



North Fork Landowners' Association Spring 2019 Newsletter

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Greetings from the still-snowy North Fork after another long winter!! We are all anxious for summer to get here – with another Calendar packed with events and activities up and down the North Fork. The North Fork is a special place, where even with our differences, we find the time to come together and enjoy each other's company. There is something for everyone included in these pages!

So, Thanks Again to our Board, our Committees, our 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

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<i>Reservations required.</i>		
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9:30am, then Lunch served, resumes 1pm		
Pie & Ice Cream Social & Square Dance		
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Crazy Hat Dance	7 pm	Aug 3
ELECTION NFLA Mtg	7pm	Aug 11

NORTH FORK FIRE MITIGATION COMMITTEE

by Allen Chrisman

Mark Your Calendars! The Fire Mitigation Committee is planning for the North Fork's 2019 Firewise Day, which will be held the morning of July 10 preceding the Summer Interlocal. The North Fork has been recognized as a Firewise Community since 2006. Come join our Celebration! This year we'll view the video "The Era of Mega Fires" featuring Dr. Paul Hessburg. This presentation describes the current issues around wildfire in the West, and what we might do to mitigate the effects. Updates on the coming Fire Season, the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and the Status of Hazardous Fuels Grants round out the morning. Join your neighbors and don't miss this annual event!!



2019 North Fork Firewise Day

North Fork Landowners Association

Fire Mitigation Committee

Wednesday, July 10, 2019 0930 – 1200

Sondreson Community Hall, Whale Creek

Time	Presenter	Topic
0930	Allen Chrisman	Welcome & Introductions
0935	Ali Ulwelling	Era of Mega Fires Video
1045	Break	
1100	Lincoln Chute	Flathead County Community Wildland Fire Protection Plan Update
1115	Allen Chrisman/ Molly Shepherd	North Fork Community Wildland Fire Protection Plan Update
1130	Andy Huntsberger	2019 Fire Season Projections
1140	Deb Starling/ Carol Daly	FEPC Hazardous Fuels Grant Status and Opportunities
1145	Molly Shepherd	Wrap-up and Adjourn

Bears Are Emerging from Their Dens... Be Bear Aware

Tim Manley, Grizzly Bear Management Specialist

April is the month when most black and grizzly bears emerge from their dens in the North Fork of the Flathead. A majority of the grizzly bears den above 6000' in elevation and when they come out of their dens they are standing on more than 10 feet of snow. There isn't much in the way of food up there, so they head down to the lower elevations in search of vegetation that is greening up, dig for voles and ground squirrels, chase lions and wolves off kills, or dig out animals that died during the winter and are buried under the snow.

Bears are opportunistic and they are always looking for food and an easy meal. That is why it is so important that people that live and recreate in bear country take the extra steps to make sure you don't leave out any attractants that will bring bears to your house or camp and provide them with a food reward.



Photo courtesy Tim Manley

Over the years, we have radio-collared and monitored many different grizzly bears in the North Fork of the Flathead drainage. One thing I noticed is that the bears we monitored know where all the cabins and houses are located. They often will spend time feeding on clover and dandelions in the yards when no one is around, especially in the spring. I can guarantee that if you have a dwelling in the North Fork, a grizzly bear has been in your yard at some point in time. That is why it is so important to make sure that when the bears are active (April 1-December 15) that you don't leave out any garbage, bird feeders, deer blocks, grain, or other attractants that will be a food reward for bears. Once they get a food reward, they will keep returning and over time can

become quite determined to access food. This can result in bears breaking into cabins, trailers, vehicles, yurts, or tents. When bears start breaking into structures, those bears are captured and killed.

Unfortunately, through the years, I have had to remove several grizzly bears from the North Fork that had gotten to the point of breaking into structures. Last year we captured and euthanized two yearling grizzly bears in the Polebridge area because they were causing extensive property damage. Their mother is wearing a GPS collar and we left her in the wild. She has not caused any conflicts that we know of until this year. If we see she is causing property damage or becomes a concern for human safety, she will be removed.

Photo courtesy Tim Manley



Our goal is to keep grizzly bears alive and in the wild. The last thing I want to do is remove a grizzly bear from the population. I think that residents of the North Fork value the wildlife that live in the area and don't want to see grizzly bears getting into conflict. We know that people and bears can coexist in the same area if bears don't become food conditioned and start seeking out food at residences or camps.

Over the years, residents of the North Fork have made great progress in making attractants unavailable to bears. I have seen people replace hummingbird feeders with hanging baskets of flowers. Gardens have been protected with electric fencing, harvested game is hung out of reach of bears or butchered quickly and put in the freezer. Bear resistant garbage containers are being used by some businesses and homeowners. Residents that used to feed wildlife have quit doing it. Note: It is illegal to knowingly feed bears, lions, deer, elk, and moose in Montana.

Thanks for all of your efforts in helping keep bears out of conflict. I am willing to visit and help landowners secure attractants in any way that I can. Please feel free to contact me by email (tim.manley@mt.gov) or phone **406-250-1265**.

Take care and I look forward to seeing many of you this field season.

Tim Manley, Grizzly Bear Management Specialist

ARE YOU FIRE READY for SUMMER 2019?
Fire Chief Lynn Ogle

What are you looking forward to? Hiking, fishing, camping, going into the Park, and heading up the Sun Highway? Having the relatives visit and going floating? This is all well and good, but is your **PROPERTY** ready for the summer fire season?

We are not saying that you have to clear-cut your trees, nor are we saying you can't have any fun this summer. What we are saying is that the fire indicators for this summer season strongly suggest advanced preparation.



Photo credit Larry Kinsolving



Photo credit Allen Chrisman

You could have the photo on the right, or you could have the photo on the left. You have a choice: protect your home and the North Fork, or just go have fun and not be bothered with all of this.

To be a good neighbor in the North Fork, take the time to have your home and property surveyed for thinning or, at the least, fire safety. Grants may be available (you get reimbursed) – contact **FEPC Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program**, 919 Elk Park Rd, Columbia Falls, MT 59912, Telephone: 406-892-8155 email flathead001@centurytel.net If you have a larger tract of land and want the thinning done for you (you can possibly exchange the trees for their work), one option is to contact **Mark Boardman C.F., Stoltze Land & Lumber Co.**, mboardman@stoltzelumber.com Phone: 406-892-7014. Make your home safe for you, your family, friends, and your neighbors.

With this advice in mind, several informational events have been scheduled at Sondreson Hall for this summer:

Wednesday, June 26, 9:30 am:	Basic Fire Training (see Calendar for more info)
Friday, June 28, 9:30 am:	Tree Farm Field Day (see Calendar for more info)
Wednesday, July 10, 9:30 am:	Firewise & Summer Inter Local (see Calendar)

Wildfire is not our friend! If we don't take a stand on our own properties, we will not be able to stop the next fire that might be coming to your home. Remember, it's not if a fire comes, it's when a fire comes!

Management Concerns for the North Fork Flathead River

By Irv Heitz, NFLA North Director

Recently, an article by Chris Peterson in the Hungry Horse News (Feb. 27, 2019) struck a wake-up chord for quite a few full and part-time residents of the North Fork. Chris wrote that, at the February Inter Local, Hungry Horse District ranger Rob Davies had warned that a permit system was being enacted on the river. To Chris, and apparently others, the system could occur soon, though the exact date of enactment was not specified. Here in the North Fork, lots of concerns were aired to us immediately!

Lynn Ogle and I certainly did not hear the same time frame from anything Davies said at that meeting. In fact, we seem to recall from our notes that he was very vague in his statement about when permits, if they happened, could begin. But Davies was very forthright about the fact that a permit system certainly had to be part of the planning process for this river branch, and perhaps even the lower Middle Fork's whitewater section.



Photo courtesy Allen Chrisman

When I called to get clarification, M. J. Crandall, Hungry Horse/Glacier View Recreation Lead, said that discussions of any such permit system were in the “pre-scoping discussions now, and that they would then lead to development of a Scoping Document. While it is really good for the public to be engaged in the process, we are only in the beginning stages of the plan,” Crandall stated.

This was certainly borne out in the planning meetings held last summer as part of the Flathead National Forest's updated River Plan for all three forks of the Flathead River system. Both Lynn and I were part of those meetings, and can state that permits are part of the discussion of the new plan, but that nothing specific has been proposed at this time. Both Davies and Gary Danzyck, former Flathead Forest planner, thought permits would have to be part of the overall plan in the future, but no time frame was attached. Much discussion has to occur before such a process, whatever it is, is enacted by any slowly plodding government agency, especially the Forest Service. (My words)

Given the astounding growth in river traffic the past three or four years, we all know something has to give for the river not to be “loved to death.” Will locals be allowed to float the river as we always have, or will we, too, have to gain permits? Will access points be improved on the river? Polebridge is already enjoying a new access which could be completed in time for this rafting season.

Stay informed: Patti Hart and the North Fork News do a fine job of posting upcoming meetings and decisions affecting us all. You can also get on the information list for Flathead Forest meetings concerning the river plan at: <http://fs.usda.gov/flathead> Scroll down to 3 Forks of the Flathead River Comprehensive Management Plan for information.

In a firm but positive manner, all North Fork residents can voice their concerns to the Forest as to future river planning. Attend a river meeting this summer; give your thoughts on river management. There will be changes; this is your opportunity to be part of the solution!

Coal Came First

Arne Boveng

For at least 150 years, The North Fork country has attracted people seeking their fortune, either from rich, natural resources or rich experience of its natural beauty. These endeavors have included early logging projects, a little gold panning, drilling for oil, digging for coal, trapping for furs and homesteading. Except for trapping and panning, of all these pursuits, coal came first. In fact, trapping furs, may have led to the discovery of the coal beds, at Coal Creek.

One of the very first to explore the area was a gentleman by the name of Thomas Jefferson. (In the 1800's it was not so unusual to be named after presidents and other famous persons).



Thomas Jefferson, Glacier Park 1910

Uncle Jeff, as he was called, or Long Jeff, came to the lower Flathead Valley in about 1883. At the time, he was a trapper, and along with Frank Emerson, another early homesteader, was making trips up the Flathead River, as the North Fork was then known, and floating loads of fur back down the river on rafts made from logs. Years later, Judge Eugene McCarthy recalled Long Jeff hollering across The Flathead River, near Demersville, to learn if the young lad had seen a raft, loaded with furs. They had brought down two rafts but somehow lost one of them and McCarthy didn't think they ever recovered it. In this manner, exploring new fur country by river, Jefferson and Emerson very likely, were the first to find coal in the North Fork. Word quickly spread to Butte, raising the interest of many, including copper king Marcus Daly. He needed coal--lots of it--to power his giant smelter at Anaconda.

Another man from Butte, who heard the news of coal, was Patrick Walsh, whose son homesteaded in what later became Glacier Park, just north of Polebridge. Walsh, together with Jefferson, Emerson and a few others, eventually sold a claim they owned jointly, for \$50,000. This may have been the Emerson Tunnel mine but at any rate, the \$7142 check they each received, must have been a small fortune for Thomas Jefferson.



Coal also played a part in the naming of our area's natural features. Have you ever wondered why the long ridge formation above our favorite road is called Demers Ridge? Coal Creek comes gushing out of the gap between Demers and Winona Ridge. Sure, you can consult Jack Holterman's "Place Names Of Glacier Park" and there you will find your one line answer, "named for Jacques DeMers, who founded the town of Demersville". OK, but why? I mean the guy got around but what was he doing up in The North Fork? DeMers was a freighter and his town of Demersville, in part, was founded on the premise of moving his merchandise closer to his Canadian gold mine markets. At one point I even wondered if he was floating back down the North Fork River to Demersville after unloading freight in Canada.

Recently I came across an old pamphlet written by Carl O'Neil many years ago and there indeed came my answer. The Missoula Gazette, Dec. 1, 1888 reported that Marcus Daly had purchased claims at Coal Creek and with his partner, planned to start a townsite named Coalfield. The name of his financial partner? Jacques DeMers.

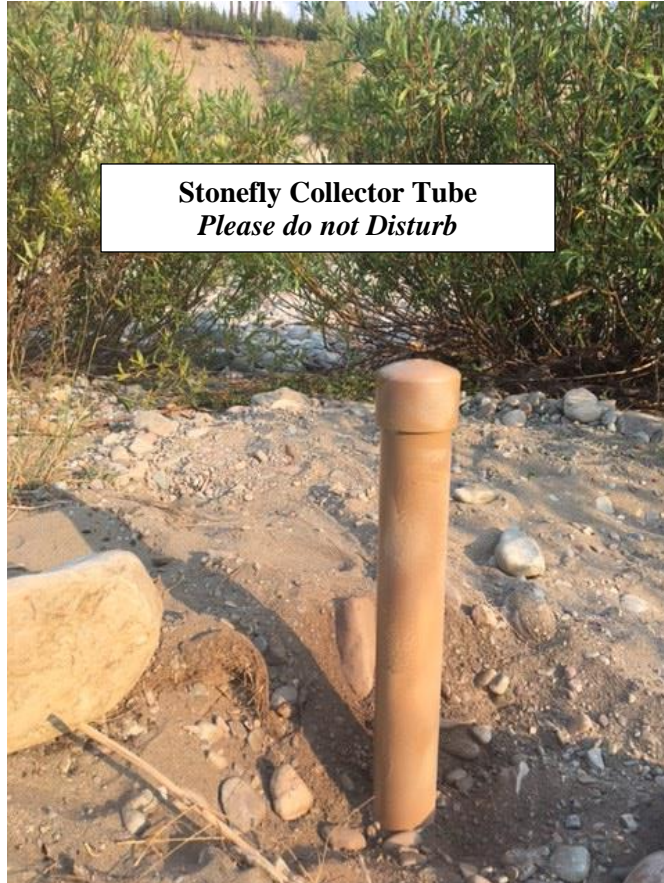
Little known Demers Ridge Lookout July, 1935

Ferde Greene photo courtesy of Museum At Central School and Ed & Nancy Gilliland

Hidden Stoneflies in River Aquifers

Dr. Rachel Malison
Flathead Lake Biological Station

River floodplains are among the most biodiverse yet endangered landscapes on earth. Floodplains provide important habitat for aquatic and terrestrial organisms from microbes, insects and fish, to amphibians, birds, elk and grizzly bears. For example, half of all the 100+ stonefly species in the entire state of Montana exist along the Middle Fork, North Fork and the main Flathead River. Another 7 stonefly species spend almost their entire lives underground in floodplain aquifers before returning to the river only to emerge as adults. Researchers at the Flathead Lake Biological Station are currently studying the vulnerability of different river and aquifer stonefly species to changing environmental conditions in the Flathead River Drainage. The Dimensions of Biodiversity project is using genetic tools to investigate the ecology of different species and how some species are adapted to live underground. This work involves collecting stoneflies from groundwater wells that have been installed in multiple floodplains in the drainage. If you are curious about the research feel free to contact Dr. Rachel Malison for more information (rachel.malison@umontana.edu or 406-872-4518) or **come listen to her presentation on August 11th, 7 pm at Sondreson Hall** to learn more about river floodplain ecology and their hidden groundwater stoneflies. Check out their website at: <https://flbs.umt.edu/apps/research/dob/default.aspx>



FORD SCHOOLHOUSE STABILIZATION TO BEGIN IN JUNE

Lois Walker, NFLA History Committee

A historic preservation team from the U.S. Forest Service has planned the first phase of stabilization for the Ford Schoolhouse. The goal of the first phase is to remove the additions that were added to the structure over the years, to begin the process of bringing the building back to its original configuration as a schoolhouse. The work will take place June 3-11.

Volunteer labor during certain phases is welcome. If you would like to help with the project, contact Lois Walker at lewalker@nvdi.com or Meghan Mulholland, archeologist with the Forest Service, at mmulholland@fs.fed.us.

This is a multiple year effort and future phases will involve restoration of the building, removing hazard trees from the property, and improving access to the site. The Forest Service hopes to eventually install exhibits, use the school as a remote classroom, and have it available for scheduled visits. The schoolhouse, built by local homesteaders, served the North Fork community as a school and gathering place from approximately 1919 to 1942.



Larry Wilson photo

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



*See enclosed 2019 NFLA Calendar
for more exciting events!
Something for everyone!*

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2019 Summer InterLocal 1 p.m.
Sondreson Community Hall***

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