reservation again.**

Joe: You know, I haven't heard anything about that, but garbage service is definitely a necessity. We don't realize how much garbage we all make until you have restrictions on dumping it.

**BHCN: That's true. Several years ago, when the garbage crews went on strike in New York City, the garbage began to pile up on the sidewalks and alleys. That must have been a really**

sweet smell.

Joe: Yes, I do remember that. We're a society that makes a lot of garbage. I think it needs to be researched so we can find a way that we can make as little waste as possible. Recycling, better ways of packaging things, there has to be a solution.

**BHCN: Research has been done on how much garbage we create, but I haven't read anything on finding solutions. Recycling has been around for some time, but doesn't seem to be having much effect, especially if there isn't any money to be made doing it. I don't know of any local place that recycles plastic anymore. So now we have huge areas of the ocean that are dead because of all the floating pieces of plastic and other trash in the water.**

Joe: I do believe all the huge ships that travel the oceans also just dump their trash in the ocean.

**BHCN: That and all their sewage. It's sad how we don't consider the long-term impact of our actions.**

Joe: At the end of the day, we'll all pay for it.

**BHCN: So, you were fishing with some friends last week. The fishing you did by yourself, was it just for fun or were you also doing some research and development?**

Joe: Well, I was checking out some new hopper patterns I was tying, trying to get something that looks and works better. I've found out that the tried and true old Dave's Hopper and Joe's Hopper work just as effectively as some made out of stuff that seems to have come from tennis shoes. I was trying to tie patterns

Continued from pg. 4

made up of all the synthetic and plastic, and rubber and flash. I went back to my book and read up on the Joe's Hopper and the Dave's Hopper, and tied some up and – guess what? – they worked just fine.

**BHCN: Someone's trying to recreate the wheel when it's not needed. Apparently, Dave's and Joe's Hopper patterns are a whole lot easier to tie also.**

Joe: Yes, they're simpler patterns and don't take as much synthetic material. They have hopper patterns out there now with lots of rubber, plastic and flash. Actually, they look really good; they even have little parachutes on them to make sure they land just right. That also makes it so you can see it better.

**BHCN: I just went out on the web and typed in hopper fly patterns, and see there are a bunch of them. It looks like they have one made out of foam. I see the Dave's Hopper is listed as one of the deadliest fly patterns for trout and bass – lots of choices.**

Joe: Yes, there are and you need to make sure you're using the right size; too big or too small, they don't feed as well or don't want to waste their time going after it.

**BHCN: I see your muddler minnow and the woolly bugger you've talked about are also flies that are good for mimicking hoppers and crickets.**

Joe: Yes, they'll work that way.

**BHCN: Joe I hope you have another great fishing week.**

Joe: I will, but right now I better get outside and roll up the windows on my truck. It's starting to rain.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

**Pryor Public Schools has the following openings for the 2016-2017 school year:**

- 1/2 Combo Class Elementary Teacher
- 3/4 Combo Class Elementary Teacher
- K-12 Special Education Teacher
- 7-12 Shop/Industrial Arts Teacher
- 7-12 Art (half time with potential full time pending endorsements)

**Please call 406-259-7329 or email [humanresources@pryor.k12.mt.us](mailto:humanresources@pryor.k12.mt.us) for information.**

# Forest in Focus Initiative treats lands near Bigfork

## Private timber sale benefits F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber mill

By ANNA ARVIDSON  
Hungry Horse News

A forest project in Bigfork is helping a mill in Columbia Falls and keeping a homeowner's property safer from wildfires.

Dr. John Christiansen is using grant money from the Forest in Focus Initiative to improve the forest on his land.

Started in 2014, the Forest in Focus initiative, driven by Gov. Steve Bullock, sets aside \$2 million for work on private, state and tribal lands, and another \$1 million for federal lands. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation is tasked with dispersing grants.

The goal of the work being done on Christiansen's 7.3 acres is fuel reduction and restoring the forest's health.

"We're thinning out the trees with the goal to reduce fire hazard and improving the health of the forest," said Jerry Okonski, owner Great Northern Land Services. Okonski spearheaded the Christiansen project, as it is being called, and has also worked on several other projects in the surrounding area. After reaching out to Dr. Christiansen and other landowners, Okonski developed a project proposal and requested the funding being used for this project when Forest in Focus initiative funding first became available in 2014. He was granted



Chris Evans, co-owner of Great Northern Land Services, falls a 100' tree on the Christiansen Project land (Anna Arvidson photo).

\$148,407 for his proposed work on 121 acres of private forest land. The Christiansen Project received \$8,760 of this grant.

F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company has been a major purchaser on the project, taking saw logs off of the land.

"It's been a great benefit having this project available," said Chris Damrow, a forester for

Stoltze. "We have the ability to treat stands that ordinarily would be uneconomical."

Damrow said the project, and the wood it provides the mill, has been beneficial to the company.

"It's helped create and sustain jobs, and it produces usable product for many facilities and sustains those jobs as well," he said.

Non-merchantable

trees, including those that are rotten, are being directed to Willis Mill in Bonner to become pulp.

"It's a symbiotic relationship. We're able to do this work and get rid of the product, and it supports the industry," Okonski said.

Maintaining the forest's health is a concern for both parties.

"Maintaining species diversity is important,"

Damrow said.

Okonski listed a dozen species in the area, including birch, mountain maple, cottonwood, lodgepole and ponderosa pine, white pine, Douglas fir, western larch, western red cedar, hemlock, alpine fir, and grand fir.

Okonski's partner and co-owner of Great Northern Land Services, Chris Evans, devises the forest plan for the project.

"I look at what needs to go, what needs to stay, and areas where I can fall everything and minimize impact," Evans said. He added that his goal is to leave green spaces.

"We feel like that really helps with recovery," he said.

Aesthetic also goes into planning.

"Lots is rotten, so I take that out and leave it with a natural flow. I'm trying to create a natural landscape and break up the viewshed," Evans said. "The people we're working for care about the forest and the health of the forest, and Jerry and I do a good job of delivering that."

Wildlife also plays a role in managing the woods.

"If I see a nest in a tree, it stays. There's falcons, hawks, raptors ... the land owners like their birds, and it adds value to the project," he said.

White pine, a once abundant species that has succumbed to blister rust across much of its range, is also benefiting from this project.

"We're finding a lot of white pine, and we're collecting cones from the ones that are resistant to blister rust," said Rick Moore, a Service Forester with the Montana DNRC.

When more grant money became available this year, Okonski was granted another \$50,725 to continue working on 53 additional acres of land in Flathead County.



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## Burglars make off with the kitchen sink

By **MEGAN STRICKLAND**  
Daily Inter Lake

After a summer of fixing up a house to call home, a Columbia Falls family is reeling after burglars made off with more than \$38,000 worth of loot, leaving hardly anything behind.

John Woody said his family had just started moving boxes into their new home off Montana 206 near the Bad

Rock Fire station last week. The family was working on the home the night of Oct. 14 and locked it up before they left. After Wood went to his son's soccer game the next morning he returned home to find that a lock on the back window had been broken. The house had been completely picked over by a thief.

A gun safe, two guns, ammunition and tools were among the valuables taken. The family's winter clothes

and a filing cabinet that contained important documents like birth certificates were stolen.

"They took my sink," Woody said. "We got a brand new kitchen sink. They even took that ... They left us a few boxes, but not a whole lot."

Woody said the monetary estimate of what was taken does not include the value of a 1968 Mustang that was stolen. The red car has a vinyl top and belonged to Woody's

grandmother.

A couple of weeks prior to the burglary Woody said one of the outbuildings had been rummaged through by someone who left a card saying that he or she had been looking at the property and wondered if it was for sale. Woody called the number but never received a response. Now he thinks that the card

See **BURGLARS**, A8

## Water-rights letters flood DNRC with questions

By **SAM WILSON**  
Daily Inter Lake

Officials with Montana's Department of Natural Resources and Conservation say a routine round of letters sent to water-rights holders in two Northwest Montana basins are being conflated with concerns over a pair of unrelated — but controversial — issues in the area.

The department recently began sending "statements of claim" asking some water rights claimants to review the state's information as the two basins head toward the adjudication process in the Montana Water Court. The letters pertain to Basin 76L, which covers the Flathead Indian Reservation, and Basin 76LJ, which includes properties in the Flathead River basin north of the reservation.

Included in the statements are abstracts and historical use information for individual water rights, and recipients have an opportunity to either confirm the information is correct or provide additional information to correct the record.

"What seems to have happened, given everything that's going on with the CSKT compact and the Montana Artesian proposal, some people became confused as to why they're getting these letters and they wondered if it has something to do with these proposals," department spokesman John Grassy said, adding that the DNRC has been "inundated with calls."

See **LETTERS**, A8

## A boutique approach to forestry



**MARK BOARDMAN**, a forester for F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Co., speaks to a group at the Spring Brook Ranch fuels reduction project near Kalispell during the 2016 Flathead Timber Tour on Thursday. (Aaric Bryan/Daily Inter Lake)

## Kalispell tree farm highlighted at timber tour

By **SAM WILSON**  
Daily Inter Lake

Business leaders from the Flathead Valley took in the scent of fresh-cut pine, the rumblings of a rubber-tired skidder and the buzz of chain-saws during the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce's annual Flathead Timber Tour Thursday afternoon.

Jim Watson, owner of the 1,000-acre Spring Brook Ranch west of Kalispell on which the small logging operation took place, said the 34-acre project is part of a long-term management strategy to improve the health of his tree farm-certified private forest.

"What we're doing is correcting past sins," Watson told a group of attendees during the tour. "The philosophy and the training of the foresters, not too many years ago, was to remove the best trees at the lowest cost."

That resulted in the best genetics getting weeded out, he added, rather than today's focus on "leave trees." At Spring Brook Ranch, that included the ponderosa pines, Western larches and Douglas firs that grow straightest and healthiest, and which Watson



**LEE CAMERON**, a knot bumper with Jamison General Land Management removes limbs from trees at the Spring Brook Ranch fuel reduction project.

hopes will repopulate his land with the most commercially and ecologically beneficial offspring. The commercial thinning work being undertaken Thursday by Whitefish-based Jamison General Land Management is also geared toward reducing potential fire fuels while leaving a broad spread of tree species and age classes on the landscape.

But that "boutique" approach to forestry isn't cheap. Montana Department of Natural Resources Forest

Practices Program Manager Roger Ziesak explained that the project on Spring Brook Ranch had been made possible with the aid of the state's Forests in Focus Program.

The 2013 Legislature authorized the program, which provides up to \$5 million every two years from the state's wildfire suppression fund to aid projects that meet criteria including hazardous fuel reduction, ecological restoration and commercial timber production.

**'The philosophy of the foresters not too many years ago was to remove the best trees at the lowest cost.'**

"The idea is to get logs on trucks while we're doing the right thing on the ground," Ziesak said.

The program has been popular with private landowners, who collectively applied for nearly \$7 million worth of grants during the program's first biennium, out of just \$2 million available for work on non-federal forest lands.

But that money isn't intended as a handout, Ziesak added, noting that his department is "looking for projects that need financial assistance to happen."

On Watson's property, a small crew of workers

See **TIMBER**, A8

## Producers urge better incentives for niche crops

By **LYNNETTE HINTZE**  
Daily Inter Lake

Local specialty crop producers made their case for more flexible grant application processes and enhanced incentives for small growers during a round-table discussion Thursday with Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont.

Tester held his second "Barnstormin' Farm Bill" session at Glacier Hops Ranch near Whitefish to hear from farmers as Congress begins constructing a new Farm Bill. The current Farm Bill expires in 2018 but hearings begin next year.

Sue Snow, co-owner of Tabletree Juice in Bigfork, pointed out how the value-added producer grant application process has too short of a turnaround between the time applications are available and when they're due.

Kathy Hadley, executive director of the Butte-based National Center for Appropriate Technology said she has gotten many comments from small producers about the ill-timed June deadline for specialty-crop grants. That's one of the busiest times of year for farmers. She wondered if a winter time line could be set up.

See **PRODUCERS**, A8

### MARCHING TO NEW YORK CITY

Bigfork student to march in Macy's Day Parade  
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### RUSSIAN INFLUENCE

States reject requests to monitor elections  
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## FROM PAGE ONE

## Two grizzlies getting into apples captured

By SAM WILSON  
Daily Inter Lake

State wildlife managers are asking residents of Northwest Montana to help reduce the number of human conflicts with grizzly bears after they were forced to trap and relocate a pair of grizzly bears found eating apples on private land.

A 5- to 6-year-old, 365-pound male grizzly bear was captured above Lake Blaine on the east side of the Flathead Valley on Wednesday. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks had set a trap several days earlier for a much larger grizzly bear that had been damaging fruit trees.

The bear had no previous history of being captured. It was fitted with a GPS radio collar and an interagency decision was made to release the bear on the east side of

Hungry Horse Reservoir in the Deep Creek drainage on Friday.

In a separate incident, a 2-year-old male grizzly was caught across U.S. 93 from the Flathead County Landfill after eating apples at a residence. The bear, which also had no previous history of capture, was fitted with a GPS satellite collar and released in Whale Creek in the North Fork Flathead drainage.

**THE STATE** agency has received numerous reports of both black and grizzly bears in the areas around Whitefish, Columbia Falls, Eureka, Bigfork and along the north and east sides of the Flathead Valley.

Fish, Wildlife and Parks officials are asking residents to pick fruit off their trees to prevent damage to the trees, and to pick up all fruit off the

ground to avoid attracting bears.

Electric fencing can also be used to protect fruit trees, poultry and livestock. Pet food and grain should be secured where bears can't get access to it. Bird feeders that contain sunflower seeds, millet and suet will attract bears.

Garbage should not be left outside where bears can get into it. In Montana, it is illegal to feed bears and ungulates; illegal foods include deer blocks and grain.

**WITH THE** onset of big game season, hunters should be aware that grizzly bears can be encountered almost anywhere throughout western Montana. Hunters should read, understand and follow the food storage orders. Hunters should also make every effort to get their har-

vested game out of the field and processed as soon as possible.

If a harvested animal must be left in the field for any length of time, it is recommended to get the meat as far away from the gut pile as possible and to leave it in an open area that can be observed from a distance. Placing tree branches or sticks over the carcass can also tip off hunters that a bear might have visited the carcass if the branches are moved.

When returning to a carcass, always approach it with the idea that a bear could be in the area.

The agency recommends that hunters and other recreationists carry and know how to use bear pepper spray.

For more information visit [fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/livingWithWildlife/beBearAware/default.html](http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/livingWithWildlife/beBearAware/default.html).

## Flathead County jobless rate improves in September

Daily Inter Lake

Flathead County's unemployment rate improved slightly in September, posting at 4.5 percent compared to 4.7 percent in August.

The county had a workforce of 42,966 people in September, compared to 44,924 the previous month, according to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

Neighboring counties also reported improved jobless rates. Lincoln County, which is tied with Glacier County for the highest unemployment in the state, posted a 7 percent rate, compared to 7.9 percent in August. Sanders County reported 6.4 percent unemployment in September, compared to 7 percent in August.

Montana's unemploy-

ment rate remained at 4.3 percent in September. The national unemployment rate increased by 0.1 percentage points up to 5 percent.

"Montana's unemployment rate continues to be in the ideal range, and the state is seeing a growing workforce," said Montana Labor & Industry Commissioner Pam Bucy. "Unemployment in the ideal range provides an even balance between workers having good job opportunities with increasing wages and businesses able to find the workers they need to produce their products."

Payroll employment estimates indicate over-the-month job growth of 2,400 jobs, with increases across nearly all sectors and strong gains in the leisure activities industry.

## BURGLARS

from A1

might have been a ruse by someone who was scoping out his home for the crime.

"A lot of stuff I don't even know how they were going to sell," Woody said.

Woody said he couldn't offer ideas on how other people in the area could better protect themselves.

"My house was locked," Woody said.

Anyone with information about the burglary is asked to call the Flathead County Sheriff's Office at 758-5585.

Reporter Megan Strickland can be reached at 758-4459 or [mstrickland@dailyinterlake.com](mailto:mstrickland@dailyinterlake.com).

## PRODUCERS

from A1

Tom Britz of Glacier Hops Ranch made a pitch for more flexible grant programs.

"As an entrepreneur you have to plan a year in advance," Britz said. "If you had the ability to have a flexible application process" small producers would be better able to react to market opportunities for their crops.

Other producers said the amount of time it takes to administer the grant, such as completing the required paperwork, makes the process cumbersome.

Pat McGlynn, Montana State University Extension Agent for Flathead County, said she

believes specialty-crop block grants are useful and would like to see an agriculture innovation center with a food scientist sponsored by the university system in Montana. In other states the costs of such programs are picked up by universities.

"At Cornell you could use [the ag innovation center] for free and have access to a food scientist," McGlynn pointed out.

Mike Jopek of Purple Frog Gardens in Whitefish told Tester about the challenges of local vegetable producers competing with vegetables imported from other countries.

"We do compete with growers south of the border," Jopek said. "The cost of labor is so wildly different for domestic producers. It's a real compe-

## 'The cost of labor is so wildly different for domestic producers. It's a real competition issue.'

Mike Jopek

tition issue."

Andy Sponseller, owner of 10 Spoon Winery in Missoula, echoed Jopek's concern. He pointed to the huge amount of nationally subsidized wine pouring into American markets, and stressed the need for more incentives and help with marketing for small producers.

"How are we going to get the guy down the road to eat our vegetables, drink our wine?" Sponseller asked. Even if local products are superior to others, "being at the

top of your game is not enough," he said.

Bruce Johnson, president of the Flathead Lake Cherry Growers, told Tester the Flathead's cherry industry remains heavily dependent on migrant workers, employing 200 to 300 migrant workers during the harvest season.

"We want to make sure the [new] Farm Bill doesn't have language that would prohibit" access to the migrant workforce, Johnson said.

Tester said it's important for farmers to start

talking now about what works and what doesn't in the current Farm Bill.

"You guys approach agriculture from the standpoint of economic development," Tester said at the round-table discussion. "We need thoughtful discussion rather than reactive" response.

Britz said afterward that local farmers have found that "completely unrelated agriculture segments oftentimes share the same problems and are looking for similar solutions."

A third listening session is planned at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Oct. 28, at the University of Montana in Missoula.

Anyone with input about what changes could be made to the federal Farm Bill can email [farmbillcomments@tester.senate.gov](mailto:farmbillcomments@tester.senate.gov).

## TIMBER

from A1

used chainsaws to strip limbs from felled trees, then organized the logs by size with a skidder. Forester Mark Boardman with F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co. explained that site-specific characteristics of such small-scale operations can add complications.

Nestled within the thinning project's boundaries was an apple orchard believed to potentially be the oldest in the Flathead Valley.

"The goal is to log it and kind of mimic a fire,"

Boardman said, pointing to the 50- and 60-year-old ponderosa pines thickly dotting the hill. "This is a spot that would burn very often, maybe every 20 years."

It will also provide some raw materials for the local timber industry, although the logging contractor Jamison Smith noted the project was a small one. Boardman estimated the 6-inch and 10-inch saw logs will yield about 10 truckloads of lumber for Stoltze — which was awarded the Forests in Focus grant to help fund the project — while the less valuable pulp logs will be processed into medi-

um-density fiberboard at Weyerhaeuser's plant in Columbia Falls.

Kalispell Chamber of Commerce President and Chief Executive Joe Unterreiner said he hoped attendees took away a more intimate understanding of the timber industry's importance to Flathead County.

"I wanted people to get on-site in this beautiful place we live in, and have an appreciation for the industry and its contributions to our quality of life," he said.

Reporter Sam Wilson can be reached at 758-4407 or by email at [swilson@dailyinterlake.com](mailto:swilson@dailyinterlake.com).

through the adjudication process since it began in the 1980s, according to the department.

They are also independent from water rights related to the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project, Olsen added.

Since they were sent, the Montana Water Court has extended the initial, 30-day deadline for

responses to the letters. Olsen said water rights holders now have several months to respond, and there isn't currently a hard deadline.

Claimants with questions or other concerns can visit the local DNRC office in Kalispell for clarification, or call 406-542-4300.

## LETTERS

from A1

Passed last year by the state Legislature, the water rights compact for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes has stirred up significant controversy due to its impacts on state water rights holders both on and off the reservation.

Separately, a proposal by the Montana Artesian Water Co. to construct a water bottling facility near Creston has prompted substantial backlash from residents concerned with a range of potential impacts from the plant, including the availability of well water from the underlying aquifer.

Kathy Olsen, manager of the DNRC regional water office in Kalispell, said the letters would have gone out to water rights holders in the two basins regardless of the other two issues, which she added have no impact on the ongoing adjudication process to close those basins.

"We're just helping the water court through this initial process of getting it ready," Olsen said.

The letters apply to water rights claims filed before July 1, 1973. The two basins for which letters are being sent are the last ones to go



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Courtesy photo

The Ashland Forest Products Mill in Ashland was part of the tour. Visitors were able to see all the work the revitalized mill is undertaking. Reopened in the fall of 2014, the mill is producing lumber products out of logs from trees killed in the wildfires of 2012.

## Forests in Focus funding helps speed up fire and conservation projects

By **KELLEY HIRNING**

Forest restoration, fuels treatments and wildfire prevention/reduction activities are ongoing in the southeastern part of Montana. Last month, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation organized a tour of different Southeastern Montana fuel reduction projects to highlight all the work that is being done in the area to reduce wildfire risk and its threat to the public and property. In addition to DNRC staff, other attendees included a Rosebud County Commissioner, U.S. Forest Service, Northern Cheyenne and BIA staff, local landowners, Rosebud Conservation District, and members of the local forest industry.

DNRC Eastern Land Office Area Manager Chris Pileski showcased some of the projects that were a result of the partnership of those involved, as well as the various state and federal grants that provided funding. Pileski also recognized Bobbi Vannattan of the Rosebud Con-

servation District for all her great work in managing most of the projects. She and the Conservation District are an important partner in completing these projects.

The group toured the Ashland Forest Products Mill in Ashland and were able to see all the work the revitalized mill is undertaking. Reopened in the fall of 2014, the mill is producing lumber products out of logs from trees killed in the wildfires of 2012, including logs from projects that were on the tour.

After touring the mill, the group visited projects on state trust land, U.S. Forest Service land, and two privately held parcels of lands.

Since 2009, DNRC has used state and federal funds to help restore forest land on 30 properties, totaling approximately 4,000 acres of private, tribal, and state lands in the southeast region of Montana. One of the funding sources was the Montana Forests in Focus Initiative, which has disbursed \$4 million dollars for projects on tribal,

state and private forests and \$2 million dollars to USFS lands for fuel reduction and forest restoration. Tom Trusler Jr, a fifth generation rancher and grant recipient said, "By utilizing the Forests in Focus money, this advanced us at least 20 years... with the Forests in Focus program, it's here now."

The Ash Creek fire in 2012 was one of the largest Montana had seen in many decades. It scorched almost 250,000 acres of Southeast Montana in less than two weeks. The tour included areas that were affected by this quick moving and devastating fire.

Brian and Maggie Dice remember that day like it was yesterday, and just talking about it brings tears to their eyes. Through the Rosebud Conservation District they also utilized the Forests in Focus funds. As Mrs. Dice stated, "it's just nice after a catastrophic fire to have the resources we need, because we couldn't have done this without them."



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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2016

## It's a bird, it's a plane, it's . . . a museum!

By JENNY GESSAMAN | Reporter

Keen eyes may have spotted a time-traveling anomaly Tuesday: a WWII-era plane circling low, preparing for a landing at Lewistown Municipal Airport.

The Spirit of Freedom is a Douglas C-54, and although the 1945 aircraft traveled on to Great Falls, any Central Montanans who missed its first landing will have a chance at its second. The restored plane will be in Lewistown again tomorrow, and its interior museum will be open to anyone curious about the international event known as the Berlin Airlift.

Owned by the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation, the Spirit of Freedom, the last plane from the Berlin airlift still flying, contains artifacts, displays and a crew dedicated to remembering the aeronautical event that saved millions of Germans.

After the Soviet Union isolated Berlin in 1948, the three other Allied Powers also rebuilding the city flew in 2.5 million tons of supplies to keep citizens alive. The Foundation website says the roughly yearlong operation involved 200,000 planes landing around the clock.

Douglas C-54s like the Spirit of Freedom were used to support the larger transport planes hauling everything from food and water to clothes and medicine. While the year of flights and supplies sustained a city, it also played a role on the international scene: The Foundation website credits the Berlin Airlift as a major factor in the start of the Cold War.

The Berlin Airlift Veterans Association's annual reunion in Great Falls this week brought the Spirit of Freedom from New Jersey to Central Montana. Foundation President and Flight Crew Aircraft Commander Timothy Chopp encouraged everyone to take advantage of the plane's Lewistown stop Sunday, saying every age would find something to enjoy.

His favorite museum display is the life-sized replica of Vittles the dog, a pup trained to parachute and pull his own ripcord.

"Getting him to pull the ripcord was easy . . . the hardest part was getting him to count to 10," Chopp laughed.

### Airport 'big enough' to handle Spirit of Freedom

The Spirit of Freedom flew here from New Jersey to take part in the Berlin Airlift veterans' reunion in Great Falls earlier this week. Pilots trained for the airlift at Great Falls, using what later became Malmstrom Air Force Base, because of the similarity to the layout and physical situation they would find in Berlin.

Lewistown Municipal Airport Manager Jerry Moline said having the plane land in Lewistown, and then return on Sunday, is a huge plus for the community.

"Having a C-54 landing here is fun for locals," Moline said, "but it also benefits the community in other ways."

See Plane | Page 5



The Spirit of Freedom, a restored 1945 aircraft that served in the Berlin Airlift, parks in Lewistown Municipal Airport to pick up fuel and media for its trip to Great Falls Tuesday.

Photos by Jenny Gessaman

This is good for Lewistown.

- Jerry Moline, Airport Manager



The aircraft's museum interior features artifacts and displays from the 1948 Berlin Airlift. The plane museum will be open Sunday at the Lewistown airport.



"Last Best Plates" founder Lynn Donaldson-Vermillion returns to Central Montana. Photo courtesy of Lynn Donaldson-Vermillion

## Denton woman finds a home with "Last Best Plates"

By CHARLIE DENISON | Reporter

Denton native and renowned photojournalist Lynn Donaldson-Vermillion is getting back to her Central Montana roots this week.

The fourth-generation Montanan, who has worked for such publications as "Time," "People," "Esquire," the "New York Times" and "Big Sky Journal," tries to make it back every year for the Chokecherry Festival, and this year is no different, as she will bring her 8-year-old twins to Lewistown to take in the excitement.

"I love Central Montana," she said, "and I love the Chokecherry Festival. It's good old family fun. I love that my kids can run around, I love sampling the entries from the culinary contest and I love seeing all the different things people can do. It feels like home."

Passionate about her hometown, the journalist - who now lives in Bozeman - has been writing and photographing the area quite a bit lately, posting about it on her blog, "The Last Best Plates." The blog launched in January of 2015 - although she once wondered whether it'd ever get started.

"I literally talked about it for five years," Vermillion said, "and a lot of my friends who are professional travel writers and travel photogra-

phers really came through. They wanted to help and contribute."

The blog - or regularly updated website written in an informal or conversational style - shares "stories, places and people of Montana... one plate at a time," Vermillion writes on the "about" page. The blog is essentially "a love letter to her home state, inviting friends from every corner to share their local knowledge and help tell its stories."

An abundance of friends help Vermillion with the website, but none more than Elizabeth Barnett, who is Vermillion's partner with the blog.

"She gets stuff done," Vermillion said. "She took the bull by the horns and made a comprehensive plan. She was really instrumental in organizing our editorial calendar and the tone of the blog."

Vermillion said she couldn't be happier with her team. Not even two years into the blog, there is already so much she has learned about Montana, and she hopes that goes for others who visit her site.

"The subject matter has been terrific," Vermillion said, "from food to inns to events. There is so much to discover in Montana and so much hidden off-the-beaten path stuff."

See Plates | Page 5

## Grant funds improve local forest health

By JENNY GESSAMAN | Reporter

Over \$400,000 in grant money was awarded for logging projects on two Central Montana private properties, all in the hopes of sustaining local forests, creating fire-resistant areas and strengthening Montana's lumber industry.

Tom McMillan's and David Snapp's projects each received over \$200,000 as part of Montana's Forest in Focus Initiative. Created by Governor Steve Bullock in 2014, the program uses up to \$1 million from the state's fire suppression fund to help finance logging projects on private, tribal and state lands.

Clive Rooney, a Department of Natural Resources and Conservation resource conservation manager, summarized the program's motivation.

"You need to manage your timber, and you can do that through logging or through firefighting," he said.

DNRC Forest Practices Program Manager Roger Ziesak, also the grant manager for Forest in Focus, explained how logging leads to the initiative's goals. Tree removal eliminates overcrowding in forests,

reducing wildfire fuel while also opening room for new growth and improving forest health. Ziesak said the logs produced helped the state's timber industry.

Gordy Sanders, resource manager for Pyramid Lumber, agrees. McMillan hired his Seeley Lake company to thin the forest on almost 400 acres near Cottonwood Creek Road. When Sanders saw a call for Forest in Focus grant proposals, he submitted the Central Montana project. The money was awarded in February, and the grant is helping both landowner and logger.

"We can actually get commercial saw logs delivered to the mill at a reasonable price," he said.

A mix of international and local factors have lowered the demand for finished timber, but saw mills are also hurting from a lack of an affordable source of raw logs. The grant awarded to Sander's Lewistown project helped reverse that problem.

"It was an opportunity to reduce the cost of trucking in this [Central Montana] country," Sanders said. "It's overall reduced the cost of delivering logs."

He explained that could be a big cost: The drive from Lewistown to Seeley Lake is 252 miles.

"Getting some logs on trucks was another big goal of the project," Ziesak said.

Grant applications that met the requirements and also generated products to saw mills got a plus during the review process, Ziesak said.

The two current projects came from the Forest in Focus' second round of grants, and Ziesak was excited to announce the opening of a third round. Due Sept. 30, he encourages everyone to look at the application.

"It's open to virtually anybody, anyone except for federal lands basically," Ziesak said. "Speaking towards the private lands, it could be the land owners, the saw mill companies, the consulting foresters: Everyone in the project just has to agree to a partnership in order to submit a complete proposal."

For a description of the Forest in Focus Initiative, as well as the grant requirements, visit <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/forestry-assistance/forest-in-focus>.



Several members involved with the Pyramid Lumber logging project 20 miles south of Lewistown stand in front of stripped logs Wednesday afternoon. From left to right, Gordy Sanders, Tom McMillan, John Nesselhuf, Clive Rooney and Roger Ziesak.

Photo by Jenny Gessaman



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**Ballots**  
 State official offers advice **B1**

**Grizzly Game Day**  
 DE Johnson a dangerous defender **INSIDE**



**Fort Missoula**  
 'CCC Worker' statue guards the gate **B1**

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**NATIONAL FOREST PRODUCTS WEEK**



**TOMMY MARTINO, MISSOULIAN**

Members of the Missoula Chamber of Commerce look over the thinning operation in Pattee Canyon on Friday afternoon. The group observed the state funded logging operation to help prevent fires and keep the forest healthy.

# Celebrating, contemplating Montana's forestry industry

**Timber tour in Missoula highlights woody economy**

**ROB CHANEY**  
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Although a campus-wide rummage sale takes place this Saturday, don't get the wrong idea about the green price tags on many trees shading the University of Montana.

Student members of the Society of American Foresters hung

tags as part of National Forest Products Week, demonstrating the value of urban forest species. For example, a Douglas fir tree by Stone Hall noted its size (83 feet, diameter (35 inches), potential products (plywood, tea for rheumatism cure) and value in environmental benefits (\$13,954, based on storm water absorption, improved air quality and property value).

The week of celebrating and contemplating the state of Montana's forestry industry wrapped up with visit to an active logging

project tucked into the side of Mount Sentinel.

Although work in the woods has been in decline for the past three decades, Montana remains one of the few states in the West with everything from loggers to lumber yards still in operation. According to Department of Natural Resources and Conservation figures, 7,749 people earn \$319 million in annual wages from the forest products industry.

National Forest Products Week even generated a proclamation

from President Barack Obama. In it, Obama noted benefits of fresh air, clean water, wildlife habitat, recreational activity and essential products such as paper, wood and packaging material. He also observed the increasing risks of wildfire, erosion, drought and climate change.

"(W)e are exploring ways to

Please see **TOUR**, Page A4

■ **INSIDE:** Daines, Tester back push to renew softwood import agreement. **Page A4**

**TRAPPING**

# Poll: Initiative lacks support

**DAVID ERICKSON**  
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A ballot initiative that would ban the trapping of animals on public lands in Montana appears headed for failure, according to a recent poll commissioned by Lee Newspapers.

The Mason-Dixon poll of more than 1,000 registered voters, conducted Oct. 10-12, found that 63 percent of Montanans who responded said they would vote "no" to reject I-177. Of those polled, 24 percent said they would vote "yes" on the measure and 13 percent were undecided.

The numbers are much different when gender is taken into account. A total of 73 percent of men said they intend to vote no, while only 18 percent said they would vote yes and 9 percent remain undecided. Of women, 53 percent say they'll vote the initiative down compared with 31 who will support it, with 16 percent undecided.

Trapping also appears to be a partisan issue. For Democrats, 45 percent say they'll support I-177, with 40 percent saying they'll vote no and 15 percent undecided. Among Republicans, 77 percent say they'll vote against it, 10 percent say they'll vote for it and 12 percent are undecided.

The question in the poll was phrased: "Ballot initiative I-177 would ban trapping on public lands. If you were voting today, would you vote yes, no or undecided?"

■ **A group called Montanans for Trap-Free Public Lands** gathered enough signatures to get the

Please see **POLL**, Page A4

**INCEST CASE**

# Judge sparks outrage with no prison time

**AMY BETH HANSON**  
 Associated Press

**HELENA** – A judge's decision not to order prison time for a man who raped his 12-year-old daughter has sparked outrage from afar and calls closer to home to toughen Montana's law, which allows such lenience in certain circumstances.

Enacted in a wave of similar legislation around the country after the killing of a 9-year-old Florida girl in 2005, the Montana statute requires a minimum sentence of 25 years in prison for anyone convicted of rape, incest or sexual abuse of a child 12 or younger.

But unlike many of those other laws, Montana's also allows judges to dole out far less severe punishment in a case where a court-appointed evaluator determines that ordering treatment outside prison "affords a better opportunity for rehabilitation of

Please see **INCEST**, Page A4

**SECRETARIAL ORDER FROM SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR SALLY JEWELL**

# Mow: Glacier Park already collaborates

**VINCE DEVLIN**  
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**WEST GLACIER** – A Secretarial Order from Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell encouraging cooperative management opportunities between public land and water managers, and federally recognized Indian tribes, will have little effect on Glacier National Park, its superintendent says.

"Quite honestly, I believe it will boil down to reporting requirements on what we've already got in place," Jeff Mow said Friday, the day the order

was announced.

The park has conferred with local tribes on a range of issues for years, Mow said, including fisheries, grizzly bears and plant species.

Glacier is even working with its closest Native American neighbors, the Blackfeet, on that tribe's efforts to reintroduce a wild bison herd that would likely roam inside and outside Glacier's borders.

"The restoration of free-range wild bison is of huge mutual interest for agencies and tribes," Mow said. Between that and

tribes' and park's involvement with Crown of the Continent groups, there is collaboration on a variety of issues, the superintendent said.

"We've got a lot going," Mow said.

■ **Jewell announced the order** Friday in Fairbanks, Alaska, at the annual Alaska Federation of Natives Conference.

It sets out a framework to ensure that Native communities have the opportunity to assume "meaningful and substantive roles in managing public lands

that have special geographical, historical and cultural connections to the tribes," according to the Interior Department.

The order covers far more than national parks. In addition to the National Park Service, it applies to the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

"This Secretarial Order reflects the Obama administration's deep commitment to

Please see **GLACIER**, Page A5

# Zinke suggested voter fraud during 2013 interview

**Republican says he'd 'heard' of election troubles**

**MATT HUDSON**  
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**BILLINGS** – Before becoming a congressman, Ryan Zinke said there was widespread voter fraud in both national and Montana elections, including a claim that the dead cast ballots.

While election officials deny that voter fraud happens in Montana, Zinke's comments are in step with Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump, who has made claims of rigged elections and raised the profile of fraud concerns leading up to the 2016 election.

Zinke has been a supporter of Trump throughout the election year.

In 2013, Zinke appeared on an online radio show, The Hagmann

and Hagmann Report. At the time, he was a former state senator who had served two terms in the Legislature.

The conversation turned to voter fraud midway through the show, and Zinke said that voter confidence in the system is important. He then made his claim.

"I think there was a lot of tomfoolery in this last election. I just came back from Santa Barbara with the Republican women there that went down to

a local university and witnessed, you know, a lot of voter fraud," Zinke said. "And I have to believe that's probably the case across the country. I know in my home state, during the senatorial election, there was a lot of voter fraud. And there was people that

Please see **ZINKE**, Page A4

■ **INSIDE:** McCulloch: Don't give your ballot to a stranger. **Page B1**

**DISCOVER DIGITAL**



■ Missing Washington-Grizzly Stadium on game day? Check out photos from when the venue was under construction. **AT MISSOULIAN.COM**

CLASSIFIED	C2	OBITUARIES	B3	SPORTS	D1
COMICS	D5	PUZZLES	C9	TV LISTINGS	A9
MARKETS	A6	RELIGION	B4	WHEELS	C1



# Senators push to renew softwood import agreement

**ROB CHANEY**  
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Montana's Senate delegation co-signed a letter to President Barack Obama asking for continued pressure to get a new Softwood Lumber Agreement with Canada.

"We are disappointed that Canada appears reluctant to follow through on this commitment, which has significantly under-

mined (the U.S. Trade Representative's) efforts to reach a final agreement," Sens. Steve Daines and Jon Tester wrote on Friday, in a bipartisan message joined by 24 fellow senators.

The Softwood Lumber Agreement was originally signed in 2006 and set limits for Canadian lumber imports to the United States. It expired in 2015, but had a one-year "stand-still" clause

allowing time to negotiate a new deal. That expired on Oct. 13.

The United States has proposed that Canadian imports be limited to an agreed share of the U.S. lumber market. Canadian counter-proposals have suggested setting a duty charge on imports crossing the border, but not a quota for how much wood can be sent over.

"Hundreds of thousands of U.S.

jobs and thousands of U.S. rural communities depend on fairness in trade in softwood lumber," the senators wrote. "That is why we will continue to urge you, and any future Administration, to seek a fair, effective, and sustainable agreement with Canada on softwood lumber trade, and in the absence of such an agreement, to fully enforce U.S. trade laws."

U.S. negotiators maintain the

Canadian timber industry benefits from government subsidies that give an uncompetitive advantage to cutting trees on Canadian provincial and federal land. The Canadians have successfully argued in international trade court that the U.S. import limits violate free-trade agreements.

Senators Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, and Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, authored the letter.



**TOMMY MARTINO, MISSOULIAN**

Neil Simpson of the Department of Natural Resources shows off the new view after a hillside was cleared of hazardous trees during a Missoula Chamber of Commerce timber tour.

## Tour

From A1

help forestland owners respond to climate change," Obama wrote. "Earlier this year, we released a roadmap for implementing key building blocks to achieve this goal, such as private forest growth and retention, stewardship of Federal forests, and promotion of wood products."

For Missoulians, the week culminated with a trip to the top of Pattee Canyon, where Kathy and Gary Kahl hosted a tour of a hazardous fuels reduction project on their property. A long driveway beyond the popular public trailhead, the Kahls overlooked a dense grove of trees on the steep slopes above Deer Creek Road.

"We feel totally privileged to live up here, but we're compromised by the fire danger," Kathy Kahl said. "We don't want anybody dying

trying to save us."

That was a real concern in 1985, when the Hellgate fire raced around Mount Sentinel and sent flames up the canyon in sight of the Kahl's home. In the 33 years they've lived there, Kathy said saplings she planted when they moved in are now blocking the view out her windows.

Thanks to a grant from the DNRC Forests in Focus program, the Kahls and two neighbors were able to hire a professional logging crew. The goal was to take most of the trees off the hillside, leaving old healthy Douglas fir, larch and pine trees about 20 feet apart. That's the prescribed distance that keeps a wildfire from jumping from treetop to treetop in what's known as a crown fire.

Gary Kahl said the results mean more sunlight in the mornings and a view of the mountains to the east that he hadn't seen for years. It also means considerably less risk of a fire

starting from the Deer Creek Road racing up the hillside to his home.

Because the properties bordered Deer Creek at the bottom of the canyon, the crew had to set up a high-line skidding machine to pull the cut trees to the top of the hill. That proved a challenge to maneuver a 110,000-pound line skidder to the top of Pattee Canyon.

Intermountain Forestry owner Ben Smith said that was actually easier on the landscape than more common ground-level skidding with bulldozers. His team expected to need about three weeks to remove 80,000 board-feet of logs and 40 tons of pulp from the six-acre parcel. The commercial value of the logs would pay for about half of the cost of the project. The Forests in Focus program of state dollars pays for the other half.

"It's cool to see landowners wanting to manage their timber," Smith said. "And a site like this is a lot of fun to work with."

## Poll

From A1

measure on the Nov. 8 ballot. The ban, if it were passed, would include exceptions for protecting livestock, property and public health. It would not affect trapping on private land, which takes up more than two-thirds of Montana.

According to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, around 6,000 trappers harvest roughly 50,000 furbearing animals in the state every year. Most of those are muskrats and coyotes, but thousands of raccoons, beavers, red fox, bobcats, skunks, badgers, martens and mink are taken annually.

The Montana Trappers Association has come out strongly against the ballot initiative. State campaign finance records show that organization has received \$47,530.13 from the end of June to late September in political contributions, including \$5,000 each from the Alaska, Pennsylvania, Utah and Vermont trapping associations. Many individual contributions came in, both from out of state and from within Montana.

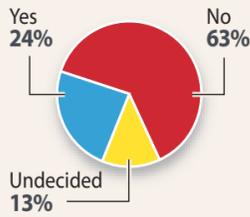
The MTA sent well over \$12,000 to a political committee called Montanans For Wildlife and Public Lands Access, which is financing advertisements and flyers against I-177. That organization has received roughly \$137,862 from late July to late September. The Ohio State Trappers Association gave \$10,000, Republican gubernatorial candidate Greg Gianforte gave \$10,000 and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation gave \$25,000.

Montanans For Effective Wildlife Management, which lists the same treasurer as Montanans For Wildlife and Public Lands Access, also got \$7,420 from the MTA.

A political committee that supports the initiative called Montanans for Trap Free Public Lands - Safe Public Lands For All Users, received more than \$108,422 in contributions since May. Almost

## Trapping on public land

Ballot Initiative I-177 would ban trapping on public lands. If you were voting today, would you vote: "Yes" to approve the initiative, or "No" to reject the initiative?



Source: Mason-Dixon Polling & Research

LEE MONTANA NEWSPAPERS

## About the poll

The Mason-Dixon statewide poll included calls to landlines and cell phones between Monday and Wednesday, Oct. 10-12. Respondents were 1,003 Montanans who said they were registered and likely to vote. The number of people polled in each county is proportionate to historical voter turnout. The margin of error for statewide figures is 3.2 percentage points.

all of those came in the form of individual contributions, many of which appear to be from Montana residents. Alan Applebury, a veterinarian in Hamilton, donated \$20,000, the largest contribution. The group spent large sums of money on hiring people for signature gathering.

**Clare Beelman, a volunteer** who is supporting I-177, accused political opponents of spreading misinformation and lies.

"I would say to people who are undecided, I would urge them to go to our website [yeson177.com](http://yeson177.com) and read the initiative," she said. "Because if you spend a few minutes reading it, you will realize

Please see **POLL**, Page A5

## Zinke

From A1

voted that were not alive."

Montana Secretary of State Linda McCulloch, a Democrat, said Friday that she's seen no evidence of voter fraud and that claims about voting under the names of the deceased are unfounded.

"There is no history of that," she said. "In fact, county election officials take people off when they appear in the obituaries. They take them off the (voter) rolls."

Yellowstone County Election Administrator Bret Rutherford said he also hadn't seen issues with fraud and deceased voters. He said that in addition to monitoring obituaries, his office gets reports from the state health department to keep the voter rolls current.

In response to questions about the radio show, Zinke campaign spokeswoman Heather Swift said on Friday that Zinke was asked about voter fraud and "simply re-

laid concerns he heard in various precincts."

"The Congressman does not believe voter fraud is a big problem in Montana but does acknowledge that every few years there are ballot integrity incidents here and there that pop up," Swift said via email.

She cited two stories from the 2012 election about a voting machine delay and the use of stickers to correct ballots.

Concerns about voter fraud have also crept into Montana elections after reports that volunteers offered to deliver some absentee ballots for voters. Police in Livingston determined one of the volunteers to be part of the Montana Democratic Party.

The story spurred Montana Republican Party Chairman Jeff Essmann to call on McCulloch to issue a public service announcement to encourage absentee voters to hand-deliver the ballots or send them by mail.

McCulloch said on Friday that

the volunteer delivery has happened for years, but she added that the best practice is what Essmann suggested.

"We advise people - voters - to not give their ballot to someone other than the county election office or put a stamp on it and put it in the mail," she said.

As of Friday, 313,995 absentee ballots had been mailed.

McCulloch said that there are safeguards in place, mostly at the county level, to protect against voter fraud. She said that signatures on absentee ballots are verified against a voter's registration card and that in-person voters must show identification or proof of residence.

"We look at every single signature," Rutherford said. "For some reason, nobody believes me when I say this."

In Montana, voters can show an ID for an in-person vote. They can also present a bank statement, utility bill, paycheck or other document that includes a name and

address.

Those who don't have identification materials can cast a provisional ballot. Then voters have a day to provide an identifying document.

After the election, a hand-counted audit checks the voting machine count. McCulloch said there has never been a discrepancy with the machine count.

Both Rutherford and McCulloch said that the issue of voter fraud has reared its head throughout their tenures as election officials. And it appeared during Zinke's time in the state Senate, when multiple election bills appeared in the Legislature.

A measure requiring post-election audits of voting machines became law in 2009, unanimously passing the Senate and surviving a split House vote. That process remains in effect today.

During the same session, a bill for absentee voter confirmation mailers was also signed into law. Zinke voted against the

mailers bill.

During the 2011 session, a bill to expand voting by mail died in the House amid concerns over voter fraud. A stricter voter ID law passed both chambers but was vetoed by Gov. Brian Schweitzer.

The mail-in ballot bill never made it to the Senate, but Zinke did cast a no vote for the voter ID measure.

In the 2013 Hagmann show, Zinke called himself a "huge advocate for voter ID," adding that the cards would need to be widely accessible and at no cost.

Concerns of voter fraud in the 2011 legislative session prompted McCulloch to pen a series of guest columns prior to the 2012 election. She wrote in 2011 that "irresponsible" allegations of voter fraud threatened to reduce voter turnout.

She maintained that position Friday.

"There has been no voter fraud in Montana," McCulloch said. "It doesn't exist."

## Incest

From A1

the offender and for the ultimate protection of the victim and society."

District Judge John McKeon, who oversees a three-county area of eastern Montana, cited that exception this month when he gave the father a 30-year suspended sentence after his guilty plea to incest and ordered him to spend 60 days in jail over the next six months, giving him credit for the 17 days already served. His sentence requires him to undergo sex offender treatment and includes many other restrictions.

Court records show that the mother walked in on the father raping the child. The Associated Press is not identifying the man to avoid

identifying the victim of a sexual assault.

McKeon took the rare step of issuing a statement a day after news of the Oct. 4 sentencing was widely published. In that statement and in his sentencing order, issued Monday, the longtime judge listed the factors that weighed into sparing the man prison time, including that:

- an evaluator found the defendant could be treated and supervised in the community;

- the man did not have a felony record, had a job and community support;

- the victim's mother and grandmother wrote letters to the court supporting community-based treatment, saying it would keep the man in the lives of his two sons and offered the family the opportunity to

heal.

- prosecutors did not challenge the results of the man's psychosexual evaluation;

- there was a "lack of input directly from the victim" or from an advocate for the victim.

"The sentence may not be a popular decision by certain members of the general public, but it is a just and proper decision given the record before the Court and the law the Court is sworn to uphold," McKeon wrote in the sentencing order.

An online petition arguing McKeon should be impeached has gathered more than 82,000 signatures in just over a week, from Montana, outside the state, Canada and elsewhere. McKeon had previously announced his intention to retire next month after 22 years as a

state judge.

District Judge Blair Jones, the chairman of the Montana Judicial Standards Commission, said Friday that he could not disclose whether any complaints had been made against McKeon. Such complaints aren't made public until the commission decides whether they have merit.

Nearly every state has enacted mandatory prison terms for child sex offenders, commonly referred to as "Jessica's laws" after Jessica Lunsford, the Florida girl kidnapped and killed by a neighbor with a history of crimes against children who had failed to register as a sex offender. Many of the measures also severely restrict where such offenders can live and work, impose GPS monitoring and other conditions once they are released.

It's not clear whether any of those laws contains an exception along the lines of Montana's, which itself may not be on the books much longer. This week, a commission studying Montana's sentencing laws recommended that lawmakers eliminate the exception to the 25-year minimum term, in the interest of more consistent sentencing.

Assistant Attorney General Dan Guzynski contrasted the case McKeon handled with that of a man he prosecuted last year, who received the mandatory minimum after being convicted of raping his 10-year-old daughter.

"Both (sex offender) evaluators said (the fathers) were treatable in their community, both were sentenced under the very same law, both raped their children,"

Guzynski told members of the Commission on Sentencing on Wednesday. "One is going to spend the next 25 years in prison and one is out on probation."

AP writer Matt Volz contributed to this report.

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## MOUNT SENTINEL



TOMMY MARTINO PHOTOS, MISSOULIAN

Members of the Missoula Fire Department Rescue Team and Two Bear Air Rescue members participate in a mountain rescue training exercise over Mount Sentinel on Thursday. The crew airlifted two people off the north face of the mountain.

# Hovering helicopter

Missoula rescue team, Two Bear Air pair for emergency training

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Hikers on Mount Sentinel were in for a sight Thursday afternoon.

With a familiar low rumble, that whop-whop-whop sound sped up by a thousand, a dark dot in the sky to the west slowly took the shape of a helicopter.

The bright blue twin-engine Bell 429, with red and white stripes on the side, flew up and over the heads of those on the trail, disappearing behind the northwestern shoulder of the mountain, the rotor quieting.

Rounding the corner, the helicopter hovered almost at eye level, sitting still in the air over the north face of Mount Sentinel as a firefighter pulled his compatriot up to the open door.

The Missoula Fire Department rescue team conducted two exercises with Kalispell-based Two Bear Air early in the afternoon.

The mock emergency scenarios depicted the rescue of an injured man on the face of the mountain, in which a firefighter was lowered to about 10 other crew members waiting with the



Jordan White, left, of Two Bear Air helps strap in the person before being hoisted into the helicopter from the side of Mount Sentinel.

"package."

Tying the limp-limbed man, wearing a rock-climbing helmet, to his harness, the firefighter was pulled to the helicopter, hanging in the air above the mouth of

Hell Gate Canyon, I-90 traffic streaming by far below.

The aircraft then slowly rotated and flew back the way it had come.

Flathead County Sheriff

Chuck Curry sat in the open door of Two Bear Air's helicopter, parked at Missoula Fire Station #4, about an hour before the

Please see TRAINING, Page B2

## SMURFIT SITE

# Officials critique delayed cleanup

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Missoula County officials issued a blistering critique Thursday of the federal cleanup process at the 3,200-acre former Smurfit-Stone pulp mill site in Frenchtown.

Although officials from the Environmental Protection Agency said that roughly 1,200 acres of agricultural land surrounding the former pulp mill are free from unsafe levels of contaminants, county commissioners said they are disappointed in the progress of the cleanup at the more polluted portions of the site and the opaqueness of the process.

The other 2,000 acres of the former mill, the areas closer to the Clark Fork River where the core industrial activities took place, have yet to be fully investigated for their levels of toxic metals and compounds.

All three Missoula County Commissioners called for an immediate investigation into what contaminants are present at the portions of the site next to the river and what threats they pose to humans and the environment, information they believe has been inappropriately withheld or not investigated in a timely fashion.

The commissioners say the EPA seems to be allowing the corporate owners of the site to exert undue influence. They also hinted that the attention on the less polluted agricultural lands may have been done to expedite commercial development and ignores the serious threat posed by sludge ponds and landfills, which could be full of toxic dioxins and metals and are separated from the Clark Fork River by only gravel berms.

"We would like to see the data beforehand instead of being told what has already been decided," Missoula County Commissioner Cola Rowley told Sara Sparks, a remedial program manager for the EPA. "We are disappointed with the progress at the site and the lack of transparency."

The 3,200-acre site, 11 miles

Please see SMURFIT, Page B2

## MINNEAPOLIS FED

# Chief: 'Too big to fail' a necessary evil

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The infamous "Too Big To Fail" program, in which billions of taxpayer dollars were given to huge financial institutions to prevent further economic crisis in the wake of the Great Recession, was a necessary evil.

That's according to Neel Kashkari, president and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, who hosted a town hall discussion about the economy and the role of the Federal Reserve on Thursday night at the University of Montana.

Kashkari was working for the U.S. Treasury Department during the financial crisis, and he admits that he's "the guy that bailed out the banks." The Toxic Asset Relief Program, in which bad investments made by banks were purchased by the government, was signed into law in late 2008.

"We hated that we had to do it, but we were faced with the choice of that or allowing the economy to collapse and turn it into a Great Depression instead of a Great Recession," he said.

Please see FED, Page B3

## MISSOULA

# Secret supports secured for street trees



TOMMY MARTINO, MISSOULIAN

Grant Keller of Terrabella prepares the ground for a grid of 60 three-foot-tall black tubes in Missoula's future Art Park on Thursday. The dirt between the tubes will provide a fertile root bed for a Pacific sunset maple tree and support a concrete patio without compacting the roots below.

ROB CHANEY  
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If a magician can rest comfortably on a bed of nails, why couldn't a tree?

That may sound like nonsense, but it just happened in both principle and practice at the corner of Pattee and Pine streets. On Thursday, excavators dug a special hole in the middle of downtown Missoula's future Art Park and buried a grid of 60 three-foot-tall black tubes. The dirt between the tubes will provide a fertile root bed for a Pacific sunset maple tree. The tubes themselves, like the bed of nails, will support a concrete patio strong enough to hold up a fire truck without compacting the roots below.

"See those honey locusts?" Karen Sippy asked, pointing to

some 20-foot-tall street trees next to the Missoula Art Museum. "They should be 50 feet tall. But they're growing in holes this big."

Sippy held her hands together, barely framing her face. She's the director of the volunteer group Trees for Missoula, which helped raise more than \$12,000 for the underground supports. Instead of a narrow hole surrounded by compacted gravel, that coming maple will have more than 900 cubic feet of loose soil in which to grow.

"This is my third installation this week," said Pat Greeley of DeepRoot Green Infrastructure, the company that makes the SilvaCell tubes. "These are going in Seattle, the Bay Area, Boise, Des Moines; Lincoln, Nebraska, even in Texas."

Please see TREES, Page B2

# Grizzlies RB resolves court case in Lake County

Counts asks judge to dismiss related case in Missoula County

DILLON KATO  
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A University of Montana Grizzlies running back has resolved

an arrest in Lake County from this summer, and asked a judge to dismiss a related case in Missoula.

Joseph Paul Counts, 23, was arrested July 15 and charged with a misdemeanor DUI after being pulled over on Highway 93 north of St. Ignatius, according to his citation.

Lake County Attorney Steve

Eschenbacher said that as part of a plea agreement, Counts pleaded guilty to an amended charge of careless driving.

Eschenbacher said Counts had been driving on the center line of the road, and after being stopped, was unable to blow enough to collect a breath sample, so there was not enough evidence to show

the influence of alcohol.

"I'm a Griz fan, and it would have been really easy to be really hard on him to show how independent I am," Eschenbacher said. "If this was anybody else, this would have been the same outcome."

Please see COUNTS, Page B2



TOMMY MARTINO, MISSOULIAN

It takes about 25 minutes for the \$8,000,000 helicopter to fly from Kalispell to Missoula.

## Training

From B1

training flights.

Each time they fly, a harnessed Curry said, three checklists are completed pre-flight.

During the flight, he'll describe in detail what's happening below the helicopter; where the rescue team member is at and where the "package" is at all times, for the sake of the pilot, who can't crane his neck to look while keeping the aircraft steady.

"Everything is always done exactly the same, every time," he said.

The helicopter is owned by Whitefish philanthropist Mike Goguen as part of his rescue operation started in 2011.

Thursday was the first time Missoula Fire Department worked with Two Bear Air, rescue team paramedic Philip Keating said.

"We do utilize medical helicopters when we can for search and rescue, but they're all so busy," Keating

said. The fire department trained with Life Flight on Waterworks Hill a few years ago.

The training helps, "so if we ever have the need to work together, it's a seamless operation," he said.

Keating is part of the 20-person Missoula Fire rescue team, made up of instructors who can use what they learn for wider operational training in their departments.

Two Bear Air's helicopter can make it to Missoula in about 25 minutes, Keating said, with a max speed of 172 miles per hour, making it the first responder if a situation like the ones played out Thursday actually occurred. Jordan White, Two Bear Air executive director, said training with the more than 200 agencies they serve is all about communication, making sure they know how the other works in an emergency situation.

"We'd rather see the people in this environment than in an emergency for the first time," Chief Pilot Jim Pierce said.

## Trees

From B1

The tubes and their bases look like oversize versions of the disposable planters found at garden nurseries. They feel almost as flimsy. But placed properly and supported by loose soil, the tubes can distribute the weight of thousands of pounds of sidewalk, pedestrians, vehicles and activity.

The tree itself will go in a separate hole tucked into the corner of the L-shaped SilvaCell network. Greeley explained that trees don't need symmetrical growing space - their roots will seek out any source of water and nutrients. That's why boulevard trees often

tunnel under (and buckle) sidewalks to partake of the more generous watering and fertilizing residents put on their lawns. Greeley said street trees that grow healthier than their neighbors often have tapped into a distant pocket of "heritage soil" left undisturbed by urban paving and development.

When finished, the \$900,000 Art Park will fill the former intersection with landscaped grounds, changing sculpture exhibits and other public activities. A consortium of local businesses, private donors, Adventure Cycling, the city of Missoula, Montana Department of Commerce and Department of Natural Resources and Conserva-

## Help expand Missoula's urban forest

The Missoula Urban Forestry Division offers Cost Share Tree Planting and Memorial Tree programs. Trees are purchased in March of each year for planting in the spring. Urban Forestry staff will help residents select the right species and location for their tree. Visit [ci.missoula.mt.us/234/Plant-a-Tree](http://ci.missoula.mt.us/234/Plant-a-Tree) for more information. To learn more about Trees for Missoula, visit [treesformissoula.org/](http://treesformissoula.org/).

tion all provided parts of the budget. It should be finished in early November.

Meanwhile, city arborists and volunteers have been scrambling to finish other tree projects before fall weather gets too cold. On Thursday afternoon, students from the University of Montana College of

Forestry and Conservation transplanted about 55 new oak, crabapple, sycamore and maple trees from their nursery home at the Wastewater Treatment Plant to new homes at Wapikiya and Whitaker parks. More new trees have been placed along Third Street West, Playfair Park and Russell Park West.

## Counts

From B1

On Sept. 12, Lake County Justice of the Peace Randy Owens deferred sentencing in Counts' case for three months, meaning he will be eligible to have the crime taken off his record if he obeys court conditions for that period. Eschenbacher said because Counts did not provide a breath sample when he was arrested, his driver's license was also suspended for six months.

The Lake County arrest came less than a year after Counts and two other Grizzlies football players pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of criminal trespassing in November after they broke into a family's house on the 200 block of Pattee Canyon Drive.

In that case, Counts was sentenced to six months in jail, all of which was suspended, with a deferral period of a year after which he could have the crime cleared from his record if he met certain conditions. After his Lake County arrest, Missoula prosecutors filed a petition to revoke his sentence, saying he failed to abide by conditions that he not consume alcohol and follow all laws during that

year deferral period.

In early September, Counts' attorneys asked Justice of the Peace Landee Holloway to dismiss the Missoula petition, taking issue with the way prosecutors had interpreted his sentence.

Defense attorney Nick Brooke wrote in a court filing that the oral sentence issued by Acting Justice of the Peace Shane Vannatta in November had been for a suspended, not deferred sentence, and that it would have expired after six months were over in May. Therefore, Counts' attorney said prosecutors could not file a petition to revoke his sentence two months after that point.

Brooke wrote that a deferral note Vannatta wrote at the bottom of Counts' sentence allowing for the dismissal after a year "may be confusing, and is likely illegal."

"The State is picking and choosing which lines it prefers, ignoring the Court's clearly articulated sentence and instead emphasizing an ending footnote as controlling the entire sentence," Brooke wrote.

The Missoula County Attorney's Office had until Oct. 7 to respond to Counts' request for dismissal, but didn't file such a response. Chief Deputy County At-

torney Jason Marks said Wednesday they received another extension to the deadline.

But clerks at Missoula County Justice Court said they did not receive such a request for an extension, and that after prosecutors didn't file a response on Friday, the motion to dismiss was sent to Holloway for consideration without a rebuttal. No decision had been made about it as of Thursday.

Counts and two other members of the football team were suspended for a game after being convicted in November. Under the UM student-athlete code of conduct, a second misdemeanor conviction - as in the Lake County case - means a player must be suspended from 30 percent of games. Counts was inactive during the first three games of the current 11-game season before playing partway into the fourth.

On Thursday, UM Athletic Director Kent Haslam said he did not know the specifics of how Counts' court cases were handled, but that he was suspended from the games for the conduct code infraction.

Violating a condition of probation or parole, the subject of the Missoula matter, could constitute a third Category II offense in the code

of conduct, which means a player must be dismissed from the team.

Haslam said the school would rely on what happened in the Missoula court proceeding to determine if any further punishment was appropriate, but said it also was possible the arrest in Lake County and alleged probation violation in Missoula could be tied together as one violation, not two.

## Smurfit

From B1

northwest of Missoula, was a paper pulp mill from 1957 until 2010. Various hazardous chemicals were used or produced there, and more than 900 acres consists of unlined ponds used to store treated and untreated wastewater and sludge from the mill.

Missoula County requested that the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the EPA initiate an investigation and cleanup in 2011. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks was forced to issue a "do not eat" advisory for northern pike and a "four meal per month" limit for rainbow trout caught downstream from the Bitterroot River due to the presence of toxic materials in the water.

In May of 2013, the EPA proposed adding the site to the National Priorities List of Superfund sites, but that process has not been finalized. An agreement between the EPA and M2Green, the current owner of the site, along with former owners International Paper and West Rock, took years to reach. Sampling for toxic metals, dioxins, furans and other hazardous materials began in November 2015.

Susan Griffin, a Superfund toxicologist with the EPA, announced that the results of the sampling indicate that all contaminants at the Operational Unit 1, the agricultural lands surrounding the site, were below acceptable risk standards or below the normal background levels found throughout Montana.

The EPA has concluded that the ag lands do not pose a risk to current and future users of the land, including agricultural, commercial, recreational and construction users. She also said the ag lands would be safe for residential use.

"Operational Unit 1 does not pose a human health concern for either current or future users of the site," she said.

Dan Wall of the EPA also said there is an "acceptable" level of risk from the level of copper found in the ag lands because, from a toxicology standpoint, the level of copper is no higher than in other natural sites in Montana.

He said the level of selenium poses a "possible but unlikely" threat to cause adverse effects in plants and small mammals, so no further action is recommended.

Sparks said the EPA is likely to remove the 1,200 acres of ag land surrounding the site from the Superfund process and allow it to be developed or used in whatever way the landowners choose.

The ag lands were never used for industrial activities.

**That leaves the remaining 2,000 acres**, called Operational Units 2 and 3, which is where the county is at odds with the EPA and the DEQ.

"The EPA and DEQ have focused thus far on the less contaminated portions of the site, with the intent of fostering site redevelopment," reads a letter from all three county commissioners: Rowley, Jean Curtiss and Stacy Rye. "This assessment is a first step. However, Missoula County's priority is that the primary public health and environmental risks be evaluated and remedied. We therefore believe that the focus should be on the 140-acre area of landfills that were buried in groundwater near the river."

The commissioners told the EPA that the public process has been limited to a "few public meetings" and email updates that have not provided detailed information or results. They believe that they have been kept out of providing comments on work plans for the site investigation.

"The length of time that it has taken to get the investigation initiated, results released and further work conducted to clean up the site has been disappointing," the letter continued. "Unfortunately, the process that has unfolded at the Smurfit site is substandard compared

to what we were expecting after our experience with the Milltown process."

Commissioners also hinted that the EPA is letting the corporations that ran the mill in the past and the current owners have too much control.

"We believe that West Rock and International Paper, along with M2Green, are exerting substantial control over work at the site, with little or no public review," their letter states.

The commission also included a list of requests, including that they immediately release all available site data for review. The commission also wants full characterization of the compounds present in the 140-acre area of landfills and sludge impoundments at the site and the risks they pose to groundwater and surface waters. They also want the landfills removed, including those that contain sludge and fly ash, with the contents disposed of in proper containers to isolate it from ground and surface water.

"The landfills contain contaminants of concern and pose a risk to human health and the environment," the letter states. "EPA's Hazard Ranking System document indicates that the sludge pond dikes have already breached in two locations, releasing materials to adjacent ponds. The landfills must be properly regulated, monitored, managed and closed in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations."

"The landfills constitute open dumps which violate federal and state regulations, including the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Solid Waste Management Act."

The commissioners oppose the closure of the land-

fills in their current form, and called for an investigation into the stability of the gravel berms that separate the landfills and sludge impoundments from the river. The commission also called for an investigation into "alleged disposal of drums of waste materials adjacent to the landfills."

The EPA is set to install two deep groundwater wells to test the groundwater at OU2 and OU3 in the coming months. EPA officials did not respond to the county's demands or criticism at Thursday's meeting, saying it was an informational meeting only.

**Larry and Karin Heggen**  
  
 larry-karin@eralambros.com  
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## Cold Springs Site Selection Election

Missoula County Public Schools will have a Cold Springs Site Selection election on the November 8th ballot.

All voters residing within the elementary district boundaries will see this question on their ballots.

### Don't forget to vote!

Ballots will be mailed to voters in mid-October and must be returned by 8 p.m., Tuesday, November 8th. Ballots can be returned by mail or dropped off.

- Missoula County Fairgrounds (enter from South Avenue and watch for signs)
- Missoula County Courthouse Annex (office located on second floor)
- Missoula County Public Schools [www.mcpsmt.org](http://www.mcpsmt.org) 406-728-2400, ext. 1024



This is a zero cost question. MCPS has to ask voters for permission to locate a school on this site in Lower Miller Creek.

MCPS Trustees contemplated the acquisition of land for a new Cold Springs Elementary school as part of the November 2015 bond already passed by voters. In this election, city voters will have a chance to grant permission to acquire the site identified by MCPS.

For more information and detailed site maps, visit: <http://www.mcpsmt.org/cssmartschools2020>

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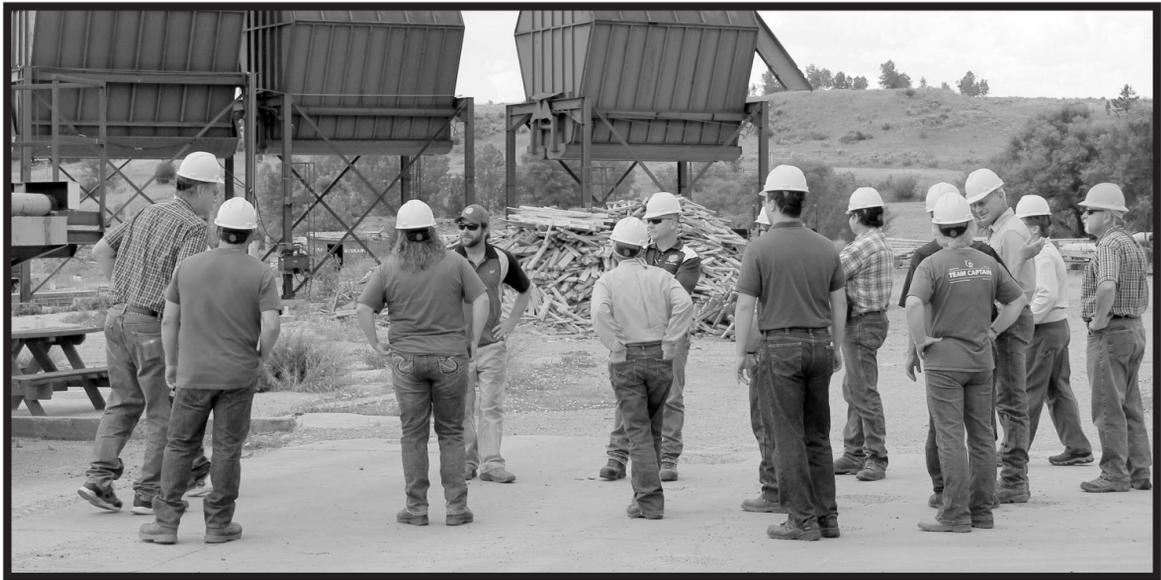
# DNRC organizes tour to show fuel reduction projects; work done to reduce wildfire threats

By Kelley Hirming  
Forest restoration, fuels treatments and wildfire prevention/reduction activities are ongoing in the Southeastern part of Montana. Last month, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) organized a tour of different Southeastern Montana fuel reduction projects to highlight all the work that is being done in the area to reduce wildfire risk and its threat to the public and property. In addition to DNRC staff, other attendees included a Rosebud County Commissioner, U.S. Forest Service, Northern Cheyenne and BIA staff, local landowners, Rosebud Conservation District, and members of the local forest industry.

here now.”  
The Ash Creek fire in 2012 was one of the largest Montana had seen in many decades. It scorched almost 250,000 acres of Southeast Montana in less than 2 weeks. The tour included areas that were affected by this quick moving and devastating fire.

Brian and Maggie Dice remember that day like it was yesterday, and just talking about it brings tears to their eyes.

Through the Rosebud Conservation District they also utilized the Forests in Focus funds. As Mrs. Dice stated, “it’s just nice after a catastrophic fire to have the resources we need, because we couldn’t have done this without them.”



TOUR---The DNRC group toured the Ashland Forest Products Mill and were able to see the first hand the work the revitalized mill is undertaking. Below right, the Mill is producing lumber products out of logs killed in the devastating fires of 2012 which scorched hundreds of thousands of acres in Southeastern Montana.

DNRC Eastern Land Office Area Manager Chris Pileski showcased some of the projects that were a result of the partnership of those involved, as well as the various state and federal grants that provided funding. Pileski also recognized Bobbi Vannattan of the Rosebud Conservation District for all her great work in managing most of the projects. She and the Conservation District are an important partner in completing these projects.

The group toured the Ashland Forest Products Mill in Ashland and were able to see all the work the revitalized mill is undertaking. Reopened in the fall of 2014, the mill is producing lumber products out of logs from trees killed in the wildfires of 2012, including logs from projects that were on the tour.

After touring the mill, the group visited projects on state trust land, U.S. Forest Service land, and two private landowners.

Since 2009, DNRC has used state and federal funds to help restore forest land on 30 properties, totaling approximately 4,000 acres of private, tribal, and state lands in the southeast region of Montana. One of the funding sources was the Montana Forests in Focus Initiative, which has disbursed four million dollars for projects on tribal, state and private forests and two million dollars to USFS lands for fuel reduction and forest restoration.

Tom Trusler Jr, a 5th generation rancher and grant recipient said, “By utilizing the Forest in Focus money, this advanced us at least 20 years...with the Forests in Focus program it’s



AWARD---DNRC Eastern Land Office Area Manager Chris Pileski recognized Bobbi Vannattan of the Rosebud Conservation District for “all her great work in managing most of the projects.”



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Photo Credit: Lyle Bachman

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# Forest in Focus – Doing More than Restoration

Story & photos by  
Andi Bourne  
Pathfinder

OVANDO – The Blackfoot Community Conservation Area (BCCA) has been the recipient of two Forest in Focus (FIF) grants totaling nearly \$315,000. Of the 5,600 total acres within the BCCA core, 863 acres have been treated with FIF grants generating around 6,600 tons of saw logs and pulp.

The BCCA is located in the mid-reaches of the Blackfoot watershed near Ovando Mountain. It combines community forest ownership and management within the Core 5,609 acres with cooperative ecosystem management for multiple-use across public and private lands for 41,000 acres in the Blackfoot Watershed.

Established in 2005, the community vision for the BCCA is to develop a working landscape that balances ecological diversity with local economic sustainability for the future benefit of the Blackfoot watershed community. This strategy of management and collaboration is one of the earliest examples of a community forest in the nation.

BCCA Chair Ben Slaght said the main revenue stream for the BCCA maintenance and projects comes from timber sales, block management and grazing leases.

The Forest in Focus initiative was started in the 2013 legislative session. That authorized up to \$5 million per biennium, or two-year period, for the state to request out of the fire suppression fund if it was above \$20 million. The primary goal in the legislation was fuels reduction, forest restoration and stewardship treatments. The secondary goal was putting logs on trucks.

Montana Governor Steve Bullock made the initial request from the federal government in late 2014. The first Forest in Focus grant was for \$2 million. Montana received another \$2 million following the second request. And the state is anticipating a third grant for \$1.5 million. They have given \$2 million



**Blackfoot Challenge Land Steward Brad Weltzien explaining the treatment to members of the Forest in Focus Tour of the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area, Sept. 29.**

total to US Forest Service projects.

“What’s exciting is getting treatments out on lands that normally don’t get treated. This includes projects in the wildland urban interface but the emphasis is on projects that are basically unaffordable and lands that really need treatment,” said DNRC Program Manager Roger Ziesak.

In addition to funding projects on nine of the 11 National Forests in the state, there have been 24 projects on private, state and tribal lands with the Forest in Focus grants. Projects range from Lincoln County to south of Miles City with the vast majority of the projects on private lands. Ziesak said these projects have sustained approximately 160 direct jobs.

The proposals must meet the current voluntary best management practices and follow the streamside management zone laws. “We know that we are getting good forestry out there because of that,” said Ziesak.

The main goals for the projects on the BCCA were to bring the forest back into balance and make the forest more resilient to fire, insects and disease. Projects were designed to shift species composition away from the Douglas fir and instead favoring ponderosa pine and larch. Through mechanical treatments, projects mimic fire taking out the ladder fuels and implementing sustainable harvest. Large snags are left for wildlife and there is

experimentation with how much dead and down fuels to leave on the forest floor. Projects manage for timber production in the future by creating an uneven aged stand.

“We keep the best of the best so in the future we will have really good genetics in here,” said Blackfoot Challenge Land Steward Brad Weltzien. “We are trying to balance everything; it’s not just timber ground, not just grazing ground and not just a wildlife area.”

Ziesak estimates 7,500 acres have been treated, 7-18 million board feet of timber have been generated along with 30,000 pounds of pulp.

“The industry is hurting. That is one of the reasons this program was developed. What we are telling folks is give us projects that [they] can’t afford to do without financial help,” said Ziesak. “Log supply was a critical issue for the mills and the infrastructure. As far as the DNRC is concerned we need to have a timber industry in the state. If we can’t supply them with logs, they are not going to hang around and wait.”

Rich Lane purchases the logs for the Bonner Chip Plant. He feels the difference in the Forest in Focus grants, compared to other federal grants, is that it is Montanans’ tax dollars at work.

“I think the Governor took a great leap of faith when he decided to tackle forest management in this state. This Forest in Focus

program is one of the things that has been accomplished from it. Our [state] tax dollars go towards good forestry, not just logs to mills but to all the other good things it does like improve wildlife habitat, reduce fuel loading and stream restoration.”

Pyramid Mountain Lumber, Inc. Resource Manager Gordy Sanders said

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**Don and Barb McNally are local ranchers, grazing leaseholders on the BCCA and members of the BCCA Council. They attended the tour sharing the benefits they have seen from the treatments for grazing and the general benefits they have seen as a result of the Forest in Focus projects.**

Pyramid Mountain Lumber enjoys the opportunity to participate in the Forest in Focus projects.

“If there is the right work done on the ground for the right reasons, everyone benefits. It produces a better log for the remaining mills around the state at a price that we can afford to run during these depressed lumber markets,” said Sanders. “The more work that [happens] on the ground, regardless of where it is, the more all the industry benefits across the state.”

Ziesak said Montana used to produce 300-400 million board feet per year, now only 60 million board feet per year are produced. What grows in Montana is around 900 million to one billion feet which would be the annual allowable cut. Sanders added that amounts to 900-1,000 truckloads per day accumulating fiber on the ground.

“It’s better to log that stuff than have it die and burn, I think,” said Ziesak. “As far as the state is concerned it has been a real win, win for us. We get to have

those treatments out there, we get to feed mills and we get to have people understand proper forest management.”



**Montana Department of Natural Resource and Conservation Program Manager and Forest in Focus grant administrator Roger Ziesak pointing out the vibrant shrub component on this unit that was thinned and logged. He said the shrubs had responded very well to the reduced competition and increased light following the thinning, generating good cover and food for wildlife.**

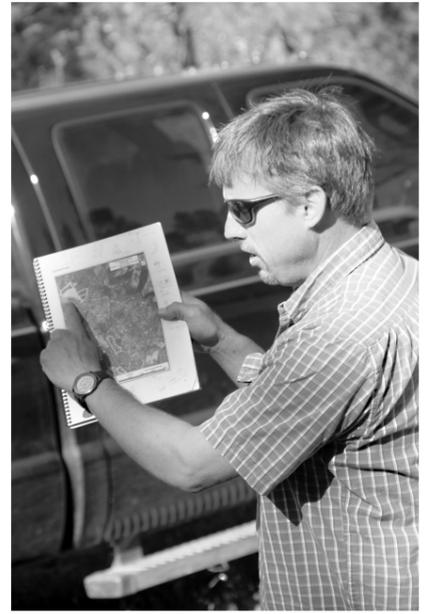
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Clockwise from left: DNR Program Manager Roger Ziesak explains the work that was done as Rich Lane, Log Buyer for Willis Enterprises, looks on. Blackfoot Challenge Land Steward Brad Weltzien explains the different locations that were treated. Gordy Sanders with Pyramid Lumber and local property owner Ben Slaght listen to the presentation.

# Preventing fires and getting logs on trucks

by Michael Stafford

Many areas of the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area (BCCA) just north of Ovando have seen heavy growth over the years. In fact, some of the growth is so thick with ladder fuels that should a forest fire strike the area, the result could be disastrous.

But through the Forest in Focus Initiative and funds provided through that program, hundreds of acres in six different locations on the BCCA have undergone treatment which has limited and reduced the impact that could be caused by a wildfire.

"We would not have been able to do it without financial support," said Brad Weltzien, Blackfoot Challenge Land Steward.

In addition, the project help put logs on trucks to mills and bring material to the pulp mill in Bonner. It also has helped the landscape of the forest in those areas to grow healthier in the future.

"We're getting treatment done out there where it wouldn't otherwise get treated," said Roger Ziesak, DNR Program Manager.

On Sept. 29, a number of different people gathered in Ovando to hear how the Forests in Focus Initiative has helped with a project recently completed in the area and saw firsthand how fuels have been reduced and the timber industry helped. Recently, 450 acres worth of the BCCA were treated resulting in 5,452 tons worth of material to Pyramid Mountain Lumber in Seeley Lake and 4,158 tons worth of other wood to the pulp mill in Bonner.

That was made possible through a \$140,925 grant through the initiative.

The BCCA consists of 41,000 acres of state, federal and private land with a core 5,600 acre area that was purchased by the Blackfoot Challenge in 2009. The land is managed by a council made up of representatives from different ownerships and members of the community.

Historically, the land was timbered by a number of different companies over the years and the result of that has left many stands in poor condition with various stages of regeneration. The current condition also poses a risk for stand-replacing wildfires which would annihilate the existing forest.

George Hirschenberger, a member of the Blackfoot Challenge Board, explained some of the history behind the area and the Blackfoot Challenge as a whole which has been around for 23 years. He said the Challenge has worked with land owners to secure conservation easements and improve water quality among other projects.

As to the BCCA area, he said that the Blackfoot Challenge works to try to treat about 500 acres per year and that through programs like Forests in Focus, they are able to work towards that goal, one small piece at a time. Treatment makes those areas more resistant to wildfires.

As the work has progressed, he said the Blackfoot Challenge is keeping an eye on how the different areas being treated will contribute overall to the health of the entire area.

"We're still after that big picture question," said Hirschenberger, "there are still areas we want to target."

Before the group of attendees, including representatives from the Blackfoot Challenge, private landowners, representatives from the DNR, a Powell County Commissioner and members of the press, toured the area, Ziesak gave an overview of the Initiative and what it is designed to do. Started in 2014, the Forest in Focus Initiative allows for up to \$5 million per biennium to be used from wildfire funds to be directed towards projects which will reduce the risk of wildfires and at the same time stimulate the forestry industry in operations that would not otherwise be possible without financial help.

In the past, funds have been

used both for private timber sales as well as helping with Forest Service proposals. Ziesak said the extra funding has helped to expedite the process of getting the Forest Service sales going sooner.

"The idea being to get those into the market sooner," he said.

More recently the funds have gone primarily to forestry on private lands and Ziesak said that thus far 24 projects around the state have been done through the past \$4 million that has been spent.

"We've managed to cover a vast majority of the forests," he said, "give us a project you can't do without financial help."

The Initiative is slated to continue for some bienniums to come and Ziesak said that many very well written proposals were received within the first two years.

Overall, he said that the program is designed to provide extra funding to get treatment done in areas where the risk of wildfire could be reduced. At the same time, those projects are also geared towards getting material to mills and at times, such as projects in the eastern part of the state, help defray the cost of transportation which would otherwise make projects financial unfeasible.

"The industry is hurting and that's why this started," he said.

Rich Lane, log buyer with Willis Enterprises which operates the pulp mill in Bonner lauded the program noting that not only is it mitigating wildfire fuels, but helping to keep the timber industry alive.

"We're seeing state money get good work done on the ground," he said, "I think this is a unique program that is just starting to get attention."

As the groups toured a few of the different sites that were treated, Weltzien explained a little bit further about what work had been done. He said that in the past the land had been harvested pretty hard by companies such as Anaconda, Champion and Plum

Creek. That resulted in heavy regeneration, but also in the thickness of ladder fuels.

"A big part of this project was to bring our forest back into balance," he said.

Some of that was achieved by leaving a diversity of different tree species in place during the operation. Thinning was done, but Weltzien said that some thick stands were also left on the landscape. Brush was left on the ground to replace nutrients in the soils and the trees displaying the best genetics were left in place so as to proliferate those good qualities into future trees that would grow in the area.

"We're trying to leave the best of the best," he said.

He also noted that by increasing the space between trees, the possibility of crown fires is reduced should a wildfire strike, the trees are able to grow more healthy and if a bug infestation should occur, the forest would be in a better condition to resist the effects.

"Really it's pretty straightforward," he said about what was done in the six different areas treated.

In addition to the project which has been completed, the BCCA is also the recipient of an

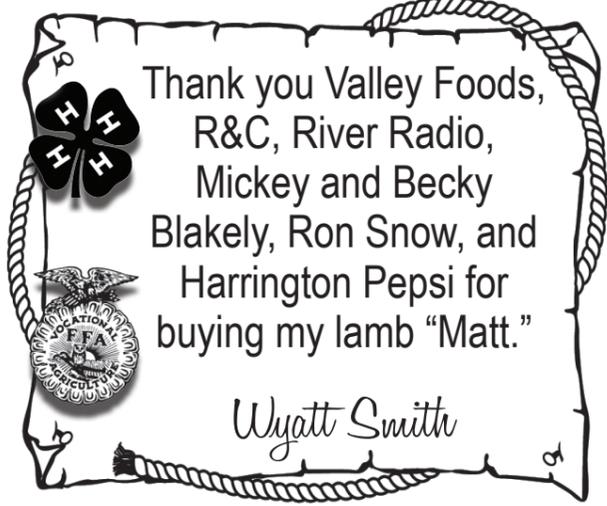
other Forest in Focus grant which is providing \$173,585 to treat 413 acres. The project is in process and is proposed to bring 5,452 tons of logs to sawmills and 4,158 tons to the pulp mill.

In information provided by the Blackfoot Challenge they lauded the Forest in Focus Initiative as well as Governor Steve Bullock's support of the program to create healthy landscapes and support the timber industry.

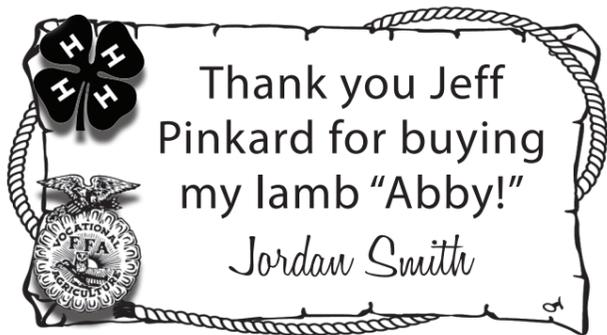
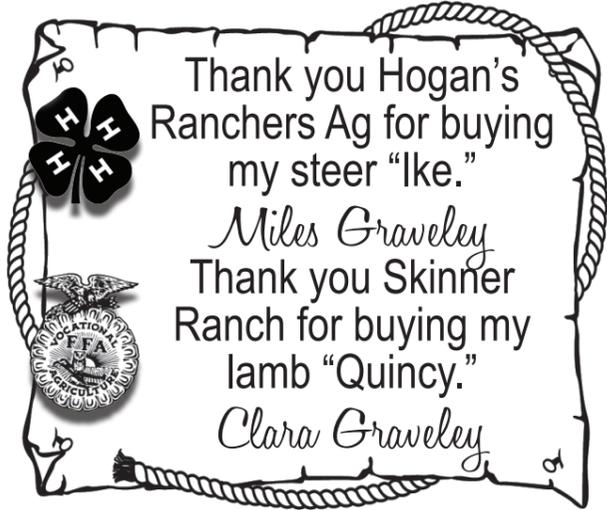
"This program relies on a local market for the forest products removed during treatments. Access to these local markets reduces the net cost of treatments, allowing us to increase the number of private landowners participating in the program and the number of acres treated. The Governor's Forest in Focus Initiative is helping to retain access to these markets," stated the information, "for us, successful management of forests and rangelands in the Blackfoot Watershed means resilient and sustainable use of forest and rangeland resources, increased pace and scale of management, working forests, healthy rangelands and soils and local benefits like fire safe communities, grazing leases, forest stand diversity and forest jobs."



Gordy Sanders, Resource Manager with Pyramid Lumber, and Powell County Commissioner Dan Sager chat about the treatment that was done.



Clockwise from right: Sean Steinbach, DNRC Forester and Project Foreman explained the work that had been done on the prison ranch. Roger Ziesak, Forest Practices Specialist with the DNRC tells of the benefits the harvest not only brought to the forest, but also to the local mill. Commissioner Doug Crachy and Steve Flynn with Sun Mountain Logging look at the results of the project.



## The forests are in their focus

by Michael Stafford

It was easy to tell that those who spoke about and toured the recently thinned and harvested areas of the Montana State Prison were proud of the work that was done there. Timber was harvested that otherwise would not have been and in the event of a wildfire, fuels were reduced.

However, none of that would have been possible without the grant funds from the Forests in Focus Initiative.

"We're getting some really nice work done all around the state," said Roger Ziesak, Forest Practices Specialist with the DNRC.

On August 25, a number of different people including DNRC staff, Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) staff, local government officials and reporters toured the recently thinned areas. During the tour, the Forests in Focus Initiative was explained.

"So far it's been a good program," said Ziesak.

He told the group that the initiative was created through the state to provide grant money towards harvesting timber and thinning dense areas of forests. In particular, the money goes to projects that might not otherwise be done due to their remote location away from a sawmill or other facility or projects that would not be financially feasible given the amount of timber in those locations. He also said that the initiative is to help out the timber industry in the state and to get logs on trucks headed to mills.

"This grant program was developed as one of the ways to address that," said Ziesak.

The grant program was set up for five bienniums and is in its fourth year. So far, it has been able to help with 24 projects around the state.

One of those, the LaMarche Timber Harvest was at the prison ranch.

Sean Steinbach, DNRC Forester and Project Foreman explained a little bit about the thinning projects that have occurred in the forested areas of the prison property. He said that the prison has done a good job in the past of thinning timber and that the grant program allowed that effort

to be carried forward.

In 2009 and 2010, Steinbach said federal grant money became available for some harvest projects at the ranch. However, the recent grant of \$200,000 for the timber sale of 470 acres for saw logs and pulp was state money.

The grant was awarded in February 2015 and work started in the summer of 2015, recently finishing up.

Rich Lane with Willis Enterprises that operates the pulp mill in Bonner said that he believes the state money is well spent on projects like this one.

"Our state money we want to invest very wisely and I think that's being done here," he said.

On the way up to one of the sites thinned, Ziesak explained that like the other projects that have received grant money, this one was slightly unusual in that the grantee, Sun Mountain Logging, provided more funds to the project than the grant did.

"They were able to do a much larger area that way," he said.

The LaMarche timber harvest consisted of different sites including one that was on a sharp slope and needed to be line logged using cables and hauling the timber back up. Both Ziesak and Steve Flynn with Sun Mountain Logging said that was a more expensive part of the operation and would not have been possible without the grant funds.

At the other sites, Steinbach explained that the forest was thinned with about 30 feet in between trees and those left being a variety of sizes and ages.

"I really like having a mosaic of age classes," he said.

It was also noted that with the different ages and sizes, the potential for an insect infestation through the area is lessened.

Flynn agreed and said that with the forest thinned in the area, it helps reduce the possibility of a forest fire starting and serves as a break should one start on adjacent Forest Service land. While a forest fire would not stop at the area, if it were a crown fire which cannot be controlled, it would

be forced down to a ground fire which crews could battle.

"Timber stand improvement and fire reduction were two of the major points," he said.

As for the timber removed, Flynn said that 550 loads of saw logs were taken to Sun Mountain Lumber and 50 to 60 loads of pulp were taken to the mill at Bonner.

"A little over two million board feet," he said.

Flynn elaborated that the prison has been proactive about managing their forests and in the past have had their crews thin and timber different areas as well. He also spoke highly of the crew from Sun Mountain Lumber of the job they did at the different sites.

"Our operators are really experienced," he said.

Yet another benefit to the thinning is that much more sunlight can shine through the canopies, allowing in time more grass to grow. Ziesak said that will be good for the cows on the ranch.

"This is going to give them a lot more grass in this area," he said.

There were also some additional parts of the timber sale that the grant funds helped allow to be done. Some of the timber roads used to haul were later obliterated, returning the area to regrow.

Another part of the project included rebuilding part of LaMarche Creek which had blown out. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks had wanted restoration to the creek as it is habitat for a pure strain of cutthroat trout and with the extra money available through the grant program, not only were part of the creek able to be restored, but two to three miles of it will be fenced to keep it protected from cattle on the ranch. Work was also done in other areas to prevent sedimentation into drainages.

As for the ranch and MCE, Steinbach said that they were compensated for the sale of the timber. The money will be used for training programs through MCE.

"It was a good project from a collaboration standpoint," he said.



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# Majority: Don't transfer lands

46% of those polled oppose state takeover

**TOM LUTEY**  
For the Independent Record

**BILLINGS** — It's hard to watch network television for more than a few hours this election season without seeing a campaign ad referencing public lands.

Public lands have become a go-to issue for Democrats who associate their opponents with attempts to transfer ownership of federal lands to states. A recent Lee Montana poll suggests that only a third of Montanans would support such a transfer.

Asked whether they believed federal lands in Montana should, or should not, be turned over to the state, 37 percent of state

residents supported the move. Of the 1,003 registered voters questioned, 46 percent said the lands shouldn't be transferred. Another 17 percent were undecided.

The poll's margin of error was 3.2 percent and was conducted by Mason Dixon polling of Florida.

Other polling firms that have worked on the public lands issue in Montana and the West said that Montanan's low level of support for the transfer was notable and indicated that political messaging on public lands is

Please see **TRANSFER**, Page A10

### About the poll

The Mason-Dixon statewide poll included calls to landlines and cell phones Oct. 10 through 12.

The results included 1,003 Montanans who reported they were both registered and likely to vote. The number of people polled in each county is proportionate to the historical voter turnout.

The margin of error for statewide figures is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points but higher for numbers broken down by gender, region or party.



Land Board looms large in state races

**JAYME FRASER**  
Independent Record

**MISSOULA** — Republicans hope to gain majority control of the Montana Land Board for the first time in decades, arguing they would create more jobs through responsible development of state lands.

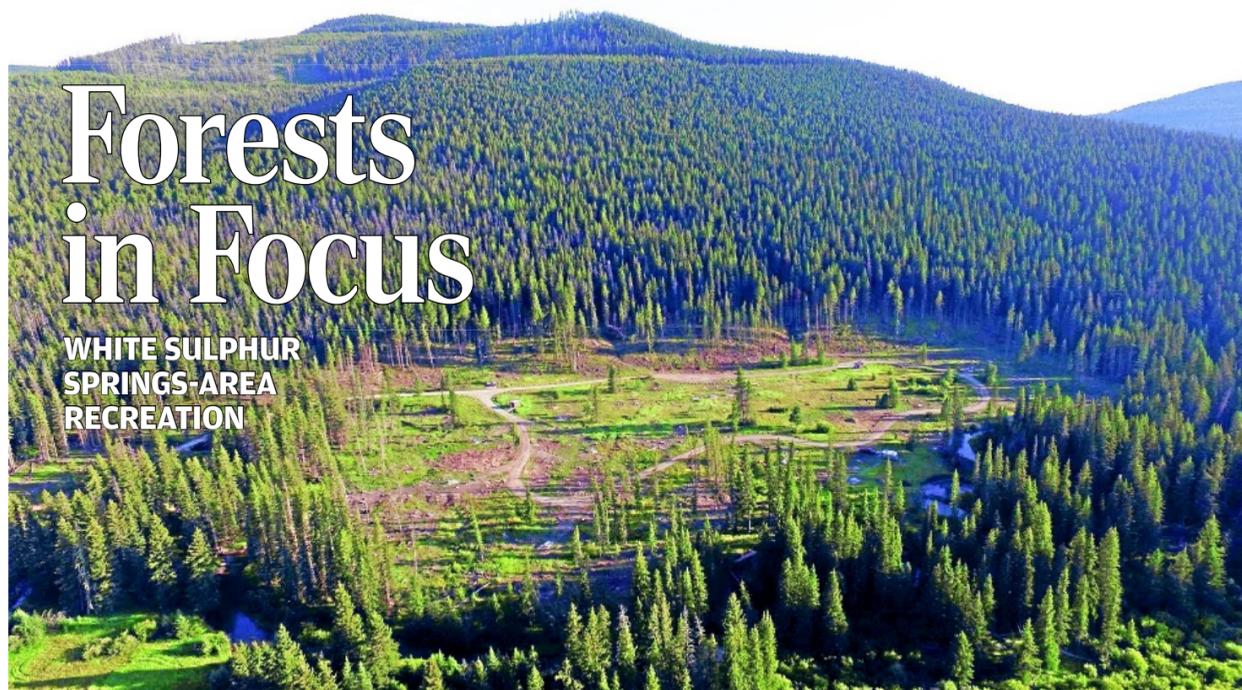
In turn, Democrats have touted their Land Board votes as proof they do not obstruct natural resource industries as the GOP often charges.

In addition to their primary duties, the governor, attorney general, superintendent of public instruction, auditor and secretary of state sit on the Montana

Land Board. The group meets once a month to oversee the use, maintenance and sometimes sale of more than 5 million acres of state trust lands and more than 6 million acres of mineral rights.

While that is only a fraction of Montana's total 94.1 million acreage, the parcels checker-board the state and are leased for farming, ranching, mining, timber harvest, oil and gas extraction, and public recreation, among other uses, to generate funding for public education. The group also provides final approval of other state land

Please see **LAND BOARD**, Page A10



INTO THE LITTLE BELTS PHOTO

The freshly reopened Jumping Creek Campground in the Helena-Lewis and Clark National is seen from this aerial photo.

## USFS, DNRC partner to reopen Jumping Creek Campground

**TOM KUGLIN**  
Independent Record

As Forest Products Week wrapped up events in western Montana last week, federal and state officials highlighted one particular campground project that turned public safety concerns into logs for a local mill.

Jumping Creek Campground north of White Sulphur Springs reopened this year following a three-year closure. Officials from the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation were on hand last week, talking to White Sulphur students about the project.

Root rot called tomentosus infected older spruce and fir trees across the property, leaving dead and dying trees and creating concerns about the hazard they posed to campers.

"We're very lucky no one was hurt — it was an unfortunate chain of events and it's not



USFS PHOTO

Volunteers assist with the planting of trees at the newly reopened Jumping Creek Campground.

popular to close a campground," said Deputy District Ranger Beth Ihle.

With the campground closed indefinitely three years ago, offi-

cials weighed options for its safe reopening.

"We looked at trying to move facilities and that just wasn't feasible," she said. "Our experts

### If you go

**WHAT:** Jumping Creek Campground

**WHERE:** North of White Sulphur Springs; about 17 miles south of Niehart on US 89.

**DETAILS:** 5800-foot elevation. 10 campsites on Sheep Creek. Fishing for brook and rainbow trout in the creek. Nearby are a number of old logging roads, which can be explored on a bike or on an ATV to scale Green Mountain and Smokey Mountain. About 2 miles east on US 89 is foot trail that climbs Mizpah Peak.

looked at rehab options and after we consulted, decided the only option was to remove all the trees."

Crews would then replant seedlings and a wider variety of species with the goal of long-term resilience to the rot.

Please see **JUMPING**, Page A16

## More meth than weed in DUI tests

No other drug has spiked in same way

**MATT HUDSON**  
For the Independent Record

**BILLINGS** — For the first time, methamphetamine outpaced marijuana as the most common drug found in addition to alcohol in DUI samples sent to the state crime lab last year.

Meth has also been detected more often in other cases that the crime lab's toxicology division handles, according to a summary report from the Montana Department of Justice's Forensic Science Division.

"I think that's the real take-home of this summary, is the massive increase in methamphetamine," said Scott Larson, toxicology supervisor at the crime lab.

Alcohol remains the most prevalent substance found in DUI toxicology cases.

In 2015, alcohol was the only detected substance in 2,277 cases. There were 3,380 total DUI cases tested that year.

The lab had 294 DUI cases involving meth, and the concentration of the drug increased 123 percent. That's up from 2011, when state toxicologists processed 73 DUI samples that were positive for meth.

Marijuana used to be the most common substance after alcohol found in DUI blood tests. In 2015, meth became more common in DUI blood tests, according to the lab.

The toxicology section of the state crime lab in Missoula also

Please see **METH**, Page A16

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Photos: American artist Nathan Sawaya's Lego masterpieces debut in Milan, Italy.

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# Jumping

From A1

Uncertainty surrounded funding for the small but impactful project in terms of recreation, and the Forest Service applied for and received a \$23,000 grant from the DNRC's Forests in Focus Initiative.

Forests in Focus, created in 2014 by Gov. Steve Bullock, put state funding toward expediting and bolstering federal forestry projects. To date, 15 projects covering 200,000 acres have received state funding, according to DNRC.

"We've been scaling up projects for these communities," said DNRC Director John Tubbs. "This project is small in size, but it brings a number of benefits to places like White Sulphur and those are the types of opportunities we're looking for."

The Forest Service is pushing more projects as well under authorities of the 2014 Farm Bill. Those authorities allow expedited environmental analysis in about 5 million acres of Montana's forests impacted from insects and



USFS PHOTO

Students from White Sulphur Springs listen to presentations for the Forest Service and DNRC at the recently reopened Jumping Creek Campground.

disease. The state can also work more closely with the Forest Service under the bill's "Good Neighbor Authority."

Increased logging and the Farm Bill provisions particularly have brought the scorn of many in the environmental community.

The liberal use of categorical exclusions for logging up to 3,000 acres can occur without normal environmental impact studies

and public input. The provisions threaten wildlife habitat, critics say, while losing money on timber sales.

But federal and state officials counter that logging and other forestry projects are typically about forest health or public safety, and selling timber helps offset the cost for necessary management.

In the case of Jumping Creek, the small size of the project made

it difficult to bid, but they were able to piggy-back on another area project near Sheep Creek, which also received Forests in Focus funding.

Construction logs went to a Bitterroot Valley mill, others went to RY Timber in Townsend and others were used for pallet and firewood.

Logging left considerable slash on site, and officials again used the Farm Bill to pay for the cleanup.

The Good Neighbor Authority allowed the state and Forest Service to contribute funding to chip and transport the remaining material for an area mine reclamation project.

Jumping Creek Campground may now look bare on first glance, but a closer inspection reveals trees already replanted with more planned for next year.

"In this project we were able to replant for future generations, produce local commodities and ensure recreation for our communities," said Forest Supervisor Bill Avey.

Officials were happy to have the campground reopened, Ihle said, as it may take time to regrow, but still has that all important location factor that makes it prime for campers.

"This is a scenic byway for those that don't want to take the interstate, and gives them a unique campground with some of the nicest amenities in the area," she said.

Reporter Tom Kuglin can be reached at 447-4076 or tom.kuglin@helenair.com

# Meth

From A1

does postmortem drug screens for medical examiners and analyzes drug and alcohol tests for cases that involve drug-endangered children. The lab also analyzes urine tests for the Department of Corrections — inmates and those on probation.

The lab tests for a range of different drugs — like marijuana, prescription narcotics, hallucinogens and inhalants. The overall number of positive drug findings has decreased over the years.

DUIs make up the largest caseload, accounting for more than half of the 6,139 cases handled last year. In the majority of DUI tests, alcohol is the only substance present in the blood sample.

But meth has increased in other test areas. They include postmortem drug screens, where the lab had 20 positive cases for meth in 2011. That jumped to 73 in 2015, though the lab handled 801 total cases.

Urinalysis tests conducted on probationers and parolees have turned up more meth as well. No other drug has spiked in the same way.

Chris Evans, deputy chief for the Billings region of Montana Probation and Parole, said that there was certainly an increase in violations for meth use since 2011. He said that when officers spoke to the offenders, they heard it was often an easy drug to get.

"The availability of methamphetamine during that time was a lot greater," he said. "There was just more of it around."

Of the 1,192 urinalysis cases handled by the lab in 2015, more than 550 turned

up positive for meth. There were fewer than 200 in 2011.

In DUI, urine and post-mortem samples, meth was the only drug other than alcohol that has steadily become more common.

Other institutions, including the court system, have seen the effects of increased meth use. A February report by The Billings Gazette found that the number of felony drug possession charges in Yellowstone County has significantly increased over the years. Most of them involved meth.

### Other findings

The report also tallied tests from traffic fatalities. In more than a third of fatal crashes cases in 2015, no drugs or alcohol were found in the victims.

The report didn't distinguish between drivers and passengers in its data on fatal crash victims.

The most common drug present in fatal crashes in 2015 were central nervous system depressants, which cover a range of prescription medications. Larson said they can be drugs that treat anxiety and depression, or they could be sleep-

ing pills.

"This is a big problem in terms of DUI cases," Larson said.

The numbers are still relatively low, however. There were 14 cases in which the depressants, but no alcohol, were found. Fewer than 20 cases involved those types of depressants and alcohol. The lab studied 213 fatal crash cases in 2015.

The presence of marijuana decreased in urinalysis and DUI cases over five years, the report showed.

One bright spot in the report, Larson said, was the decrease in the presence of hydrocodone in cases like DUIs.

The prescription narcotic was once the most common in its class.

But another drug, oxy-

codone, has gradually increased in tests over the years, nearly replacing the hydrocodone.

The overall caseload for the toxicology section of the crime lab has also steadily increased over the years. There were fewer than 4,000 total cases in 2010, but in 2015 it topped 6,000.

A second state crime lab opened in Billings this year, but it won't house a toxicology section. Its purpose is to process physical drug evidence, a caseload that has grown alongside the number of possession cases in court.

Phil Kinsey, crime lab administrative director, said that there are no plans to expand the Eastern Montana lab for toxicology.

### LOTTERY NUMBERS

■ **Powerball:** 1-28-33-55-56; Powerball: 22; Power Play: 2

■ **Hot Lotto:** 7-14-20-33-44; Hot Ball: 14

■ **Montana Cash:** 1-5-6-10-36

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# Forests in Focus Funding Helps Speed Up the Process

By Kelley Hirning

Forest restoration, fuels treatments and wildfire prevention/reduction activities are ongoing in the Southeastern part of Montana. Last month, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) organized a tour of different Southeastern Montana fuel reduction projects to highlight all the work that is being done in the area to reduce wildfire risk and its threat to the public and property. In addition to DNRC staff, other attendees included a Rosebud County Commissioner, U.S. Forest Service, Northern Cheyenne and BIA staff, local landowners, Rosebud Conservation District, and members of the local forest industry.



DNRC Eastern Land Office Area Manager Chris Pileski showcased some of the projects that were a result of the partnership of those involved, as well as the various state and federal grants that provided funding. Pileski also recognized Bobbi Vannattan of the Rosebud Conservation District for all her great work in managing most of the projects. She and the Conservation District are an important partner in completing these projects.

The group toured the Ashland Forest Products Mill in Ashland and were able to see all the work the revitalized mill is undertaking. Reopened in the fall of 2014, the mill is producing lumber products out of logs from trees killed in the wildfires of 2012, including logs from projects that were on the tour.

After touring the mill, the group visited projects on state trust land, U.S. Forest Service land, and two private landowners.



Since 2009, DNRC has used state and federal funds to help restore forest land on 30 properties, totaling approximately 4,000 acres of private, tribal, and state lands in the southeast region of Montana. One of the funding sources was the Montana Forests in Focus Initiative, which has disbursed four million dollars for projects on tribal, state and private forests and two million dollars to USFS lands for fuel reduction and forest restoration. Tom Trusler Jr, a 5th generation rancher and grant recipient said, *“By utilizing the Forest in Focus money, this advanced us at least 20 years...with the Forests in Focus program it’s here now.”*

The Ash Creek fire in 2012 was one of the largest Montana had seen in many decades. It scorched almost 250,000 acres of Southeast Montana in less than 2 weeks. The tour included areas that were affected by this quick moving and devastating fire.

Brian and Maggie Dice remember that day like it was yesterday, and just talking about it brings tears to their eyes. Through the Rosebud Conservation District they also utilized the Forests in Focus funds. As Mrs. Dice stated, *“it’s just nice after a catastrophic fire to have the resources we need, because we couldn’t have done this without them.”*

## **Forest Project is a Win-Win 9/25/2016 – Montana Standard**

By Pat Hansen

Hazardous fuel reduction, logs for jobs, stream restoration and improved habitat for fish, wildlife and cattle on the Montana State Prison ranch are the result of a Forests in Focus Initiative (FIFI) project.

The after-effects of the catastrophic mountain pine beetle outbreak has resulted in a forest health crisis throughout Montana and the West, and the availability of timber continues to be challenge for Sun Mountain Lumber and other mills.

FIFI is a \$3 million, state-funded cost-share program designed to increase the rate of forest restoration and/or hazardous fuel reduction, put logs on trucks for jobs, and to improve watersheds and wildlife habitat on non-industrial private, state and tribal lands. Since FIFI was started in 2014, there have been 24 projects across the state completed.

“So far it’s been a good program,” said Roger Ziesak, grant manager and forest practices specialist with the Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). “We’re getting some really nice work done all around the state. This project benefits the MSP ranch and local business.”

Sean Steinbach, DNRC forester and project foreman, explained that in 2009-10 federal stimulus funds were used on the south end of MSP ranch property to jump start harvest and restoration by picking up beetle killed timber that was sent to the pulp mill. He and Steve Flynn, with Sun Mountain Lumber, agreed it was expensive because the steep terrain required 800-1000 feet of cable to bring the timber uphill.

“There was a lot of dead timber lying on the ground, but I’m really happy that is cleaned up in case there is a fire,” Steinbach said.

The \$200,000 grant from the state FIFI Fire Suppression Fund and a collaborative effort by DNRC, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Sun Mountain Lumber and Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) made the recently completed commercial forest thinning project possible. The grant was awarded in February 2015 with work starting last summer.

Steinbach said, “Sun Mountain Lumber put in more money than the state; the only grant where more money was contributed by a partner than the grant.”

Rich Lane, of Willis Enterprise that operates the Bonner pulp mill said, “This is state money and we want to invest wisely; that has been done here.”

Recently DNRC representatives, county commissioners, and industry partners toured portions of the completed 470-acre project on the north end of the prison ranch where more than two million board feet of timber was harvested.

Sun Mountain Logging did commercial thinning of Douglas fir and Lodgepole pine at 30-foot spacing for a natural forest look with trees left being a variety of sizes and ages to reduce the potential for insect infestation and the possibility of a forest fire starting. It will also force a crown fire to the ground where firefighters can battle it. The work provided 550 loads of saw logs to Sun Mountain Lumber in Deer Lodge, 60 loads of pulp logs to the pulp mill in Bonner and 200-300 tons of rails to build a fence along LaMarche Creek.

Ziesak said best management practices (BMPs) were used in every aspect of road construction and harvest to ensure minimal soil disturbance, to protect water quality and disturbed areas will be seeded with grass.

FWP was concerned about a pure strain of westslope cutthroat trout in LaMarche Creek that was being affected by sediment flowing into the stream from poorly maintained roads after storms.

The project included road maintenance to prevent sediment, obliteration of a number of unnecessary roads, realignment of the stream that had 'blown out' its banks in places, and installation of culverts. Now a 2.5 mile fence will be built along both sides of the stream to protect the riparian area, with water gaps installed for the cattle to use.

In addition to the logging, sawmill and pulp mill jobs, and watershed restoration, MCE received money from the timber sale that Ross Wagner, MSP ranch manager, said will be used for vocational training of inmates and DNRC trust land on the south end made money for the school trust fund.

Steinbach said, "This project could not have been done if the sawmill were not here."

**Side Bar:**

Since 1990 more than 30 Montana sawmills have closed and the Montana Wood Products report for 2015 states only 15 mills with more than 10 employees are left in the Montana. In 2013 the manufacturing segment of Montana's economy contributed \$14.1 billion to the state's economy. Of the 22,148 manufacturing jobs in Montana, wood products manufacturing ranked first with about 7,000 workers.