

**absaroka | beartooth**  
WILDERNESS FOUNDATION

# Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness News

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

Fall 2017

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ←

The ABWF...We may take you on a hike into wilderness. We maintain and improve trails with the help of volunteers. We go into schools offering lessons on Wilderness and Leave No Trace. Then we invite groups young and old alike, out onto the trails to teach them about what's here and why it's so important. We host events that showcase artists inspired by wilderness or educate citizens about issues that impact our public lands. We hire young interns to learn about Wilderness conservation and develop work skills alongside Forest Service staff. We build partnerships with other groups to get our collective work done better. We may also greet you at a trailhead with information and gentle reminders of how to minimize your impacts in the backcountry. All in the spirit of keeping the A-B Wilderness special!

Six years ago, almost no one had heard of the A-B Wilderness Foundation, nor had many guesses about what we do. Today, we have added over 1200 of you to our mailing list, carried out nearly **60 trail projects**, welcomed nearly **1000(!)** of you as volunteers in a variety of ways, and hired 13 interns who have toiled over **8000 hours** working on trails while forging skills and careers in conservation. We have welcomed 7 artists in to interpret our wilderness.

We are reaching out to more and more school kids...and we have learned from so many of you how dear and valuable this big, old place—the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness—is to people around the world, across the country, and right here around its beautiful edges.

Implicitly we all know how valuable public lands like the A-B Wilderness, the Pryor Mountains, Little Bighorn Battlefield, Yellowstone National Park, and Makoshika State Park are to us as a people, particularly when our growing populations crave places to get away from the busy stressfulness of a high-paced, modern technological society. But it's time we all got more EXPLICIT about our involvement protecting our wild places. We've asked a lot of you, and you've responded.

By building deeper connections to our valued public places, it is the ABWF's hope that more people step up to help places like the A-B--while we still know them as our parents and grandparents have known them.

I'm proud of how far we've come! **Won't you help us keep supporting these programs?**

Please take this final opportunity of 2017 to give financially to the ABWF. An envelope is provided.

David Kallenbach

*"We provide active opportunities in the outdoors for people to become more deeply involved in the protection and stewardship of our most important wild lands—the A-B Wilderness."*

*A group from Westminster College, Salt Lake City, pose at the end of a successful work day.*



# Season Highlights



Photo by Ethan Fichtner



Jason Gollan



Big Brothers Big Sisters



Erecting a sign

## TRAIL CREWLEADER

Our newest addition to the ABWF...this summer, we hired Jason Gollan as a Programs Coordinator/Trail Crew leader. Jason's greatest contribution turned out to be one of my key prerequisites in a trail crew leader—a personality to facilitate an amazing experience for the volunteers and engage them in a fun, congenial way. All who got to work with Jason this summer saw that immediately! A highly energetic worker and true friend to the trails! Help me nudge him to come back again next summer, providing he comes back from Thailand!

Jason's position was funded by a **National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance** (NWSA) grant for nearly \$15,000! NWSA is an umbrella group for organizations like the ABWF who do Wilderness and trail stewardship work. I attend their very valuable conferences each year to stay abreast of what's happening in wilderness stewardship. We are ever so grateful they made it possible for us to hire Jason.



Tyler Shaw, Ryan Mielke, Kyle Dee, Shannon Rebinski, and Jason Gollan -- our 4 interns and Trail Crewleader!

## WILDERNESS INTERNS

We hired FOUR this year! Together Kyle, Ryan, Shannon, and Tyler accumulated **1815 hours** of time on trail working alongside the regular Forest Service crews, often on 8-day hitches to far-flung trails deep in the backcountry. At least one of the interns helped Jason on every volunteer project ABWF did this summer. This year I hired Shannon to specifically help me with trip leadership and logistics, spearheading our Trail Ambassadors program, and helping with some of our educational programs. A great crew of folks. Thank you!

Thank you to the **Cinnabar Foundation** for providing a grant to support our internship program! Theirs was critical funding to hire one of our interns.

**Did you know?** So far **FOUR** of our 13 interns have gone on to work as paid Forest Service staff after completing an internship with the ABWF!



## NATIONAL TRAILS DAY ◀◀◀

We started the season with a big bang, employing **48 workers** (48!) above the Paradise Valley on the Suce Creek Trail. Incredible turnout and a much improved trail!

## NICHOLS CREEK TRAIL ◀◀◀

It's finished and connected from end to end! After three years of hard work by ABWF volunteers, crews of MCC workers, and help by the Beartooth District crew, one can now hike or ride a bike or horse **4 ¼ miles** from the Ski Area down to the West Fork Road! It's an excellent trail and a remarkable achievement in ABWF's 6-year history.

## KNOX LAKE TURNPIKE AND PUNCHEON ◀◀◀

This summer ABWF revisited the Knox Lake trail above Gardiner/Jardine to build additional trail/drainage structures called 'turnpikes' (raised-bed trail filled with gravel) and 'punchcons' (low bridges with planks). A crew of 9 volunteers built a 25-ft puncheon and a 25-ft turnpike at a soggy section in the trail. As always, thanks to our Wilderness Interns, and Gardiner crewleader Cooper Parkerson who oversaw the project. Two years in a row, employees of **Warren and Sue Johnson's Hell's-a-Roarin' Outfitters** and their stock came out to help us haul in the gravel with which we filled the turnpike. A great, muddy project!

*"The bonding of everyone on the Lake Fork team to accomplish a common goal was a really great thing to be a part of. People of various backgrounds, ages and nationalities, coming together for a common purpose, can do great things."*

-Jim Merring, volunteer

## AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY ◀◀◀

This trails advocacy organization sent us an awesome crew of volunteers from all over the country. Great work got done on Bridge Creek, Upsidedown Creek, and E. Fork Trails along the upper Boulder River.



## EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH ◀◀◀

We reached **243 people** in all—kids and adults alike—through our 8 educational programs we delivered in 2017. This included taking 10 kids from **Luther School** snowshoeing and learning about winter ecology; teaching 'What Is Wilderness?' and Leave No Trace best practices to kids and their 'Bigs' from **Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Park and Sweetgrass Counties**; and helped host an amazing forum of sharing timely information about the value of our public lands with nearly 70 folks who came out for the **Beartooth Front Community Forum** in May.

**Give us a call—406-425-1944**—if you would like ABWF to do **FREE** educational presentations for your kids, your students, your civic group, your college class, etc. Look for more of this in 2018.



Knox Lake trail crew



Hell's-a-Roarin' Outfitters



Girl scouts on Timberline





Trail Ambassadors



New tread on Lake Abundance



Hauling planks at Knox Lake

## TRAIL AMBASSADORS ←

by Shannon Rebinski

Our USFS Wilderness Rangers spend a large chunk of their time burying human waste while out in the field. That's right, they are responsible for cleaning up after careless users who don't take the extra minute to dig a proper (6-8 inch deep) cat hole. What's more, rangers pack out used toilet paper, too. Imagine yourself in their shoes. Who goes as far as handling human feces and trash that's left behind? *They do.* If everyone took a minute to *actually stop and think*, to realize the impact they leave onto others when they don't practice proper Leave No Trace ethics, perhaps they will rethink going to the bathroom and throwing a rock or thin layer of dirt on top.

To combat this unnecessary problem, the ABWF with financial support from the **Billings Community Foundation**, started a Trail Ambassadors program from the ground up in order to educate users on proper wilderness ethics around heavily used areas across the A-B Wilderness.

Our goal for this season was, in partnership with the Custer Gallatin NF, to recruit and train volunteers who would maintain an educational presence at trailheads. Ambassadors then disperse information to wilderness users who may not know, or need to be reminded of proper ethics of minimal user impact and Leave No Trace (LNT) Principles.

After visiting with the **Gallatin Valley Land Trust** in Bozeman to learn about their successful Trail Ambassadors program, ABWF then established our own. We supplied complete set ups at the Gardiner, Livingston, Cooke City, and Red Lodge Ranger Stations; volunteers can then pick up/ drop off Trail Ambassador supplies in these centralized locations according to their preferred trailhead or district.

Each setup includes trowels for waste disposal, 50' bundles of p-cord for food storage, dog bags, CleanWaste Toilet-in-a-Bags, and literature on LNT, trail etiquette, and volunteer opportunities, all of

which can be distributed to users for **FREE** as needed. Various maps are also available for reference.

We want to stress that we avoid "bothering" wilderness users who may be there to get away from human interaction. We do not solicit anyone; instead, we allow the users to approach the Trail Ambassador. When given the choice, users seem to be sincerely interested in starting a conversation. They become excited when we explain our purpose. In 2017, we contacted **464 people** on trails over **12 total outings**.

A big 'Thank you!' goes out to **Sylvan Peak** in Red Lodge, **Timber Trails** in Livingston, and **CleanWaste** in Belgrade for donating supplies for handout! Thanks also to **Nancy Taylor** of the Yellowstone District for her leadership on this project!

Got 3 hours of time here & there? Become a Trail Ambassador yourself! Sign up at [www.abwilderness.org](http://www.abwilderness.org) or email us [info@abwilderness.com](mailto:info@abwilderness.com). Your initiative could help clean up the backcountry!



Taking out a rotten bridge in Box Canyon



Young volunteers at Nichols



Turnpike building at Russell Creek





Dave

Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation

# Volunteers of the Year



Gus

## DAVE JOKI ◀◀◀

Dave has worked on four ABWF multi-day projects in the last two years! We value his dedication, as he resides in Palo Alto, California and still finds time to come all the way to Red Lodge and volunteer with us. Dave spent many years as a High School Teacher and Private Tutor, and as he transitions into retirement, he aims to invest more time volunteering in the environmental field. Not to mention, he's already been volunteering with the Golden Gate National Recreation Area for an upwards of 20 years, from the beaches of California to the river canyons of Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado and Utah. He's also helped dig ground for those rebuilding homes in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Needless to say, Dave has plenty of opportunity to keep busy, but he still decides to commit his time to helping improve the AB Wilderness. What a stand up guy!

## KAREN "GUS" GUSTAFSON ◀◀◀

Gus is the ultimate Rockstar, rounding out the season with five, count 'em, FIVE single and multi-day projects this year! She has been a volunteer since the wee days of ABWF, both as a trail worker and (an AMAZING) camp cook. Gus explains, ***"I like to camp cook because I am not that strong a hiker due to bad knees but I can still be in beautiful places supporting those who are young and agile enough to do the hard trail work."*** Having a camp cook is a HUGE relief as a trip leader, because it's incredibly exhausting to work an 8 hour day on trail only to come back and spend another 2 hours prepping, cooking, and cleaning for up to 12 other people. Gus even goes the extra mile by sneaking in a little something extra for desert, making it a pleasant surprise for even the trip leaders who think they know the entire planned menu. We are constantly begging Gus to quit her day job so she can become the full-time official camp cook of the ABWF. Cheers to you, Gus! Thanks a million!

## THE A-B ATLAS PROJECT ◀◀◀

*In eager anticipation of the 40th anniversary of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness in 2018, Forest Service retirees Traute Parrie and Dr. Jesse Logan are spearheading the production of a new piece, "The Shining Mountains: A Journal/Atlas of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness", a distinctly place-based "atlas" of art and essays.*

*This will not be an atlas in the traditional sense, but will pair essays with visually stunning maps and art (see photo below) to leave the reader with a deeper appreciation of the unique scientific, cultural, and social aspects of the A-B Wilderness. The intent of the atlas is to raise awareness about the values of the ABWA, identify what's at risk, and cultivate advocates.*

*In the end, we hope to build a stronger sense of connection to this place we call the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness.*

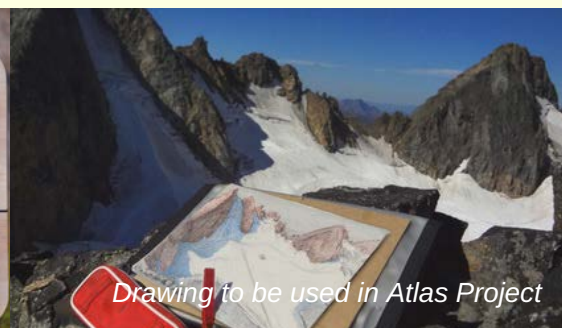
*Essays will be divided into 3 categories:*

- 1) The Human Sense of Place - from Cooke City to Reed Point, and What Lies Between*
- 2) The Flora and Fauna*
- 3) Rock, Fire, and Ice*

*All proceeds from the book will go to the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation.*



We do more than just wilderness!



Drawing to be used in Atlas Project

# Thank You!

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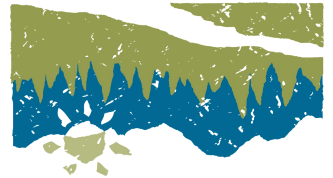
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## Drum Roll, Please!

### 2017 Season Accomplishments

**9 SINGLE DAY PROJECTS -- 164 VOLUNTEERS, 1024 HOURS OF WORK**  
**5 MULTI-DAY PROJECTS -- 64 VOLUNTEERS, 1605 HOURS OF HARD WORK!**  
**2 CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECTS -- 8 VOLUNTEERS, 352 HRS GATHERING DATA**  
**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS -- REACHED 243 PEOPLE FROM 5 TO 80 YRS OLD**  
**THAT'S 5043 TOTAL HOURS OF WORK ON BEHALF OF THE A-B WILDERNESS!**

**VOLUNTEERS HAVE GIVEN THE ABWF OVER 25,000 HOURS OF THEIR TIME**  
**IN THE LAST SIX YEARS. WE OWE IT ALL TO YOU!**