

NFLA Newsletter

Autumn 2006

North Forkers fight coal mine

The North Fork of the Flathead River continues to receive a great deal of attention on both sides of the border because of current coal mining projects proposed on the Canadian side of the Flathead.

Montana officials have been very concerned with the downstream effects from mining developments north of the border. Negotiating teams for the governor of Montana and the British Columbia premier continue the process of finalizing an environmental cooperation agreement.

At the same time, Montana has a delegation of 13 people from federal, tribal and state governments providing extensive comments on the Cline Mining Corp. environmental-assessment process for its proposed open-pit coal mine in the Canadian Flathead. The proposed mine site is in a headwaters tributary of the river, approximately 24 miles north of the border, and would threaten all aspects of the watershed from west-slope cutthroat and bull trout to carnivores and game species.

Concern about the effect on the entire Flathead River system from mining developments in the remote Canadian Flathead has heightened the need for baseline data on water quality and aquatic communities for the North Fork watershed. In light of the recent increase in explorative activities, Glacier National Park requested funding of approximately \$300,000 to conduct water-quality studies of the North Fork of the Flathead River over a three-year period.

The U.S. Geological Survey will lead the studies, with the park and other agencies cooperating in the effort. The objective of the project is to provide baseline data on water quality and to collect habitat information before ground-disturbing activities occur. Funds for this study should be procured when Congress finalizes the 2007 federal budget.

Sharing in the concern about research needs, the North Fork Landowners' Association, along with the North Fork Preservation Association and the North Fork Compact, recently sent a joint letter to federal and state officials requesting monitoring of the water quality of the Flathead.

Also in response to mining concerns, the NFLA recently became a member of the Flathead Coalition. The coalition, comprising sportsmen, and businesses and community organizations, was formed in 1975 to launch a grassroots campaign in response to proposed coal mining north of the border, which threatened the Flathead River. The coalition revived its activities in 2004 as a result of a proposed open-pit coal mine and coal bed methane development in the Canadian headwaters of the Flathead River system.

Fire Mitigation Committee update

The North Fork Landowners' Association Fire Mitigation Committee continues to work on fire preparedness and related stewardship issues.

Grant money is still available for fuels reduction around homes. The original grant has

been extended to 2007 and the supplementary grant expires in 2009. The maximum rate has been increased to \$900 per acre, a reflection of North Fork conditions.

The committee especially encourages new landowners and those who have not yet participated in the program to obtain more details by contacting Bill Swope, program coordinator, at (406) 892-3866 or e-mail him at bhswope@centurytel.net.

After a successful workshop and field trip addressing forest insects and disease in June, the committee is considering a workshop on weeds in the spring or early summer of 2007.

The committee is applying for Firewise Community status for the North Fork. The award recognizes the landowners' commitment to mitigating fire risk to their homes and properties. Also, the committee is exploring an agency-funded weed-eradication project.

The comment periods for the Forest Service proposed Trail and Red Whale fire mitigation projects have ended. The Trail decision is expected in late 2006 and the Red Whale decision in mid-2007.

The state continues to plan for timber-sale projects in its Mud Lake and Moose sections, as well as in its holdings south of Polebridge.

Neighborhood plan progressing

The North Fork Land Use Advisory Committee met again in October to continue work on revising the North Fork neighborhood plan, which is required to be consistent with Montana's new statutory Growth Policy Guidelines. The neighborhood plan will present an overview of the North Fork, a history of neighborhood planning that resulted in the current zoning regulations for the North Fork, and serve as a guide and basis for existing and future zoning.

A draft of the Flathead County Growth Policy was released in June. Following adoption of the county's Growth Policy and further input from the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office, the committee will present the draft Neighborhood Plan at community meetings on the North Fork early next summer for public comment. The revised draft Neighborhood Plan will then be mailed to all landowners for input.

To read the current North Fork zoning regulations, visit page 142 of the [county Web site](#).

Annual financial report

The North Fork Landowners' Association ended the fiscal year with a net operating loss of \$1,318.99.

The association continues to operate on an approximate break-even basis, with the loss primarily attributable to a one-time capital expenditure of a new wood shed for the hall. Income and expenses were as follows:

Balance Aug. 31, '05	\$ 12,822.21
Plus income	4,109.26
Less expenses	<u>5,428.25</u>
Balance Aug. 31, '06	

As of Aug. 31, there were 246 members.

Heger re-elected president

Ed Heger was elected to a second one-year term as North Fork Landowners' Association president at the Aug. 5 business meeting. Molly Shepherd was elected to a second one-year term as vice president. Pat Cole was appointed secretary-treasurer by Heger.

Elected to two-year terms were North Director Jon Cole and South Director Gerry Stearns. The terms of Directors Oliver Meister and Frank Vitale will expire next year. Lynn Ogle continues to serve on the board of directors as immediate past president.

The NFLA board of directors comprises:

- President Ed Heger
- Vice President Molly Shepherd
- Secretary-Treasurer Pat Cole
- Past President Lynn Ogle
- North Director Oliver Meister
- North Director Jon Cole
- South Director Frank Vitale
- South Director Gerry Stearns

Elections are held at Sondreson Hall the first Saturday in August at sundown. To run for a board seat, talk to any board member or **Contact us**.

North Fork Landowners' Association

Polebridge, Montana

President Ed Heger
Vice President Molly Shepherd
Immediate Past President Lynn Ogle
Secretary-Treasurer Pat Cole
North Directors Jon Cole & Oliver Meister
South Directors Gerry Stearns & Frank Vitale

End Autumn 2006 newsletter