



**absaroka | beartooth**  
WILDERNESS FOUNDATION

# Absaroka Beartooth WilderNews

"It is the mission of the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness Foundation to support stewardship of the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness and to foster appreciation of wild lands."

## From the Director:

*If it's seemed quiet in the land of the ABWF, it has been. For snow sports enthusiasts, this winter has disappointed for snow or even cold weather. My 'home' ski mountain in Red Lodge will close early this year—the local ice rink and Nordic Center gave out many weeks ago. So it may have been the ideal winter to just lay low. I used the winter to replace my other worn-out knee with a stainless steel one. (Note: I did not wear out my knees doing trail work!) Wore them out over the years enjoying the mountains & deserts of the west—descending high mountains, playing basketball, snowboarding, and backpacking with a 70 lb. pack literally crushed the life out of my knees and forced me for the second time to take time to heal and rehabilitate.*

*What I have had is time to sit down (knee up + ice), write up, and submit a goodly number of grants that help the ABWF carry out its work. While grants are hardly the only way we keep doing what we do, altogether they have been very significant in how we operate. The ABWF has what is best described as a "diversified portfolio" of funding sources—a growing legion of smaller donors, our regular members, corporate donors, private foundations, and federal grants. In this issue of WilderNews, we give a resounding thanks to the many people and organizations who are financial supporters.*

*So as winter turns aside to spring, it's with excited anticipation that I will be outside soon, challenging my new knee, and getting back into action in the place I love most, the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness! I hope you're also ready! Look for our Guide to Wilderness Projects for 2016 coming out soon.*

## Winter 2016 Issue



With the old knees at Slough Creek Cabin

## Recreational Trails Program (RTP):



ABWF Intern, KJ, working the Lake Abundance Trail

Citizen Science has been the big buzzword in conservation over the past few years—i.e. recruiting citizens with time and Another of the Federal Grants that helps the ABWF immeasurably is through the Recreational Trails Program. These funds come from the Dept. of Transportation's Federal Highway Trust Fund, and represent a portion of the taxes collected on the purchase of motor fuel for off-highway recreation—snowmobiles, ATVs, off-highway motorcycles, etc. The Recreational Trails Program channels funding to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. In Montana those funds are distributed through Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks via a grant process. The ABWF has managed to fund our Wilderness Internship Program with RTP funding. The hiring of three Interns each summer that this money affords has provided the most substantial results we have seen on trails. In 2015, we received \$9000 from RTP.



## Focus on Federal Funding:

Did you know...? Counties in every state collect taxes on federal lands located within their county borders. Those taxes, by law, have to be distributed by the counties for local projects that benefit roads and trails. Each county therefore sets up a Resources Advisory Committee (RAC) of everyday citizens to make decisions on how those funds should be distributed. The committee invites grant proposals for projects that would spend those funds, and the ABWF has been successful at funding some of our trail projects with these RAC dollars. Over the past five years, the ABWF, in fact, has been the recipient of these funds on four occasions.



A volunteer working on the new Wicked Creek Trail

- Wicked Creek Trail Restoration (2013)
- Upper Stillwater/Horseshoe Creek Trail Improvement project (2014)
- Lake Abundance Trail Improvement ('15 & '16)
- Lake Plateau Trail Project (summer 2016)



Filling in a deeply rutted Lake Abundance Tr.

Good news! We were informed recently by the RAC committee that the ABWF is receiving funds for two new projects to be completed in 2016-17. Thanks to those who serve as volunteers on the committee and make decisions on how these funds get spent.

- ABWF will begin replacing the attractive and informative Wilderness portal signs where they are needed across the A-B Wilderness. Many are faded, vandalized, or just need updating since the Custer and Gallatin Forests merged.



A turnpike

- We are also excited to receive RAC funding to improve one of the most popular trails in the Absarokas, outside of Gardiner—the trail to Knox Lake, which needs the installation of numerous sections of turnpike (raised, bordered, & filled-in trail) along its first few miles where the trail is eternally muddy.

If you would like to help on this trail project this summer, we'll be spearheading the work on the Knox Lake trail, July 15-19. Sign up through our website, [www.abwilderness.org](http://www.abwilderness.org), and find our projects.



A Wilderness info panel greets the A-B user



Fuchsia paintbrush near Knox Lake—  
Sarah Bierschwale

## Highlight: The Cinnabar Foundation

Started in 1983 by Len and Sandy Sargent, the Cinnabar Foundation plays a unique role as “Montana’s homegrown conservation fund”. Over the years they have handed out over 1000 grants totaling \$5 million and have been particularly helpful getting small, grass-roots non-profits like the ABWF started. The Foundation got its name for the Cinnabar Basin/Mountain at the southwest end of the Paradise Valley where the Sargents found a place to call home, adjacent to a significant remnant of America’s pristine wild country. (Cinnabar, by the way, is a scarlet to brick-red mineral of mercury sulfide (HgS), found alongside recent volcanic activity and is the chief source of industrial mercury & the brilliant red pigment, vermilion). The Sargents were prompted to join the fight against threats in the 1970’s to dam the Yellowstone River in the Paradise Valley. Today, the Yellowstone remains the longest free-flowing river in America. There is no other statewide fund that supports conservation across the board the way the Cinnabar Foundation does.

To date, the ABWF has received just over \$10,000 from the Cinnabar Foundation. Thank you!

**CINNABAR**  
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## Sponsor Highlight: The Stillwater Mine:



North America’s only platinum and palladium mine is located on the Custer-Gallatin National Forest southwest of Absarokee, MT. My very first introduction to the Beartooths in 1996 was a flat tire I got on the road high above the Stillwater Mine. I walked back quite a few miles, then mercifully caught a ride down the mountain with a mine employee. The Stillwater Mining Company is still a generous steward of the public lands surrounding the mine. Among their many contributions, they have made possible the restoration of the trail system by organizations such as ABWF, the Forest Service, and the Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen.

The two main drainages of the Stillwater River were both badly burned in the great fires of 1988, altering the trails, bridges, and access to popular areas that have yet to be fully repaired. Upgrading the Stillwater corridor and its access trails to the Lake Plateau has been a high priority for the Beartooth District for years. The Stillwater Mine has consistently helped the ABWF fund our volunteer trail projects in the Stillwater drainages, projects like the Upper Stillwater/Horseshoe Creek project in 2014. This summer they will be instrumental in helping the Forest Service install a new bridge into the W. Stillwater near the Initial Creek Trailhead.

If you also want to help on this project, just find the “Initial Creek Trail Project” on our website, [www.abwilderness.org](http://www.abwilderness.org). We will be camping at the campground and walking in to work each day a short distance. Should be a fun, more moderate trail project, if you care to lend a hand. Dates: July 8-11, Fri-Mon.



# Contributors to the ABWF in 2015:

**Nationally, federal and corporate sources combined amount to less than 20% of all contributions made to charitable organizations. The other 80% are from individual donors, like you! YOU, deserve the greatest thanks of all!**

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	Bob & Mary Johnso Red Lodge		Clare Witcomb, Red Lodge
	Carolyn Jones, Billings		Nikki Yancey, Billings

## Did you know?

Geologically, the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness is a conglomeration of two mountain ranges—the Absarokas to the west of the Boulder River, and the Beartooths to the east. The Absarokas run north-south, reach over 11,000 feet, and are a much younger range formed by the Laramide Orogeny—the mountain-building event that created the Rocky Mountains 60 million years ago. The Beartooths, by contrast, are far older in origin, the result of two separate mountain-building events—one dating back 250-300 million years ago; the other 60 million years ago. They run in a more west to east direction and reach 12,000 feet—highest in all Montana.

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Aspen Geheber, Clarkson, KY	Nancy McGrade, Red Lodge		
John & Petrea Goering, Bozeman			

**Thanks to all who contributed to the ABWF in 2015!**

*(Our apologies if we missed anyone)*





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Sign up for our e-newsletter:  
[info@abwilderness.org](mailto:info@abwilderness.org)

## Artists-in Residence Event

Once again, as a way to call attention to the transcendent value & beauty of this special place, we are seeking applicants for our second round of the Artists-in-Residence Program! If you would like to spend time in solitude, living simply at the fringes of Wilderness in a Forest Service cabin, practicing your particular art, please consider applying. More details on our website, under the 'Projects & Programs' tab. Deadline for applications are April 30th. Three artists will be chosen in 2016.

## Coming Soon

late April—Two of our artists from last summer—Bianca Klein and Bernie Quetchenbach will be presenting their work and promoting the A-B Wilderness for the ABWF. Keep an eye out for details.

## Camp Cooks Needed!

Camp Cooks Needed! Last summer we successfully added 'Camp Cook' to our list of volunteer opportunities and had tastier meals as a result! Camp Cook is a crucial position that makes the whole work project go much smoother! If you are interested in volunteering and would rather cook and serve meals rather than swing a Pulaski, consider signing up as one of our camp cooks. We have 4-5 opportunities this summer for you to serve up your backcountry culinary skills. (Don't worry, you'll have help!) See our website under 'Projects and Programs' and find a date that works.



*Kathy rocked it as camp cook!*