

It's Fall, still golden, and strikingly warm.

My favorite season to be sure. This issue of the WilderNews is a cornucopia of interesting tidings and great accomplishments which I hope you will enjoy with some pride. You are reading this because of your support for the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation. Many of you have become members, volunteered, donated, or just want to be kept apprised of what's going on in the A-B Wilderness. You love Wilderness to want to keep it healthy, vital, and accessible to all the way we do. Here's one reason why your help is so important.

The ABWF was started in large part as a recognition that declining Forest Service budgets and efforts were not sufficient to maintain the A-B Wilderness the way it needs to be in order to preserve its outstanding character and resources. This situation is not improving, and one key reason is the cost of fire-fighting.

One is the skyrocketing cost of fighting fires. In 2015, combating ever larger and more numerous wildfires cost the USDA Forest Service \$1.7 billion, which is the costliest year ever. It cost \$260 million just to fight the country's single worst fire in 2016, the Soberanes Fire in central California. For comparison, the Yellowstone fires of 1988 cost \$120 million to fight and that was considered to be one of the hottest and most unprecedented fire seasons in history, when over 5 million acres burned across the country. But since 1988, there have been 18 summers that have been hotter, and half of those saw more than 5 million acres burned! Last year, in fact, 10 million acres burned across the U.S. and fire seasons are now an estimated 78 days longer than they were in 1970.

Here's the crux. Money to fight these fires comes out of the Forest Service's budget. All other natural disasters—floods...tornadoes...earthquakes...hurricanes, all get handled by FEMA, a part of the Department of Homeland Security. Every other natural disaster, EXCEPT wildfire. Suppressing fires and paying for crews, aircraft, etc., now uses up more than 50% of the Forest Service's budget, when just 20 years ago it was only 16%.

All this diverts Forest Service funds away from watershed protection, habitat restoration and recreation. It's money that won't be going to maintaining trails, maintaining roads, and making forests and wilderness areas places people want to go. One possible solution: The Wildfire Disaster Funding Act is a bill before Congress that ensures catastrophic wildfires are treated like other natural disasters. It would allow the Forest Service to access emergency FEMA funding to fight the largest and most catastrophic fires, instead of decimating the Forest Service budget.

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell, recently doubled down on the Agency's position regarding partnerships: "Through strategic public/private partnerships, we can accomplish more work while also yielding more benefits for all Americans." Having to rely more on groups like the ABWF is becoming more and more critical.

So, we need your help now more
than ever.

Please renew your Membership
with the ABWF using the
enclosed envelope



Left: Ranger Todd Burritt mounts a sign on the E. Baldy Basin Trail—this is the first sign I've seen that recognizes the newly merged Custer and Gallatin National Forests!

Right: Newly constructed bridge on East Rosebud to Cooke City trail.

Photo courtesy of
Ethan Fichtner



Photo Courtesy of
Jeremy Zimmer

A Productive Season!

- The ABWF planned and carried out 13 trail projects this summer—7 day-long and 6 multi-day trips—the most we've ever attempted!
- 52 volunteers signed up for our multi-day projects this summer; exactly half of them—26 volunteers—came from out of state!
- 5 Educational programs—engaging 184 kids and adults alike in understanding the A-B Wilderness in a fresh, more respectful way.
- The ABWF wrote and received 3 federal grants that funded trail projects this summer. The Lake Abundance and Lake Plateau Projects in August received grants of \$48,500 and \$16,600 respectively. The ABWF received \$10,400 to complete the Knox Lake project in July. That's \$75,500 Total.
- Volunteers cut a ½ mile trail between Initial Creek Campground and the trailhead for the W. Fork of the Stillwater. This effort was funded by the Stillwater Mining Company whose terrific support for Wilderness and Trails has been ongoing
- The ABWF contributed 4532 hours of work towards improving A-B Wilderness trails in 2016. That includes the work of our interns, our volunteers, the Backcountry Horsemen, and 3 Forest Service crews paid for with grants received by the ABWF.

Cooke City to East Rosebud Trail

The A-B Wilderness's signature trail, the 28-mile Russell Creek to E. Rosebud route, got some outstanding improvements this past summer! Our Wilderness Interns—Ethan Fichtner & Bryce Howe lent the Forest Service a hand on the first mile of the trail just east of Cooke City. This section is perpetually muddy and gets braided wider and wider each year. The solution? A raised section of trail called a turnpike through the boggiest sections. Bonus! Heavy run-off along Russell Creek had seriously damaged the foot bridges above and below Russell Lake. The Forest Service has installed new bridges over this heavily used trail. Thanks to the American Hiking Society for providing "Vacation Volunteers" and a \$3000 grant to the ABWF to help see to it that work continues on this iconic trail.



Turnpike Construction on Knox Lake

ABWF Volunteers and two crew from the Gardiner District spent five days putting in two sections of turnpike on the trail to Knox Lake (E. of Jardine). Turnpike often fixes the problem of perennially muddy sections of trail with drainage problems. The packstring of mules you see loaded with gravel, are lined up behind Warren Johnson, owner of Hell's A-Roarin' Outfitters. Warren and his sons volunteered their stock to haul in gravel which we used to fill in the turnpike structure you see in the photos below.

Left: Intern Bryanna-Angood Hardy, USFS crew Rachel Hendrickson & Cooper Parkerson, intern Bryce Howe, Nelson Scott, Bryan Altenhof, and Marni Angood. Crouching Kelsey Jenkins, Sam Italiano, Beth Williams.

Center: Hell's A-Roarin' outfitter mule train.

Right: The finished turnpike.



Photo by Bryanna Angood-Hardy



Wilderness

Outfitter: Beartooth Powder Guides

By Jesse Logan, Board member of the ABWF

Ben Zavora is a man with a penchant for hard work. If you doubt this, consider the fact that in one summer, with a little help from friends he constructed a comfortable one room cabin that easily accommodates 10 guests. Not only is this a sweet little cabin, but it was constructed entirely from standing dead timber found on the property, and all access was exclusively human powered. That's right, all construction materials used came in on someone's back. Later in the same summer, he constructed a comfortable yurt located near the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness boundary. These two backcountry huts form the foundation of a backcountry skiing operation that Ben operates out of Cooke City, Montana. www.beartoothpowder.com.

The Woody Creek cabin, 2.5 mi. south of Cooke, services a wide variety of deep-powder skiing, and is the focus for both self-supported and guided/fully-catered skiing in wide variety of terrain. Whitebark pine forests, high ridges and peaks abound. The Mt. Zimmer Yurt provides access to more advanced alpine terrain in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, including classic ski-mountaineering destinations like Granite Peak. With the terrain serviced by these two destination huts, ski tours for any level of ability or objectives can be readily accommodated.

Beartooth Powder Guides is committed to responsible backcountry winter education, offering courses ranging from avalanche classes to advanced ski-mountaineering. This commitment to responsible human-powered winter recreation fits well within the ethic of the Wilderness Act of 1964, under which the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Area was created in 1978. Recognizing the importance of Wilderness to his operation, Ben donates \$1 from sale of each custom map of the areas serviced by his huts to the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation. www.beartoothpowder.com/product/cooke-city-area-map

With so many trails to travel, Dylan Shanks of Red Lodge passed away far too soon. A native Montanan, who grew up in Glasgow and Columbus, MT, you might expect that he would love all things outdoors. He did. While working as a brewer at Red Lodge Ales, friend and fellow brewer, Justin Moore, said he talked endlessly about backpacking trips. He had recently purchased a “splitboard,” to help him spend more time in the backcountry, away from the lifts he grew up loving at Red Lodge Mountain. He loved nothing more than snowboarding at Beartooth Pass. “Dylan was a very meticulous, particular kind of guy” in a way that could make his life as a brewer stressful, said Justin, “but the outdoors brought a healthy perspective” to him that eased the stress. Dylan felt strongly about his down time and not taking the outdoors for granted. He loved living here because the Wilderness was so close, and felt drawn back to the mountains anytime he was away.

A fund gathered in Dylan’s memory by his parents Jan and Frank Shanks will go to helping Little League baseball in Glasgow, MT and the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation in Red Lodge to ensure others will continue to pursue Dylan’s passions.

Photos Courtesy of Justin Moore



Remembering Wilderness Friends

November 8th marks the 10th Anniversary since our friend Emily Sandall passed away descending Half Dome in Yosemite. Emily was truly unique, with the most generous spirit imaginable and allowed the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness to be a big part of her spirit in a relatively short time. An intern turned instructor for Outward Bound in Montana, Emily worked hard and frolicked hard among these high mountains, reaching out to young students, outdoor colleagues, and community members all. Thanks to the Sandall family who have donated to the ABWF on her behalf over the past three years.





Left: Sign recognizing ABWF for our work!

Right: Out-of-Staters: clockwise from bottom center: Jim Howe (PA); Glenn & Michelle Florence (ID); Steve Kaiser (WI); John Clayton (MT); Linus Metzler (SWI); Janel Bloom (CA); Kasey Haack (MT); Hannah Marchant (MT); Kelsey Jenkins (WA); Linton Brown (IL); Patrick Collieran (CO). These fun folks did "Check and Fill" work for 7 days near Horseshoe Lake on the Lake Plateau!

National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance:

We were one of 17 recipients in May of a \$13,000+ grant that allowed the ABWF to hire Kelsey Jenkins this summer to lead the volunteer trail trips. KJ did an excellent job heading up these trips, keeping volunteers engaged, fed, safe, and entertained. It's a lot to juggle, and she did it well. ABWF is a member of NWSA (read below), attend their conferences, and collaborate with fellow stewardship organizations on a national scale. Thank you, KJ and NWSA! From the NWSA Granting Committee:

"The National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance is excited to support the volunteers, nonprofit organizations, and agency partners who are stewarding their local public lands. These Wilderness Stewardship Performance Grants will accomplish much needed work to improve wilderness performance scoring in a number of wilderness areas. Americans are lucky to have such diverse and beautiful wilderness areas across our country, but we are even luckier to have caring stewards who give their time and their energy and their love to this unique American resource."

—Randy Welsh, NWSA Wilderness Stewardship Performance Project Manager



National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance

Fun Run for Charities 2016

We're thrilled by what the Red Lodge Fun Run for Charities has become—the most important fundraiser for the ABWF in our calendar year. Thanks to all of you who donated through the Fun Run. We received a record \$9715.00! That's incredible! We are so grateful for your support. \$8520 of that came from direct donations from you, while \$1195 was money matched by the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation.

Thanks also to those who donated their time to help the ABWF with the Fun Run. Volunteers make the whole event run smoothly. Our Board member, Bernie Rose, is a regular, staffing our booth, and perennial volunteer Linus Metzler added his help—visiting from Switzerland. ABWF member, Rue Freeman, gives us hours preparing the race packets.

Let this season be your season to Support ABWF!

While government Grants, Fun Runs, Memorial Funds, Business, and Foundation Support generates significant funding for our projects, those alone will not keep the ABWF going. We are at a critical juncture in our growth and the service to our Mission. A few of the grants we have relied on in the past won't be available to us in 2017. We need all of YOU to make this work, at whatever level of support you can afford. Enclosed is an envelope to make it simpler to give!

Please consider becoming a sustaining member of the ABWF. It is quite easy to go online and make your donation be a monthly recurring donation—the gift that keeps on giving!

Thank you!



Left: Crews hard at work on Turnpike.

Center: Fun Run Participant Running for the cause

Right: KJ and her group of volunteers on the E. Baldy Basin project.



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WILDERNESS FOUNDATION

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Meet the 2016 Artists -in- Residence



Tami Haaland is the author of two books of poetry: *When We Wake in the Night*, and *Breath in Every Room*, winner of the Nicholas Roerich Prize. She has received an Artist Innovation Award from the Montana Arts Council and served as Montana's fifth poet laureate from 2013-15. For over twenty years, Haaland has been teaching at MSU Billings, where she currently chairs the Department of English, Philosophy and Modern Languages.

Elizabeth Claire Rose is a printmaker and photographer currently living in Pittsburgh, PA. Rose attended the University of Montana where she earned a B.A in Fine Art and a minor in Wilderness Studies. Anchored to wilderness areas throughout North America, her work explores ecosystems and records interactions between people and the environment. Her recent work explores alpine wilderness areas, and is inspired by experiences she has had in Montana's high country, particularly the AB Wilderness.