

NORTH FORK LANDOWNERS' ASSOCIATION

2024 Spring NEWSLETTER



FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT and VICE PRESIDENT



Dear Neighbors,

Officially, it is still winter as the NFLA volunteers and Board work diligently to put together the “spring” newsletter. This is an important undertaking, and a very large amount of time is spent putting the calendar in place, organizing events, and generally planning for a busy summer. We would not hesitate to declare the NFLA

“community” to be home to the largest volunteer army of any community to be found west of the Mississippi. Winter is a perfect time to do this as we await the arrival of spring and the many distractions which occur when the weather improves. While this is our first attempt to write a welcome newsletter, we did take the time to read past letters reaching back to 2006. Given the timing of this newsletter it is always true that “spring is just around the corner” and this is cause for excitement given how tough some of our winters can be. Truthfully, we did have a very cold stretch this winter that caused the river to freeze over, which is always a bit exciting. However, we are probably all wishing the snowpack was much deeper as we ponder the coming summer and eventually “fire season.”

Our community lives with nature and rejoices in all its seasons. We plan and prepare while looking out for each other. We look forward to summer and the community fellowship it brings as neighbors return along with the robins. We are truly blessed to be part of this community and call the North Fork “home.”

This year promises a delightful mix of community gatherings, and we’re kicking off our popular monthly pizza get-together on the last Friday in May. These casual gatherings around the North Fork provide the perfect opportunity to share stories, laughter, and, of course, delicious pizza. It’s a chance to strengthen the bonds that make our community so special.

In celebration of our rich history, we’re thrilled to continue our history days, where seasoned North Forkers will delve into the captivating tales that have shaped our area. Additionally, our monthly meetings and speaker presentations at Sondreson Hall should be fun and informative.

Speaking of the hall, work continues on the ceiling project led by committee chair, John Stone. In true North Fork tradition, a group of volunteers is being organized to complete the project in late May in time for our first membership meeting on June 9th. As Jack’s grandfather used to say, there are two types of construction in the North Fork: rustic and rough. The ceiling project aims to maintain this tradition and should delight all when completed.

As most of you know, the road projects were not completed as planned last summer and therefore we are looking forward, without much enthusiasm, to the most special of seasons, “construction season.” Look for updates on the NFLA website as it is impossible at this point to provide a “concrete” schedule, as nothing goes according to plan in the North Fork.

As we navigate the upcoming months, let’s cherish the sense of camaraderie that defines our community. Please renew your membership dues to help support all the volunteer activities. Feel free to donate more if you please. All donations and dues are appreciated and helpful. Please attend as many of our events as you can and take advantage of the opportunity to stay in touch with old friends and neighbors and meet new ones. Keep an eye on the NFLA calendar for specific details about each event as there are changes at times. Jack McFarland and Jim Rittenburg (our President and Vice President) jointly worked in preparing this year’s welcome for the newsletter. Please let us know if you spot some passages in this newsletter written by Chat GPT as we just had to experiment with it, just a little. We wish you a wonderful summer with family and friends.

Warm regards,
Jack and Jim

PAY DUES - DONATE - BECOME A MEMBER!



You can pay dues and donate at: <https://nflandowners.org/pay-dues-donate/>

or get New Membership Information at:

<https://nflandowners.org/nflawp/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/NFLA-Patrol-Signup-Form.pdf>

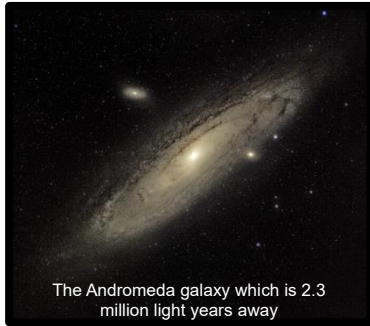
All this and more can be found on the NF Landowners' Website! <https://nflandowners.org/>

Embrace the Darkness!

Article and Photos by Jim Rittenburg

Anyone who has visited the North Fork, or is fortunate enough to live here, has experienced the magical nature of this place. Its stunning mountain views which are ever-changing from morning to night and season to season; the incredible variety of wildlife, wildflowers, and vegetation; and the pure solitude and silence that can be experienced here. But wait, there's more! There is another spectacular world that reveals itself to us at night, and that is the celestial canvas that gets painted as the sun goes down and darkness rolls in! The expansive wilderness and minimal light pollution create an ideal environment for dark skies and a mesmerizing display of stars, planets, and constellations. Away from urban lights, the inky darkness exposes the brilliance of the Milky Way galaxy, stretching across the vast expanse above. Eighty percent of the people in the U.S. are unable to see the Milky Way due to the ever-increasing light pollution that washes out the night sky across much of the country.

On a dark North Fork night, you can join the elite group of people who live under skies so dark that we can even spot the Andromeda galaxy, which is the only object beyond the Milky Way that can be seen from earth with the naked eye. When you do this, you are looking into the past at light that left the Andromeda galaxy 2.3 million years ago. How many miles is that you ask? Just multiply 2.3 million light years x 6 trillion miles per light year, and you get an astronomical number: 1,380,000,000,000,000,000 miles! So even traveling at the fastest speed possible, the speed of light (186,000



miles/second) it would take you 2.3 million years to make the journey!

So, as we move further into 2024, embrace the darkness, and learn more about the night sky and beyond! There are



great resources on our doorstep including the Glacier National Park Astronomy Program which provides learning opportunities at the

observatory at St. Mary's and at star parties at Logan Pass during July, August, and September. The star parties include talks about the science and mythology of the night sky, constellation tours, and peering through a variety of telescopes at distant celestial objects. There are also a variety of organized stargazing opportunities in the North Fork which can be found in the NFLA calendar. This includes both night-time stargazing for the night owls, as well as daytime stargazing, at our very own sun, for those who have trouble staying awake until dark on those long summer days. Also, just prior to the July NFLA members meeting, a guest speaker will provide information about the International Dark Sky Association and the Glacier National Park Astronomy program.

The inserted pictures were taken in the North Fork over the past few months, and highlight the various types of objects that can be viewed



through telescopes at the upcoming NF stargazing programs.

A 40 Year Journey

By Diane Boyd

I finally finished my memoir which is a lot about life in the North Fork in the early days of the wolf research here. The book is, "A Woman Among Wolves: My Forty Year Journey Through Wolf Recovery." It's a story that few people, except for North Forkers, know, about how wolf recovery in the West all started with one wolf, Kishinena, who walked down the Rocky Mountains from Canada and found her home in the North Fork. She survived due to the tolerance of our local community. And the story goes on from there. The book will be published Sept 10 by Greystone Publishing and will be



available through many sources. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did writing it.

The opening paragraph in the book, after Doug Chadwick's Foreword:

"My pickup banged and rattled along the potholed Inside Road in the northwest corner of Glacier National Park. Boxes of wolf traps and jars of bait slid across the truck bed. I was in a hurry, my mind focused on the wolf caught in a trap somewhere ahead in the lodgepole pine forest. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed motion in my rearview mirror. I looked up to catch the glassy reflection of vivid yellow eyes framed by a wolf's black face looking over my shoulder from the back seat. How did I get here?"

Bears on the North Fork

By Justine Vallieres, MT FWP, Bear Specialist



It was another busy summer and fall in the North Fork. The bear conflict incidents that occurred were very unfortunate. One of the reasons being that the residents of the North Fork excel at being bear aware, so it was highly disappointing to see that folks had to endure the stress and destruction that was not a result of their leaving out attractants. I generally know that I do not need to worry about the North Fork and landowners do a great job at limiting and/or securing bear attractants. The North Fork area is a leading community in this sense, so I thank and applaud you for that!

When we relocate and release bears, we look at who the bear is (male, female, family group, single bear etc.), what they have done (livestock depredations, garbage, pet food etc.), and their behavior (food conditioned, habituated to people, coming in during the day, etc.) to decide where might be the best place to relocate them. All while keeping in mind that bears never stay where you put them. They have huge home ranges and can easily cover a lot of ground. Relocation can work well on younger bears, but really just buys older bears, and us, more time to try and help landowners secure attractants. Most older bears will try and make their way home and typically get into more trouble because they are lost. Relocation is a temporary solution, so my goal as a bear specialist is to target the root cause of the issues which is securing attractants. My goal is to trap less. I can move bear after bear, but that's not the resolution. The issue of attractants still remains unless dealt with.

We have many relocation sites that we can use that are approved relocation sites. Currently we only have 3 relocation sites in the North Fork. Contrary to popular belief, we are not dumping all the problem bears in the North Fork or in The Bob. These sites are scattered all throughout North West Montana. However, the North Fork and Glacier National Park are often good spots because we know they are well secured places, surrounded by forests of the rest of the park, the Whitefish range, and Canada. That being said, I am picky about what bears get relocated up there because I do not want the locals to have to deal with "conflict bears." Usually if a bear is being relocated up there it is a bear that had a minor conflict or maybe predated on livestock, because I know there are little to no livestock up there for me to worry about a bear getting into further conflicts. The hope is the bear will go into the park or Canada and stay in the mountainous wild areas. I have declined certain bears from other regions being relocated up there because I do not want you all to feel you are just a dumping ground for conflict bears. I respect the North Fork community and I wish to keep our relationship a positive one. I try and make the best decisions for both the people and the bears, which is why this summer was such a tough one.

On August 7 I caught a female grizzly and her cub of the year in Fortine getting into unsecured garbage at one residence. I had no other calls about this particular family group, and she had no prior conflict history. I wanted to get her out of that area because that area in particular had a lot of unsecured attractants. If that cub stood a chance at life it would not be there. We relocated them to Frozen Lake as I wanted to keep the female somewhat close to her home range. She spent a few weeks in Canada in good spots away from people, which looked promising. Then I watched her make her way down into the North Fork. She then spent a couple weeks breaking into cabins and garages. The behavior progressively got worse. I caught her and her cub on September 20 and lethally removed both of them.



It was hard for me to not feel somewhat responsible for these conflicts, as I was the one who initially caught and moved her. However, that's the tough part of this job. You don't know where these bears are going to go or what they are going to do. As much as you may know bear behavior and patterns, sometimes these things are just very unpredictable. Your mind spins and you ask yourself so many questions trying to make sense of things. Had she broken into structures before she was moved and people just never called? I guess we will never know. That is why I stress to people the importance of calling right away when conflicts do occur. Was she a known bear and somehow, we just missed the microchip? I guess time and DNA will tell. Did she do this as a result of being relocated to a place she didn't know? Maybe, but again we will never really know.

What I do know is that these females are so energetically taxed trying to feed themselves and their cubs that they start doing things they wouldn't or didn't normally do to obtain food. We see this time and time again; when they are single bears they go quiet and then we see their behavior get progressively worse when they have cubs. Ultimately, a female bear's number one goal is for her and her cubs to put on enough fat for the winter and to keep herself and her cubs alive. She tried just that. She did her best. For human safety and public tolerance of bears we cannot have bears breaking into cabins. We have to draw that line, and sadly she crossed that line. Had I known she was going to go from A to Z, I wouldn't have moved her, but in this job there is no way of knowing. You just try to do the best you can do with the knowledge and experience you have. Had this been another family group, they may have done just fine and kept on moving through the North Fork, but these are individuals with different histories, personalities, and temperaments. In this job every situation is different and must be handled case by case. At the end of the day, it's important to remember we are all just trying to do the best we can do with what we have.

Here is hoping this season is a quiet one up there, and please call me when conflicts first start happening. The sooner I know, the sooner I can respond and help you guys, but also help keep that bear out of further trouble. Thank you!

Working Together to Reduce Pollution and Improve Water Quality

Submitted by Janelle Housman, Research Coordinator, Flathead Lake Biological Station | University of Montana



**FLATHEAD LAKE
BIO STATION**
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

The Montana Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program (MT PSPP) is a new collaborative network working together to reduce pollution, improve water quality, and promote engagement and education in the Upper Columbia River Basin of Montana. Based out of Flathead Lake Biological Station, the program aims to measure, document, and reduce pesticides in surface waters and groundwater. These efforts will support green

infrastructure, agricultural best management practices, community education, research on human health impacts, environmental monitoring and analysis, and science communication.

The program is led by Dr. Rachel Malison, an Assistant Research Professor at FLBS. She also developed and runs the Monitoring Montana Waters (MMW) program, which supports volunteer water quality monitoring efforts in Montana. Assisting her is Janelle Housman, the Research Coordinator for the program, and Jared Glass, a Big Sky Watershed Corps Member.

The PSPP team is looking to actively engage landowners, producers, organizations, community groups and any interested parties to work together to understand the impact of pesticides and implement actions to help protect our waters. The PSPP working area, the Upper Columbia River Basin, encompasses twelve counties in Montana: Lincoln, Flathead, Sanders, Lake, Mineral, Missoula, Powell, Granite, Ravalli, Lewis & Clark, Deer Lodge, and Silver Bow.

This program is voluntary and is being modeled after the Oregon Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program. The Oregon PSPP has successfully brought many different stakeholders together to reduce pesticide pollution before legislation needed to be put in place to better protect water resources. Rachel, Janelle, and Jared are looking forward to engaging with new partners and they are available to answer any questions or provide more information about ways to get involved. janelle.housman@flbs.umt.edu

Many may recognize Dr. Rachel Malison, as she has presented at multiple Interlocal Meetings on her research of stoneflies here in the North Fork. If you are interested in reading her stonefly publication, "Amphibitic stoneflies (Plecoptera) are integrators of ecosystem processes in alluvial aquifers of gravel-bed river floodplains" Stanford, J.A., DelVecchia, A.G., Giersch, J.J., & Malison, R.L. (2024), please contact her at rachel.malison@flbs.umt.edu.



Polebridge Bear Smart Update Spring 2024

By Suzanne Hildner

Spring is almost here and the bears know it; bears have been reported in the Swan Valley, and at least one North Fork resident has seen bear tracks. Polebridge Bear Smart (PBBS) has been busy over the winter preparing for spring and summer. Here is a list of our activities for 2024.

1. PBBS was asked to provide Bear Smart training for Montana Conservation Corp (MCC) in Kalispell this spring. Approximately 60 leaders and members of MCC crews will be trained. We have expert help providing this training from People and Carnivores. Additionally, we have lots of fun doing it!
2. PBBS will continue to provide Bear Smart training to seasonal employees in and around Polebridge. This will be our third year offering this training.
3. We will continue our Initial Response Program whereby PBBS can rapidly provide trail cameras and scare devices to

property owners who have had a bear incident and who wish to identify and/or deter their visitor. This program is offered in conjunction with Montana FWP; landowners must agree to notify FWP they have had an incident. This program enjoyed a successful start in 2023.



4. Finally, NFPA/PBBS is again offering Kodiak brand 96-gallon bear resistant garbage containers for loan or purchase at a reduced price. This opportunity is being made to the Polebridge community at below market cost with the help of grants and private donations. Purchase price per canister is \$300. Cans are available now! Please contact Suzanne Hildner sdhildner@icloud.com or (406) 253-3263 to purchase or rent. Help the Polebridge Community be BEAR SMART

The Bingo History Mystery

By Lois Walker



This mystery began on Hall Cleanup Day last May 20th. As Beth Ulrichsen was tidying up the inside of the Hall, she ventured a look inside the cabinets on the south wall and came across a mysterious medium-sized box. Upon opening it, she discovered that it contained (count 'em) 100 custom-printed Bingo cards. They are a lovely shade of green, with red shutter slides covering the numbers. Across the bottom of each card is printed North Fork Improvement Association, Polebridge, Montana 59928.

Although some of our readers may have played with these cards and are familiar with them, no one there that day recognized them. Where did these cards come from? How old are they? Who ordered them, and for how long were they used at our traditional summer game nights? Clearly, this called for some research.

Clue #1. The fact that they feature a zip code means that they were manufactured after 1963, when the U.S. first began using zip codes.

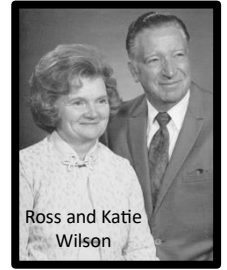
Clue #2. We have had two Bingo nights at the Hall so far this winter. As we were packing up the cards on the second night, we took notice of the labels on the outside of the box. The box was shipped to: North Fork Improvement Association, c/o Mrs. Ross J. Wilson, Golden View Wilderness, Polebridge, MT 59928. Katie Wilson was Ross Wilson's second wife. Golden View Wilderness was the name they gave their property on the east side of the North Fork Road south of Ford Ranger Station, subsequently owned by Joe and Barbie Kuzma and now owned by Tom and Betsy Holycross. Evidently, it was Katie who ordered the cards. The UPS label on the package is dated August 22, 1977.

Clue #3. The spreadsheet that I maintain, listing the officers and board members of the organization since 1947, revealed that in August 1977 Ross Wilson was elected president of the NFIA and Katie was elected secretary-treasurer. [The NFIA was renamed the North Fork Landowners Association in 2005.]

Clue #4. Conversation with Larry Wilson confirmed that Katie Wilson was an enthusiastic Bingo player. It's logical that she would have ordered the custom cards. We don't know if she paid for the cards herself and donated them to the organization or whether they were paid for with treasury funds. There are no minutes from that period to document whether they were purchased privately or by the board. We assume that the metal cage with the 75 calling balls and the master card were already owned by the group, because there are earlier mentions of Bingo being played on game nights.

So, the mystery has been partially solved, and Beth and Kevin Ulrichsen graciously offered to sponsor Bingo nights over the winter months. Little did they expect that the first night would coincide with a temperature of -30°, but 12 hardy locals showed up to participate, and both sessions so far have been enthusiastically received by the community!

If you have memories you'd like to share, please contact me: lewalker@nvdi.com



History of Sled Dog Races in the North Fork

by Lois Walker

The last time sled dog teams competed on the back roads of the North Fork was in 2017, but for many years sled dog races were an annual event that added excitement to our winters.

For 20 years, from 1983 until 2002, races were held every year, except for 1988 when there was a lack of sponsorship and funding and in 1991 when there was extraordinarily deep snow and avalanche danger. To my knowledge, there were no races in 2003 or 2004, but they were then held sporadically from 2005 to 2017, depending on snow conditions and sponsorship.

The first annual Glacier View Sled Dog Race, as it was originally known, was organized in 1983 by well-known mushers Dow Powell of Whitefish and Jack Beckstrom of Kalispell. The three-day competition started Friday morning at the north end of Whitefish Lake and proceeded over Red Meadow Pass into Polebridge. The teams encountered a blizzard coming over the Whitefish Divide. Snowmobiles that had broken trail for the teams retraced the path so that the dogs recognized where to go.

On Saturday morning about 25 people (a crowd for Polebridge in those days) lined up to watch five teams launch



from the starting line just south of the Polebridge Mercantile. One unlucky musher had his dogs turn east on Beaver Drive and lost a few minutes as people rushed to help turn the dogs around and head south via the back way to Hay Creek Road. Saturday's route covered a loop west of Polebridge. The third leg of the race on Sunday ran from Big Creek to Canyon Creek, shorter than originally planned due to poor snow conditions. A sixth team joined the Sunday competition.

To be expected, there was some added excitement during the race. One of Jack Beckstrom's dogs apparently hit its head while crossing Moose Creek on Saturday. Jack administered mouth-to-nose resuscitation and CPR to the dog. After reviving and riding on the sled for a while, the dog resumed its place in line and raced all day Sunday. Bill Hoyt of Malamute Manor Kennels on Dillon Road wasn't so lucky. On the trail from Big Creek to Canyon Creek an angry moose charged his team. The cow landed on one dog, breaking its neck, and kicked and injured three other dogs.

In Polebridge, Karen Feather, owner of the Mercantile and the Northern Lights Saloon, catered meals for the racers and their support crews. The North Fork Hostel helped provide accommodations. Veterinarian Trish Miller from Whitefish was on hand to administer any needed medical attention. The clamor at night made it hard to sleep, however. Whenever someone went to the outhouse, one dog would

howl and within seconds all the other dogs would be howling. About the time things quieted down, someone else would go to the outhouse. One year Larry Wilson commented in his weekly column, "You can't help but wonder where the dogs get the stamina to run all day and bark all night."

That first year Jack Beckstrom, with his 14-dog team, outdistanced the pack all three days of the competition and scored a commanding win over the 130-mile course. His combined times totaled 14 hours, 30 minutes, almost two hours ahead of the runner-up, Rick Petura of Eugene, Oregon.

Jack Beckstrom's wife Laurie won the 1984 three-day, 130-mile race with her 12-dog team. She won \$500 from Iams Pet Foods, presented at an awards dinner at the Glacier Inn Restaurant in Columbia Falls. In 1985, the race was again sponsored by Iams and Jack Beckstrom's business, Adanac Kennels. The race had grown to 18 teams, with participants from eight different states. By 1986, Iams had increased its prize money to \$2500, but after that the company backed out, preferring to put its money in bigger events such as the Montana Governor's Cup 500 and the Iditarod race in Alaska.

In 1989, the race was renamed the Root Beer Classic, in honor of Jack Beckstrom's favorite lead dog. The sole sponsor was Adanac Kennels. (Not to be confused, John Frederick and Sharon Costantino at the North Fork Hostel had an Irish setter also named Root Beer, but there was no connection to the race.) From 1989 to 2002, the race frequently was held the last weekend of December or over New Year's Eve and Day. Distances and events varied, depending on snow depths and weather conditions. In 1996, skijoring and short sprints were added to the festivities.

In downtown Polebridge, Karen Feather sold the Polebridge Mercantile to Chrys Landrigan in 1987, but she continued to own the Northern Lights Saloon until 2000. Dan and Deb Kaufman purchased the Mercantile from Chrys in 1994 and owned it until 2009. Dan's pastry goods were an instant hit with mushers and their crews, and the Saloon, under various proprietors, continued to provide meals and liquid refreshment.

The Root Beer Classic remained a relatively small event with very limited prize money, but it continued to attract mushers from across the region and parts of Canada who wanted to give their dogs some competitive experience. The Beckstroms, for instance, were training for the 500-mile Bear



Grease race in Duluth, Minnesota, and others were training for the annual Race to the Sky competition in Helena.

It appears that there were no races from 2003-2005. In 2005, it was due to lack of snow. From 2006-2009 the race was held in March, for some reason. In 2006 there was low attendance, perhaps because it was held the same time as the Iditarod. In 2007 and 2009, it coincided with North Valley Search and Rescue winter training in the North Fork. It seemed that enthusiasm for the race and the energy to organize and sponsor it were waning.

No races were held from 2010-2014. Will Hammerquist bought the Mercantile from the Kaufmans in 2014 and took a real interest in re-establishing the Root Beer Classic. In 2015, the race was held March 7-8. The longest race was only 18 miles that year, up Hay Creek Road, with shorter races and skijoring in the Polebridge area. Due to warm weather, the start of the long race was moved from the Merc to the Hay Creek Junction. The Saloon, then owned by Bob and Kathy Reiswig and John and Joyce O'Hara, again provided meals.

That was the end of the traditional Root Beer Classic, however. In 2016, the race was cancelled for lack of snow. In 2017, the nonprofit corporation Snow Action Sports sponsored a two-day 40-mile race, February 18-19, from Olney to Polebridge and back. Skijoring was held at the Dog Creek Lodge outside of Olney.

So, why did the races come to an end? There were various factors, no doubt. Moving the race to February or March didn't always work so well. Lack of snow, rather than heavy snow, was more often a problem. The main organizers were getting older and were also involved in other pursuits. Jack Beckstrom died unexpectedly in March 2018, at age 64. No one else stepped up or shared the same level of commitment that he did. It had evolved into sort of a vanity race for Jack. It enjoyed a long tradition, and it was a fun, relatively small race that was convenient for training purposes. It became harder and harder to line up sponsors and prizes, however, due to the high profile of larger races that Jack himself had helped establish. And the pandemic of 2020-2022 further exacerbated the situation.

But for many years, the annual sled dog races were a welcome and anticipated part of the North Fork winter calendar. Now we have only photographs and the memory of hundreds of enthusiastic barking dogs to remind us of the excitement.



Basic Fire Training Thursday, June 20th

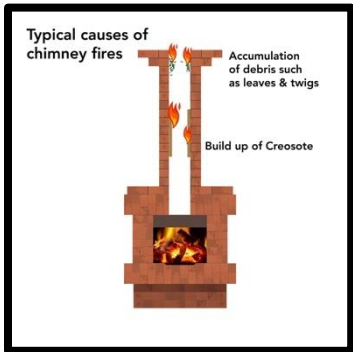
- 9:30am to 3 pm @ Sondreson Hall.
- AM. Session - Basic Chainsaw Use and Safety - Lincoln Chute
- Lunch at Hall, bring your own
- PM Session, visit to nearby Properties for Home Ignition Zone assessment and discussion



Preventing Chimney Fires

By Kevin Ulrichsen

As we are all aware, chimney fires happen in the North Fork, and spring is a great time to start thinking about preventing future chimney fires. As woodstove season comes to an end, chimney-cleaning season is upon us.



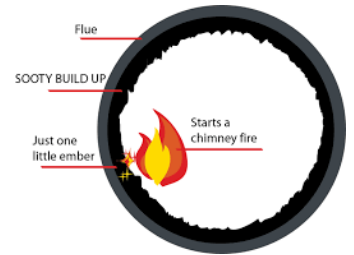
Caused by a buildup of creosote from smoldering fires, chimney fires are best prevented by regular cleaning of your chimneys. This flammable tar-like substance builds up along the interior of the chimney pipe, and is caused by incomplete combustion of

wood, going up the chimney as a liquid, and later condensing into a solid. If the solid creosote is not cleaned out of the chimney on a regular basis, it can block the flue, and ignite. Most buildup of creosote will be encountered where the chimney meets the cooler outside air at the top of the pipe.

A few early signs of creosote buildup are: not getting a good draft, smoke not going up, and the fire not burning normally, especially during and after a recent cold snap. In the event of a chimney fire, you may hear a loud crackling in

the chimney, notice a glowing red pipe, and see flames or embers emanating from the top of the chimney.

If you think you may have a chimney fire, call 911 for help first, as it may take a long time for the Blankenship Fire Department to arrive. Reach out to friends and neighbors next, to ask for help, and get everyone out of the house and to a safe location.



Remember: the best step toward the prevention of chimney fires is regular cleaning. To learn more about chimney fires and their prevention and extinguishment methods, North Forkers are encouraged to attend the talk regarding chimney fires at the annual Firewise Day at Sondreson Hall on July 10th.

Firewise and Interlocal Meetings!

Wednesday, July 10th!

9:30 Firewise/12:00Potluck Lunch/1:00 Interlocal

GARDENING ON THE NORTH FORK

By Jerry Wernick

When we first moved to the North Fork Valley in 1976 our first priority was building a simple, survival cabin to weather the long winter. Soon thereafter, we began thinking about a garden. Very few of the original homesteaders were still living in the area, and we had only met a few who could share their wisdom. We were fresh out of California with no experience in northern mountain horticulture.

One warm spring day, with eager enthusiasm born of near total ignorance, we planted our first garden. We chose crops that resembled the mid-western staples we had known in our youth—complete with pole beans at the base of a six-foot-high tepee-like structure. Needless to say, the beans never made it more than a few inches above ground. The inevitable late spring frosts wiped out all our warm climate seedings. First lesson learned.

We kept trying each year and eventually settled on the basics of a North Fork garden—rhubarb, cabbage, chard, lettuce, beets and other frost hardy plants. At first, we had no fence at all. The local wildlife were kind to us, probably because they had never encountered these strange new “weeds.” Our need for better fencing was demonstrated first by our neighbor’s friendly cow. One sunny summer day “Rosie” slipped her picket rope and headed our way. She found an open gate and ate all of our eleven developing cabbages in one go. We got the last laugh because our neighbor, Peggy’s, precious milk tasted like cabbage soup for three days. We are still the best of friends. However, Rosie’s exploits were small potatoes compared to our losses once the local deer, ground squirrels, and chipmunks tasted the new additions to the forest menu. For some reason pine squirrels seem to like strawberries better than spruce cones. Good fences and a lot of traps help, but we have decided that some sharing with the wildlings is inevitable and probably just plain fair since they were here first.

It became clear early on that growing fruit trees and heat-loving vegetables would require some greenhouses. Over the years we have experimented with three different types. The simplest is the hot house with a single layer of plastic sheeting. This produces a four-month growing season, is very hot and humid, and works well for melons, squash, peppers, shell beans, eggplant, etc. No auxiliary heat is needed, but large openable vents are essential. Next, we tried an orchard greenhouse with an openable roof. Peaches, apples, apricots and other fruit trees like the moderately warm climate. It is frost free for about eight months and requires only a few wood fires on extremely cold nights in March and October. The trees need a winter dormant period (November through February) anyway. The third environment is a year-round greenhouse that provides space to overwinter flowers, grow some winter

salad greens, nurture hundreds of early spring vegetable seedlings, and even grow some exotics for the North Fork like figs and lemons. It is also a place to seek solace on winter days. Our solarium needs about three cords of wood to keep it adequately heated during the winter.



The secret to productive outdoor gardens in our valley seems to be years of picking out rocks and replacing them with many yards of compost and local forest topsoil. The secret to successful natural greenhouses is the addition of large amounts of internal thermal mass like concrete, stone, and water to moderate overheating in summer and the extreme cold of long, frigid nights in winter.

Gardening on the North Fork does require considerable effort and innovation, but the rewards are certainly worth the effort. What's not to like about a bowl of freshly picked raspberries or a serving of creamy mashed potatoes drawn from the root cellar in mid-winter?

In recent years, a group of local gardeners began a North Fork community market. Anyone can share, trade or buy flowers, produce, and crafts at these friendly events. So, come spring, plant your seeds, smell the goodness in the freshly turned, sun-soaked soil, and always be thankful for the gift of new life.

North Fork Preservation Association News

By Suzanne Hildner

The North Fork Preservation Association (NFPA) is looking forward to the busy summer season along with the rest of the North Fork community. Founded in 1982, we work on issues important to maintaining the wildness of the North Fork. For those who are unfamiliar with our organization you can read more about us online at gravel.org. There is a link to join on the website if you would like to support our work.

NFPA is the parent organization for Polebridge Bear Smart. We also have a speaker series each summer in conjunction with our annual meeting the last weekend in July. This year we are excited to announce that local biologist and author John Fraley is our speaker. John will be discussing his latest book "My Wilderness Life". Here are the details:



NFPA 42nd Annual Meeting at Sondreson Hall, July 27th, 2024

Guest Speaker: John Fraley, local wildlife and fishery biologist, outreach specialist for MT FWP and author of "My Wilderness Life"

5:30 potluck, 6:45 short business meeting and election of officers, 7:30 presentation

If you'd like to read more about John here is a link:

dailyinterlake.com/news/2022/dec/11/john-fraley-releases-his-fifth-book-adventure-memo/

We hope to see you there!

About the North Fork Trails Association

By Bill Walker

Established in 2013, the mission of the North Fork Trails Association (NFTA) is to promote the maintenance and preservation of the historic trail structure in the North Fork Flathead area with the aim of supporting recreation, forest management, and research.

There is an extensive trail system in the North Fork, especially west of the river, but reductions in federal funding allowed it to become dilapidated and partially abandoned over the last few decades. The North Fork Trails Association formed with the goal of reversing this process.

NFTA sponsors trail work, hikes, and explorations, including some low-impact walks for folks who don't think a 10% grade has to be part of the normal outdoor experience. NFTA also offers various types of training that are open to the public, such as our annual series of First Aid/CPR/AED courses, typically held in May and July (May 21st and July 23rd this year).



As of last fall, NFTA has established a "Challenge Cost Share Agreement" with the local U.S. Forest Service office, which basically defines a mutually beneficial cooperative agreement between our two organizations. It will enable us to work more closely and effectively with the Forest Service and, in turn, enables the Forest Service to give us more support, including targeted funding, equipment and training. Yay!

Starting in early spring, the activity schedule begins posting to the North Fork Trails website (<http://nftrails.org/calendar/>). The website also contains various informational articles, including regularly updated posts on trail conditions throughout the entire area. Also, many NFTA activities are cross posted to the NFTA website (<https://nflandowners.org/calendar/>). Contact Bill Walker at wkwalker@nvti.com or 406-407-2764 for more information.

2024 NFLA Activities Calendar



Printed Versions of the North Fork Calendar can be picked up at the top of Vance Hill. There is a small black mailbox for calendars on the side of the Rittenburg mailbox. (Heading North, this is the second mailbox on the left in the group of 7 at the top of Vance Hill.)



Updates will be posted on Facebook, the NFLA website, www.nflandowners.com/calendar, and at Sondreson Hall

RECURRING EVENTS

- * **The North Fork Landowners Association Meetings:** held the 2nd Sunday of each month from June to October. Guest speaker followed by Meeting. Bring a snack to share.
- * **North Fork Worship Non-denominational services** led by Don Sullivan, will be held at Sondreson Hall each Sunday at 10.30am from June 4th until August 27th. These will be followed by coffee and social time. Please bring a snack to share. Don, twilitz1@yahoo.com
- * **Wernick's Garden Sale** - The Wernick's produce will be available for sale on June 19th, July 17th; Aug 21st and Sept 18 NOON @ the Gazebo on E. Meadow Rd. Don't be Late!

April 25 Thurs	Star Gazing , 7.30 pm @ 197 W Thunderbird Rd. Telescopes provided, Sky tour of stars, constellations, galaxies, and Nebulae. We will do some astrophotography so you will have pictures to remember.	Check with Jim Rittenburg if cloudy 215 796 1592
May 21 Tues	1st Aid/CPR/AED Class with certification 9am @ Sondreson Hall. Trainer Bob Lee. All day event, bring lunch & drinks, \$45pp, max 10	Reservation: Bill Walker 406 407 2764
May 22 Wed	Gardener's Roundtable , NOON @ Wernick's Gazebo E Meadow Rd. Share ideas and knowledge with fellow gardeners. Bring starts, plants or bulbs to share or sell. Baked goods and crafts maybe available for sale	Jerry & Linda Wernick jerrywernick@gmail.com
May 31 Fri	Last Friday Pizza Party , 6pm by the Polebridge Bridge. Bring a chair, drinks, toppings, sauce or cheese to share. Oven & dough provided.	Lorna & Jim Rittenburg 267 992 0881
June 1 Sat	Star Gazing , 7.30 pm @ 197 W Thunderbird Rd. Telescopes provided, Sky tour of stars, constellations, galaxies, and Nebulae. We will do some astrophotography so you will have pictures to remember	Check with Jim Rittenburg if cloudy 215 796 1592
June 8, Sat	Sondreson Hall Spring Clean Up , 10 am start, indoor cleaning, outside brush clean-up, wood chopping, etc. Bring tools. Noon-Volunteer Barbeque. All help welcome!	Dan Jacobson 406 249 4190 (clean up) Zoe 731 695 4528 (potluck)
June 9 Sun	NFLA General Meeting, 6:30 pm (earlier start time) @ Sondreson Hall Presentation and Updates from Justine Vallieres, FWP Management Specialist, and Suzanne Hildner, Polebridge Bear Smart (there will be an opportunity to practice with inert bear pray). 8 pm General Meeting. Bring snacks to share.	Host - Jack MacFarland 503 453 5172
June 12 Wed	Wednesday Morning Coffee with Larry Wilson meet at 10am at his cabin on Kintla Ranch Rd. Informal chat about the early days in the North Fork. Bring a chair, drinks and snacks	Lorna Rittenburg 267 992 0881
June 17 Mon	Game Night , 7pm @ Sondreson Hall. Games for all ages, including children. Bring drinks & a snack to share.	Bridget Priest 530 205 8050 Gerry Stearns gsmontana2@gmail.com
June 19 Wed	Wernick's Wed Market @ Noon, E Red Meadow Rd, meet your neighbors, buy fresh produce, flowers, baked goods and crafts	Jerry & Linda Wernick jerrywernick@gmail.com

June 20 Thurs	Basic Fire Training , 9:30am to 3 pm @ Sondreson Hall. AM. Session- Basic, Chainsaw Use and Safety - Lincoln Chute. Lunch @ Hall bring your own. PM Session visit to nearby properties for Home Ignition Zone assessment and discussion	NF Fire Mitigation Committee Allen Chrisman & Dick Leigh achrisman52@gmail.com
June 21 Fri	Summer Solstice Hike . Evening hike to Hidden Lake 6:30pm for short 3-mile hike, flat. Meet at Polebridge Ranger Station to car pool or ebike to trailhead.	Zoe text 731 695 4528
June 22 Sat	Live Band at the Summer Dance and Social . Olde time music by The Unstrung String Band. Debo Powers will lead the dancing suitable for all ages and abilities, Dance, Listen & meet your neighbors Bring your favorite finger foods and drinks to share. We will pass the hat for donations for the band, but not required.	Polly and John Preston 605 391 7131
June 28 Fri	Last Friday Pizza Party 6 pm @ the Border. Meet the Border Patrol guys, bring chairs, drinks, toppings, sauce, or cheese to share. Oven & dough provided.	Lisa and Snuffy Smith 941 504 7433
July 4 Thurs	North Fork Community Picnic 1.30pm @ Jacobson's, 61 Moose Creek Rd. Bring a dish to share, drinks & a chair. Yard games, popcorn and movies at dusk, bring blankets. No Fireworks, please.	Dan and Dawn Jacobson 406 261 9527
July 6 Sat	Square Dance at the Hall! All are welcome, no need to know how to square dance, lessons for all levels. Please, come join the fun! 7:30 at the Hall! Lemonade provided, bring snacks	Paul Marotz alfnme@hotmail.com
July 9 Tues	North Fork "Oh Hell" Tournament @Sondreson Hall, 7pm. Attention all card players- join us for a simple, fun game! Beginners welcome. Bring drinks and a snack to share	Randy Kenyon 406 890 4460
July 10 Wed	Firewise and Interlocal Day , 9.30 am @Sondreson Hall. Homeowner's Insurance in the Wildland Urban Interface - Scott Countryman . Update on the Wedge Canyon TIP, Fire Season Observations, NF Wildfire Plan update, Chimney Fire Prevention. 12:00 Lunch served by NFPA, please bring a dish to share. 1:00 pm Interlocal featuring speakers from County Rd Dept, GNP, USFS, US Fish & Wildlife, Dept of State Lands & Border Patrol.	Allen Chrisman achrisman52@gmail.com Molly Shepherd mollshep@gmail.com Bill Walker wkwalker@nvdi.com
July 14 Sun	NFLA General Meeting, 7pm @ Sondreson Hall . Speaker: Mark Paulson, " International Dark Sky Association & GNP Astronomy Program". 8 pm General Meeting . Bring a snack to share.	Jim Rittenburg 215 796 1592
July 17 Wed	Wernick's Wed Market @ Noon, E Red Meadow Rd, meet your neighbors, buy fresh produce, flowers crafts and baked goods	Jerry & Linda Wernick jerrywernick@gmail.com
July 19 Fri	Friday Morning Coffee with the Evans Family . Learn Historic & Funny Factoids about the Panorama Ranch. 10 am at the cabin where the poppies grow just south of the Polebridge turn-off. Carpool, bring a chair, drinks and snacks	Lorna Rittenburg 267 992 0881
July 23 Tues	1st Aid/CPR/AED Class with certification 9am @ Sondreson Hall. Trainer Bob Lee. All day event, bring lunch and drinks, \$45 pp, 10 max.	Bill Walker 406 407 2764 wkwalker@nvdi.com
July 26 Fri	Last Friday Pizza Party , 6pm @ the Rittenburg's Bring chairs, drinks, toppings, sauce or cheese to share. Oven & dough provided.	Lorna and Jim 267 992 0881
July 27 Sat	North Fork Preservation Association 42nd Annual Meeting 5:30 pm @ Sondreson Hall. Potluck dinner, 6:45 pm Business meeting, 7:30 pm Speaker, John Fraley, local fishery biologist, outreach specialist for MT FWP and author of "My Wilderness Life"	Flannery Freund 406 407 3863
July 29 Mon	Game Night , 7pm @ Sondreson Hall. Games for all ages, including children. Bring a snack to share.	Rayna Eyster Beth Ulrichsen 860 960 6103

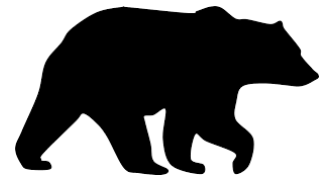
Aug 3 Sat	Square Dance at the Hall! All are welcome, no need to know how to square dance, lessons for all levels. Please come join the fun! 7:30 at the Hall! Lemonade provided, bring snacks to share.	Paul Marotz alfnme@hotmail.com
Aug 6 Tues	Look at the Sun Through a Solar Scope with Jim Rittenburg Open House from 10am to 12 noon at the Observatory at 197 W Thunderbird Rd	Jim Rittenburg 215 796 1592
Aug 11 Sun	NFLA General Meeting 7pm @ Sondreson Hall. Presentation by Rachel Malison, Flathead Biological Station, Topic: : Ecology of river floodplains & their hidden groundwater stoneflies, plus info on a new Pesticide Stewardship program & volunteer water quality monitoring. General Meeting @ 8 pm , bring a snack to share.	Cheryl Crane cherylcrane@comcast.net
Aug 12 Mon	North Fork Compact Meeting 8 pm @Sondreson Hall , open to non members, snacks provided.	Bruce McNeil cbm010@msn.com
Aug 14 Wed	Wednesday Morning Coffee with Joyce and Wendy. Polebridge in the 70's. Meet at the Polebridge Mercantile at 10 am. Bring coffee and snacks and a chair	Joyce O'Hara 978 407 2344
Aug 14 Wed	North Fork "Oh Hell" Tournament @Sondreson Hall , 7 pm. Attention card players. Join us for another simple, fun game. Beginners welcome. Bring a snack to share.	Randy Kenyon 406 890 4460
Aug 18 Sun	Annual Pie & Ice Cream Social & Square Dance 7 pm Sondreson Hall. Bring a pie, ice cream provided. Burn those calories & Square dance like the good ol' days with Debo Powers. All ages welcome.	Kevin & Beth Ulrichsen 860 960 6103 Debo 406 407 0787
Aug 21 Wed	Wernick's Wed Market @ Noon , E Red Meadow Rd, meet your neighbors, buy fresh produce, flowers, baked goods and crafts	Jerry & Linda Wernick jerrywernick@gmail.com
Aug 23 Fri	NOTE DATE Last Friday Pizza Party , 6 pm @ Hornet parking area, carpool from the Whale Creek/NF Road junction. Bring chairs, drinks, toppings, sauce or cheese to share. Oven & dough provided.	John and Zoe 731 695 4528
Sept 8 Sun	NFLA General Meeting, 6 pm @ Sondreson Hall. Presentation and K9 Demo by President Julie Balch & members of the County K9 Foundation. Meeting at 7 pm , bring snacks to share.	Steve Berg stephenberg44@gmail.com
Sept 11 Wed	Wednesday Morning Coffee with Jack McFarland, Larry Wilson and Lois Walker , meet at the Ford Schoolhouse for History & Fun Facts about life at the Schoolhouse at 10 am. Bring coffee, snacks & chair	Lorna Rittenburg 267 992 0881
Sept 18 Wed	Last Wernick's Wed Market @ Noon , E Red Meadow Rd, meet your neighbors, buy fresh produce, flowers baked goods and crafts	Jerry & Linda Wernick jerrywernick@gmail.com
Sept 25 Wed	Star Gazing , 7.30 pm @ 197 W Thunderbird Rd. Telescopes provided, Sky tour of stars, constellations, galaxies, and Nebulae. We will do some astrophotography so you will have pictures to remember	Check with Jim Rittenburg if cloudy 215 796 1592
Sept 27 Fri	Last Friday Pizza Party , 5 pm @ the Ford River Access. Bring chairs, drinks, toppings, sauce or cheese to share. Oven & dough provided.	John Stone 425 775 5550
Oct 13 Sun	NFLA General Meeting, 6 pm @ Sondreson Hall. Speaker, Teagan Tomlin, Executive Assistant, Office of the Superintendent. Topic: Geologic History of Glacier National Park (An overview of the forces and processes that built and shaped the landscape of Glacier National Park.) Meeting at 7 pm , bring snacks & items for the food pantry.	Randy Kenyon 406 890 4460

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



Don't Forget to Renew your
NFLA Membership
or
Consider Becoming a New Member,
all are Welcome!
Contact John Zardis
treasurer@nflandowners.org
or visit NFLA Website
nflandowners.org for forms

**North Fork Patrol
Signup**
Application Download
available on the NFLA
Website
nflandowners.org



NFLA Guest Speakers and Membership Meetings

Open to all who would like to come!
The second Sunday of the month, June through October
Guest speakers at 7pm, Meeting begins at 8pm
(1 hour earlier in September and October)



2024 Scheduled Speakers:

- June** - Justine Vallieres, FWP Management Specialist, and Suzanne Hildner, NF Bear Aware (there will be an opportunity to practice with inert bear spray).
- July** - Mark Paulson, "International Dark Sky Association & GNP Astronomy Program"
- Aug** - Rachel Malison, Flathead Biological Station, Topic: Ecology of river floodplains & their hidden groundwater stoneflies plus info on a new Pesticide Stewardship program & volunteer water quality monitoring.
- Sept** - Presentation and K9 Demo by President Julie Balch & members of the County K9 Foundation.
- Oct** - Teagan Tomlin, Exec Asst, Office of the Superintendent, Topic: Geologic History of GNP