



North Fork Landowners' Association Spring 2018 Newsletter

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Greetings from the still-snowy North Fork, where record snow is reluctant to leave and even the old-timers are suffering from "cabin fever!" But the robins have arrived, so Summer must be right around the corner... and your Board has worked hard to make this one of the BEST! Be sure to post your official Calendar (inside) where you will see it often.

So "THANK YOU" to our Board, Committees, volunteers, and YOU, the members, for all the time, support, and contributions you've given that help to preserve our North Fork traditions, history, and Sondreson Hall. We look forward to seeing all of you this summer!

Larry Wilson, President
North Fork Landowners' Association

NORTH FORK FIRE MITIGATION COMMITTEE

by Allen Chrisman

Mark Your Calendars! The Fire Mitigation Committee is planning for the North Fork's 2018 Firewise Day, which will be held the morning of July 18 preceding the Summer Interlocal. The North Fork has been recognized as a Firewise Community since 2006. Come join our Celebration! Byron Bonney will be our featured speaker again. This year he will tell us about the effects of fuels treatments in the area burned by the 2017 Lolo Peak Fire south of Missoula, as well as some effects from the Sunrise Fire near Superior. Byron's presentation last year focused on the Roaring Lion Fire, and the effects of fuel treatments on fire behavior. The treatments brought fire to the ground and limited the fuels that could be ignited by flying embers. They also improved the chance of

DON'T MISS THESE:

Hall Cleanup 10am May 12
Gardener's Roundtable May 23
1st Aid/CPR Training May 29 & Aug 14.
Reservations required.
1st Wernick's Market Noon June 6
NEW: Sunday NFLA Mtg June 10 7pm
Game Night 7pm June 25 & July 30
NEW: Protect Your Home July 12
9:30 @ Sondreson Hall
Firewise Day/Summer Interlocal July 19
9:30am, then Lunch served, resumes 1pm
NEW: Coal Ridge L.O. Hike July 21
8:30 @ Merc - **make Reservations** online
Duke's Kootenai Trail July 25 10am
AUCTION & Crazy Hat Dance July 27
History Tour: Killing of Bill Kruse Aug 11
ELECTIONS NFLA Mtg Sunday Aug 12
FOOD DRIVE NFLA Mtg Sunday Oct 14



Wildfires Happen - Take Action!

PLAN. PREPARE. PREVENT.

www.firesafemt.org

2018 North Fork Firewise Day

North Fork Landowners Association

Fire Mitigation Committee

Wednesday, July 18, 2018 0930 - 1200

Sondreson Community Hall, Whale Creek

Time	Presenter	Topic
0930	Allen Chrisman	Welcome & Introductions
0935	Byron Bonney	Effects of Fuel Treatments on Wildland Fires
1045	Break	
1100	Lincoln Chute	Flathead County Community Wildland Fire Protection Plan Update
1130	Andy Huntsberger	2018 Fire Season Projections
1140	Bill Swope/ Carol Daly	FEPC Hazardous Fuels Grant Status and Opportunities
1145	Molly Shepherd	Wrap-up and Adjourn

North Fork Fire Mitigation Committee (continued)

survival for neighbors' homes downwind. We are looking forward to Byron's report on what he observed at the Lolo Peak and Sunrise Fires, and a look back at some of the fuel treatment "*lessons learned*" from the Roaring Lion Fire.

While funds in our 4th Hazardous Fuels Grant are obligated, a new grant covering the North half of Flathead County has funds available that can be used in the North Fork. The Flathead Economic Policy Center (FEPC) administers the grants and provides landowners and the committee with invaluable technical assistance. Since taking over administration of Hazardous Fuels Grants in the North Fork in 2012 from the Northwest Montana RC&D, FEPC has administered over \$153,000 in grants in the North Fork and treated 241 acres with landowner contributions totaling \$129,000.

If you are interested in applying for funds from this new Grant, or in technical assistance, **please complete the WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT REQUEST inserted in this Newsletter**. Completed applications should be sent to the address on the last page of the REQUEST. Questions can be directed to 406-892-8155.

With the retirement of our friend Mason Richwine, a FEPC forester who has worked with many North Fork landowners, Tony Willits will be taking over administration of projects in the North Fork. We look forward to working with Tony, who brings a wealth of forestry and fire experience to the position as did Mason. Bill Swope will continue to work with us, and can be reached at 406-250-9812 or at bhswope@gmail.com.

Flathead County is continuing to work on revision of its Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The Fire Mitigation Committee expects to update its North Fork Wildfire Mitigation and Planning Report in conjunction with the county's revision. We'll need community input in the process. We'll also need to update maps of the significant public and private work that's been done on the North Fork since the fires of 2003.

The North Fork Patrol

by Mark Heaphy

Originally called the North Fork Neighborhood Watch, the North Fork Patrol was organized in 1981 by Lee Downes and other members of the North Fork Improvement Association (now North Fork Landowner's Association). Following an increase in vandalism, poaching, and crime, the Flathead County Sheriff's Department worked with NFIA members to establish a neighborhood service of volunteers to keep an eye on unattended properties.

In 2014, the North Fork Patrol applied for and was granted 501(c)(4) tax exempt status by the IRS. The Patrol thus became a separate organization, independent of the North Fork Landowners Association, maintaining its own account, by-laws, and separate records.

After receiving a landowner's signed Application to participate (you can download the form from the NFLA website www.nflandowners.com/north-fork-patrol), the Patrol will check a property for evidence of trespass, poaching, and external physical damage due to snow, wind, flood, fire, animal (or human) break-ins throughout the year. Although the Patrol is not meant to be "Johnny on the spot" all the time, through the years much damage has been prevented for many properties by notifying landowners of broken windows, crushed stovepipes and vent stacks, trees on roofs, animal damage, inverters left on, unlocked doors, and the list goes on. Even though the Patrol is not a law enforcement agency, it has also worked with and helped local law authorities apprehend poachers, trespassers and other criminals, as well as given countless assists to tourists, medical emergencies, fire and smoke patrols.

In addition, the North Fork Patrol also offers a reward of up to \$500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any wrongdoers on the North Fork.

The North Fork Patrol (continued)

All suspected damage or illegal activity is reported to the landowner. If unable to contact the landowner in a timely manner, and if necessary, the appropriate law enforcement agency is notified.

The all-volunteer Patrol consists of a Board of Directors, Chairman and Treasurer/Secretary. Directors have all undergone background checks and most are members of North Valley Search and Rescue. All members have radios for communication with local agencies and each other. Funding for the Patrol comes from voluntary contributions from landowners who desire to have their property checked on during the year. Landowners do not have to be members of the NFLA to obtain the services of the Patrol. Currently, there are 130 landowners signed up for the Patrol.

EDITOR: This has got to be the BEST DEAL on the North Fork! The suggested minimum annual contribution of \$10 = a **year's worth of peace of mind.**

NOTES:FIRE CHIEF Lynn Ogle



It has been a fast and furious winter up here in the North Fork. Although a lot of landowners are still absent, we must use this time to focus on the upcoming summer, and the real possibility of fire. Remember... it's not **IF** we have a wildfire, it's **WHEN!**

Many landowners have said that we need a Fire Department. Folks, that is something that is NOT going to happen; not because we don't have the desire, but most of us are too old...in years, not in mind.

However, the biggest deterrent is that Flathead County Commissioners have stated in the past that they would NOT support another volunteer fire department, and that probably has not changed with the current administration.

But, we CAN have classes on getting ready, and being aware of what we can do as well as what we should do. When everyone starts coming back from their winter doings, we will have a class on firefighting tools, the proper clothing to wear around a fire, the type and size of fire hoses, and fire pumps. What do you need to purchase and possibly where to get it?

We will also focus on the proper way to triangulate a fire from your home, and the use of local maps and a compass.

In addition, what information is needed by Fire Dispatch to make your phone call accurate, and get help on its way to the CORRECT location in the shortest amount of time?

Please contact me at lpogle@lazys-o.com if you are interested in joining us, or have other things you would like covered in the classes.

A History of the Pole Bridge

by Lois Walker

Following the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910, settlement on the west side of the North Fork River accelerated, as some homesteaders chose to leave the Park and new homesteaders continued to arrive. Fording the river was a risky proposition, especially in spring and early summer. By 1913, settlers on both sides of the river were lobbying for construction of a bridge.

In April 1913, Flathead County agreed to provide material and tools to construct a rudimentary 400-foot bridge just south of Henshaw Ford at the mouth of Bowman Creek, if locals would donate their labor. Road Supervisor Tom Lee supervised the work and Bill Adair agreed to donate \$200 in groceries for the work camp. This first bridge lasted only one year before a pier failed and high water swept most of it away.

It wasn't until 1916 that the county mobilized to build a more substantial structure. Built in the same location and using some of the old materials, the Minneapolis Bridge Company erected a 448-foot bridge, which included three 70-foot trusses on pile crib piers, at a cost of \$2398.89. A.G. Vance was contracted to haul the construction outfit and supplies to the site. The county also extended a road from Adair's Store to the bridge, which greatly eased travel between the east and west sides. On September 30, Bill and Jessie Adair hosted a big party at their store to celebrate completion of the two projects.

In 1921, the Polebridge Ranger Station was built and tourism began to increase, although travel into the Park was restricted to daytime hours. In 1924 the bridge was planked and the east end raised. This bridge served its purpose well until February 1932, when mid-winter flooding resulted in most of the bridge again washing downstream. Funding was scarce during the Depression, and the county, understandably, questioned why it should build or manage a bridge that connected lands administered by two federal agencies. Even the National Park Service director, Horace Albright, agreed that it was reasonable for the Park Service and the Forest Service to share the expense and leave the county out altogether. Local supervisors disagreed, however, and with the intervention of state officials and congressmen, the project was pushed forward. A new bridge was constructed in 1933; the county and the Park Service shared the cost, and several local homesteaders worked on the project.

By 1947, the bridge exhibited signs of serious wear and tear and was in need of a major overhaul. By then, the North Fork Improvement Association existed, and it likewise weighed in on the subject. Rather than new construction, improvements to the existing bridge were made in 1948 and again in 1953, with the county and the Park continuing to participate in a joint management plan.

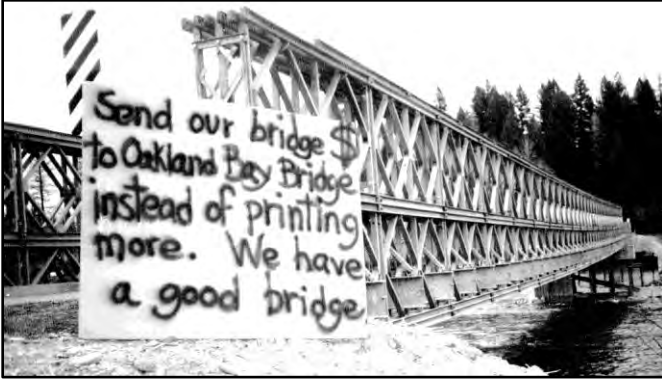
Fortunately, the bridge survived the flood of 1964, but in 1972 the west approach washed out and was repaired, and in 1973 temporary repairs were made to the bridge itself. In 1974, severe June flooding in the Polebridge area resulted in the west span washing downstream. A new bridge, similar in configuration to today's bridge, only with a single lane and a wooden deck, was completed in October of that year, featuring two steel spans on the county side and precast concrete on the Park side. That bridge served the community well until it was damaged beyond repair during the Red Bench Fire in September, 1988.



Bridge after 1988 fire (Courtesy of Glacier Park Archives)

A History of the Pole Bridge (continued)

With total replacement at hand, there was much discussion about what shape the new bridge should take. Many locals wanted to retain the traditional appearance and feel of the structure with a single-lane log structure. The Park Service, in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration, proposed a two-lane bridge (although with rustic accents) that met all current highway standards. For many months, there was no bridge and only foot or boat access to the park. Locals circulated a petition requesting that the town of Polebridge be renamed “No Bridge.” In the fall of 1989, a temporary Bailey bridge with wooden deck was installed (once the errant bolts arrived). Locals from “Temp Bridge” continued to lobby for a simple bridge or for making the Bailey bridge permanent. In the wake of the Loma Prieta earthquake near San Francisco, they posted a sign at the bridge, “Send our bridge \$ to Oakland Bay Bridge instead of printing more. We have a good bridge.”



is scheduled for 2019. Although the bridge supports primarily tourists today, in an earlier era it was a vital part of North Fork community life.

Local opposition notwithstanding, the Park received approval to build a modern bridge, which was completed in 1991. Of course, the majority of the Polebridge Ranger Station was being rebuilt at the same time. Fortunately, the bridge did not sustain any appreciable damage during the 1995 flood and has only required minor maintenance for the past 27 years. Glacier National Park is responsible for the bridge today, since it was constructed with federal dollars. A project to replace the log barriers on the bridge

The History of Tamarack Springs Academy

by Jerry Wernick

Tamarack Springs Academy, a small boarding high school in the lower Red Meadow drainage, was part of the original McIntosh homestead acquired by the McFarlands from Flathead County in the 1940s. Jerry and Linda Wernick had always desired to have a protected country home for their family, and in 1974 set out on a month-long road trip with another couple looking for secluded mountain valleys where they could pursue a natural lifestyle. One of the places of interest was the Glacier Park area, but when they tried to explore the North Fork valley there was only one realtor who was willing to spend a wintery day snowshoeing to look at property for sale “in the wilderness.” Dave Burnham drove up the North Fork with Jerry and Linda, showed them several properties, and got stuck in a snow berm on the way back to town. What a wonderful day it was!



The History of Tamarack Springs Academy (continued)

The Wernicks had taught in several Christian schools before eventually purchasing the property in 1975. When they moved there in 1980, they found it to be a great place for a family homestead - but making a living by teaching that far out in the wilderness seemed far-fetched and impractical.

That all changed when Wayne, the Board Chairman of the last school they taught at, asked them to consider tutoring his high school-aged children at their new mountain home. Wayne was a pilot with his own airstrip in the Mission Valley, and soon he was flying his teenagers to a grass strip on the North Fork where Jerry picked them up. After intensive tutoring for a couple of days, Wayne would return to retrieve his scholars. Other people heard of this unique arrangement and asked the Wernicks to open a boarding school. Advertising for students was never needed - it seemed the wilderness had its own draw. Eventually, the enrollment was limited to about 10 students per year who came from all over the US with the average stay being 2-3 years. However, some stayed all four years. So, in 1980, Tamarack Springs Academy was born.

The Academy was based on five cardinal principles - love for the Creator and wise stewardship of the natural world around us, rigorous academics, a practical work program, wilderness recreation, and community service. The students learned practical skills by working two hours each school day in the gardens and greenhouses, helping Linda bake wholesome bread, preparing nutritious meals for the school family, and a host of other projects which included helping with building construction. The first building they helped construct was the boy's bunkhouse, and they got lots of hands-on experience mixing concrete and bringing it to the cement forms by wheelbarrow for the large greenhouse. This type of work was part of the work-study class. The students also helped produce the very utilities they consumed by gathering firewood for heat and hot water, and maintaining the water turbines that created the electricity for their lights, appliances, and computers which were used to write compositions, do homework, and other projects. There was no internet available. Free time saw some students bicycling to the Merc to use the old barrel pay phones, or to buy a dessert at the bakery. But they also went skiing and tubing on our small hillside run, and ice skating on the pond. This was in addition to our Wilderness Recreation class that included mountain climbing, backpacking, hiking, rafting the river with Carl and Linda Pittman, and skiing on Big Mountain.

Students from Tamarack Springs Academy have gone on to further study in many fields. Among the alumni are business owners, mechanics, clergyman, teachers, doctors, dentists, nurses, engineers, and missionaries. For 35 years, it was a great joy for Jerry and Linda to see these young people develop their gifts and talents in productive service.

The majestic natural splendor and the welcoming community spirit of the North Fork valley made Tamarack Springs Academy possible. May these treasured values ever remain the hallmark of the alpine paradise we all share!



Editor: These lush, inviting grounds are now the site of the Wernick's Market where you can purchase fresh produce and flowers picked from their summer gardens only hours before! Be sure to stop by every other Wednesday at noon beginning June 6th. Items sell out fast, especially fruit, so don't be late.

North Fork Landowners' Association
Secretary-Treasurer
P.O. Box 1603
Columbia Falls, MT 59912



*See enclosed 2018 NFLA Calendar
for more exciting events!
Something for everyone!*

***Wednesday, July 19, 2018
Sondreson Community Hall***

***9:30 North Fork Firewise
12:00 Potluck-bring side dish
1:00 Summer InterLocal***

Wildfires Happen-Take Action!

DON'T MISS THESE EVENTS

Hall Cleanup 10am May 12
Gardener's Roundtable May 23
1st Aid/CPR Training May 29 & Aug 14.
Reservations required.
1st Wernick's Market Noon June 6
NEW: Sunday NFLA Mtg June 10 7pm
Game Night 7pm June 25 & July 30
NEW: Protect Your Home July 12
9:30 @ Sondreson Hall
Firewise Day/Summer Interlocal July 19
9:30am, then Lunch served, resumes 1pm
NEW: Coal Ridge L.O. Hike July 21
8:30 @ Merc – **make Reservations** online
Duke's Kootenai Trail July 25 10am
AUCTION & Crazy Hat Dance July 27
History Tour: Killing of Bill Kruse Aug 11
ELECTIONS NFLA Mtg Sunday Aug 12
FOOD DRIVE NFLA Mtg Sunday Oct 14