



PUBLIC LAND
WATER ACCESS
ASSOCIATION
• EST 1985 •

THE KEY QUARTERLY

Unlocking Access to Montana's Public Lands & Waters

Summer 2023

Single Track Blues

by PLWA Vice President Matt Lussier

Tire pressure, check. Shock and fork pressures, check. Water, tools, snacks, headlamp and extra tube, check. Helmet, shoes, gloves, pack, glasses, check. You hop into the saddle, clip in, and push off. As you start the ascent, your heart rate quickens, your blood pressure rises, your breathing speeds up and you begin to transition into the rhythm of the climb. As you push harder, up through the switchbacks and your breathing and heart rate begin to quiet your mind, you're taking in the recently bloomed arrowleaf balsam root, lupines, and glacier lilies. You reach the top of the climb and soak in the sounds, smells, and sights of the forest. You scarf down a quick snack and push off down the downhill portion of the loop, then out of nowhere, in the middle of a corner, you're suddenly forced to stop in the middle of your favorite trail. You get off your bike and stare incredulously upon a newly constructed gate. Then you remember the "For Sale" signs near the trailhead a few months prior. Posted on the gate, a sign reads: "KEEP OUT PRIVATE PROPERTY SMILE FOR THE CAMERAS". While your blood begins to boil and you try to wrap your head around how this could happen, you recollect that some friends and you had talked about the possibility of someone with no interest in public access ending up with this land, then the reality sets in; you know that you could, and should, have done more to prevent this sort of thing from happening.

While the above scenario may or may not have happened to you personally, it's easy to imagine how you would feel if it were you in that situation. The reality is, this happens all the time, and it happens in Montana. While we (public land users) have amazing mountain biking advocacy groups and non-profits leading the charge on sustainable trail construction, advocating for changes

to lessen the impact on wildlife or to appease other types of land users, and fighting for easements and access, the fact remains that everyone needs to do more. We need to do more to protect public access to our favorite places, improve our image among the rest of the populous, and most of all, be responsible for our own actions and inactions. While signing up as a donor for a trail rehabilitation program and going to a trail maintenance day once in a while may seem like enough, and it is a start, there is always more one can do. When you're out riding and you encounter a tree across a trail, do you clear it? When you're riding in early season and there's a puddle, do you ride through it, or do you go around it and create more erosion and damage to vegetation? Do you practice brake modulation rather than skidding and do you use proper body positioning when riding through unbanked corners and steep sections? Do you ride off trail for no reason? While it's understandable that we are all pressed for time, and with the pace that our worlds move in, we don't always have the time, nor can we expend the energy necessary to always go the extra step. This leads me to this next part.

With the influx of people moving to Montana, our ecosystems are being threatened, our economies and mindsets are changing, and our public land and water access is changing. A larger population means more money and more change. Thinking about the future of mountain biking in this state is just part of the conundrum, but we can all make a difference if we choose to do so. There is also an upside to population growth and the influx of more money, and that is that we have more people to stand up to attacks on our public lands and access to those areas. The addition of more money can also help to fight

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the increasing number of access issues that arise. Depending on where you live in Montana, your access may be right out your door, or it may be an hour's drive away, but what we all share as Montanans is the right to access those public areas. Please consider donating to non-profit access work and groups, whether it be a monetary donation, your time or both; the more advocates that our public lands and waters have the greater our ability to make a difference. Try this: when you notice an issue or

hear of something that requires action, write it down. Then set a reminder in your calendar and do something about it. Speak up for your public lands and waters - they can't speak for themselves!

To report an access issue visit PLWA's website and visit our [AIRS program page](#). To learn about your access rights in Montana, visit our [Know Your Rights page](#).

Making Wild Chokecherry Jelly

Montana is filled with wild Chokecherries. Around mid- to late August is a great time to harvest them and make some jelly that keeps all year long. Ensure that you have the proper license for the public lands that you are harvesting them from, are away from roadsides and places that may have been sprayed, and have a reliable field guide to identify the plant. Ball makes a great guide to canning and preserving for beginners. Here's a simple but fantastic recipe adapted from [A Ranch Mom's](#) website that turns out fabulous jelly every time!

CHOCKECHERRY JUICE RECIPE

- Collect 1 gallon of ripe chokecherries, rinse, and place whole berries into stock pot.
- Cover with water and boil for 45 minutes until soft & red, mashing occasionally.
- Drain juice through cheesecloth or strainer into bowl (do not press).

JELLY RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

- 3½ cups chokecherry juice
- ½ cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon butter or neutral oil
- 1 pkg dry pectin (1.75 oz)
- 4½ cups sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

- Pour juice in pot.
- Add pectin, stir.
- Bring to a boil, add sugar and butter or oil.
- Boil and stir for 2 minutes.
- Remove from heat, skim foam from top.
- Ladle into hot sterilized jars.
- Process in hot water bath for 5 minutes or time adjusted for altitude.
- Cool undisturbed for 24 hours.

PLWA
PARTNER:

Madison-Gallatin
Trout Unlimited



www.mgtu.org

Conserving, Protecting, & Restoring SW Montana

The Madison-Gallatin Chapter of Trout Unlimited was formed in 1968 because of mutual concerns over southwest Montana fisheries, including habitat impacts and the threat of a dam on the Yellowstone River. Other landmark issues the Madison-Gallatin Chapter has been actively involved in were the implementation of the wild trout management program in the 1970s and the efforts to protect stream access in the 1980s. Most recently the Chapter has been active in native fish restoration issues involving the arctic grayling and the westslope cutthroat trout.

Today the The Madison-Gallatin Chapter has a rich heritage of strong advocacy for the Madison and Gallatin watersheds and our native and wild trout. MGTU is currently taking "Statements of Interest" for new members of the Board of Directors. Joining the MGTU Board of Directors is a rewarding experience for those interested in local conservation efforts. We are an active board that meets monthly September - May. Interest Statements should try to include a brief bio, brief explanation of why you like to be on the board, and any special skills and/or areas of interest. If you are interested, please visit MGTU's website [here](#) and e-mail us your statement today.

The Passage of HB 521 Means More Support for Public Lands

by PLWA Secretary Carol Fox

Do you recreate at state fishing access sites, school trust lands, wildlife management areas or wildlife habitat protection areas? If like most of us the answer is yes then you'll want to know about a new state law requiring a Conservation License to use these areas.

This spring the Governor signed House Bill 521. Effective July 1, 2023, this new law requires all those who use any of the state's 330 fishing access sites, 77 wildlife management areas, or school trust lands to have a Conservation License to access those lands. This license is not required to use state parks. These license dollars will help pay for the maintenance and conservation of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) lands. For Montana residents, annual license costs are \$8 for adults, \$4 for seniors, and \$4 youths. For non-residents, it costs \$10. Licenses can be purchased at any FWP office or online. More information about Conservation Licenses is available through FWP's [website](#).

Prior to the passage of HB 521, only hunters, anglers, and trappers were required to purchase a Conservation License. In the [Summer 2021 Key Quarterly](#), I advocated for purchasing hunting and fishing licenses if using state public lands and waters even if you don't hunt or fish as a way to contribute funding directly to the conservation and management of fish and wildlife resources in Montana. This was due to the fact that state survey data indicated that 51% of the users of state fishing access sites were not anglers and did not contribute to creation and upkeep of these sites via purchase of a fishing or conservation license. The passage of HB 521 fixed that problematic inequity, better matching funding to users. As noted in the previous article, there's a strong connection between public access and conservation funding through the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses, including the Conservation License. The quality, quantity, and diversity of wildlife habitat, and our enjoyment of wildlife through public access depends on successful wildlife conservation and management programs that are directly funded by license sales.

We owe our gratitude to Rep. Denley Loge (R-St. Regis), who sponsored HB 521, and to the legislators, Governor, PLWA members, and PLWA conservation partners who supported the bill's passage. It is a small step in the right direction of developing and implementing equitable and effective funding mechanisms for the conservation and management of public lands and natural resources, and to include consumptive and nonconsumptive recreationists in efforts to protect our valuable outdoor resources.

How Your Dollars Protect Public Access

Access Issue Reporting System [AIRS]

PLWA's AIRS program is the first of its kind and tracks access issues across the state while also increasing the number of closures investigated annually.

Public Access Investigation Certificate Program [PAIC]

Our PAIC Program educates community members in access investigation and advocacy allowing for grassroots' activism and partnership with other organizations and communities across the state.

Legislative Efforts

PLWA works to ensure the creation and passage of bills like HB 486 that prevents illegal obstruction of public roads.

From the President's Desk

It is exciting we are headed to the first in-person Annual Meeting in a long time. I think 4 years. Drew and her team have created an excellent program and we expect an above average attendance at the meeting and the Montana Public Lands Festival which will follow.

PLWA is doing our best to keep up with public access issues in a challenging time. We have added people to the payroll with an interest and motivation to protect access and we are answering the call. As complaints rise, we still do not have the capacity to address and solve all the issues that come to us, but with the help of the AIRS program and additional infrastructure, we are tracking and evaluating the nature of Montana's access burden and more complaints than ever.

My message is short because of our upcoming meeting where we will be discussing issues important to our membership and the public in attendance - I encourage everyone to attend and learn about how you and PLWA can tackle Montana's access issues together.

Remember what Texas Bix Bender says,

"You don't need decorated words to make your meanin' clear. Say it plain and save some breath for breathin' "

Bernard Lea

2023 Board Elections: Meet the Candidates

The following candidates for Board of Directors' positions standing for election at the 2023 Annual Meeting have completed the application process and received the support of the current PLWA Board of Directors to run for election. Calls for applicants were made this spring and interested applicants reached out to PLWA's Executive Director, members of the Board of Directors, or were nominated by current PLWA members. Interested members submitted statements of interest and resumes, and went through the interview process. Per the articles of incorporation of PLWA, the position of Director should be a member and "be open only to those persons who in good conscience agree with the purposes and objectives of this corporation." Elections will occur in person during the Annual Meeting on August 19, 2023 at the Gallatin County Fairgrounds at 3 PM. All PLWA members in good standing are eligible to vote. Please renew your membership before that time if you wish to participate. Current board member Chad Zeitner will stand for re-election - his bio can be found in the [About Us](#) section of PLWA's website.



Beth Brennan
Bozeman, MT

Thank you for this opportunity to stand for election to serve on the PLWA Board. My name is Beth Brennan and I run TREAD Agency, a marketing and PR agency based in Bozeman, Montana. My marketing focus is in the outdoor recreation industry. I am also an advocate for conservation, public lands and public land access. I am involved in Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Tread Lightly and also service on the board on the Specialty Equipment Manufacturing Association Board as part of the SEMA Business Women's Select Committee.

I believe that my marketing and PR background can help spread the word and assist greatly in the promotional side of PLWA whether it be publicizing events or seeking media placements that will help cast a wider net in telling the PLWA story. I am also able to help in other marketing arenas such as branding and messaging. I am passionate about public land access and how I might contribute my skills and background to help further PLWA's mission.

My name is Dylan Pipinich, and I was born and raised in Anaconda, MT; on the edge of the Pintler Wilderness. By high school age, there were very few lakes in the Pintlers and Pioneers that I hadn't fished, very few drainages that I hadn't hunted, and very few peaks that I hadn't climbed. I completed my undergraduate degree in Bozeman, MT, and later moved to Butte, MT where I still reside.

I've managed \$20 Million heavy civil construction projects, including access negotiations for EPA directed Superfund Projects, and have also supervised and directed land records and data systems, planning and building codes, and many citizen advisory boards for Butte-Silver Bow County. The last fifteen years have given me an extensive and very unique knowledge of private property rights, public property rights, and relationships with land management agencies such as the Forest Service, BLM, FWP, MDT, as well as others. I believe this is all very applicable to PLWA's mission and programs.



Dylan Pipinich
Butte, MT

More importantly, my dedication and resolve to recreating on public lands and waters is much more of an asset. To be honest, I believe the ability to hunt, hike, and fish on public lands has had more of an impact on who I am today than anything else. It has taught me community, camaraderie, self-worth and drive, and many other virtues. It's a place to find one's self, and without it, I would be a very different person. I've experienced an access issue myself, and lost a very close friend to cancer during the process. It was eye opening to see how fast you can lose something and how hard it is to get it back. One of my biggest regrets in life is that I didn't do more to advocate for public lands until I was forced to. I won't have that regret again.

Its very important to me that my two children have the same opportunities in life that I have, and for me that starts with public lands. I've worked with Drew and Haley on an access issue and couldn't be any more excited about the accomplishments PLWA has made and where its heading. In my mind, there are few endeavors more righteous.



Codi Hanson
Toston, MT

As a passionate native Montanan, I am inspired by the organization's mission and the critical work it undertakes to educate and advocate to protect access to our public lands. I am Codi Hanson, and with a background in business management, I bring years of experience that aligns to support the goals of PLWA. I recently completed PLWA's Access Investigation Certificate program this spring and look forward to utilizing that knowledge to support the mission. I have experienced firsthand the frustration of being intimidated off public land not knowing what resources were available to address the situation. Now more than ever with Montana's growth there is a need for education and awareness surrounding rights and access to public lands.

I am particularly drawn to the collaborative spirit that PLWA embodies. In my current role as a business owner in the outdoor industry, I have the opportunity to collaborate with several like-minded organizations and individuals to share PLWA's message. Furthermore, I am impressed by the positive impact that PLWA has achieved in the past, and I am eager to be part of the team that will guide the organization toward even greater success in the future. Though I have not served in this type of capacity previously, I firmly believe that my combination of professional experience, leadership qualities, and a genuine passion for Montana's public lands will enable me to make meaningful contributions to the board's efforts and help shape the direction of PLWA.

Summer 2023 Updates from Public Access Investigator Haley Sir

A big thank you to all those that reached out after our last access update to assist PLWA on some of our ongoing issues. As our membership and volunteer base grows, so does our clarity on many of the dozens of issues we are currently working on. We have had multiple members contribute their time to help update access issues and that help is invaluable in a state as big as Montana. Below is a short summary of our ongoing investigations:



Pishkun Supply Canal Road: The Pishkun Supply Canal Road is a 13-mile stretch of unimproved gravel road whose use has been enjoyed by the public for over 100 years. The road parallels the US Bureau of Reclamation's canal that extends from the Sun River to Pishkun Reservoir. Teton County officials do not claim ownership of this road, but rather claim the mileage for compensation through the MT fuel tax reimbursement program. PLWA was consulted on how to establish a public use designation to perfect access for the public and surrounding landowners. PLWA's recommendation is to establish the route as a county road via the state's petitioning process (MCA 7-14-26). PLWA provided a letter of support in 2021 for grant funding to ensure public access via the Sun River Bridge crossing on this current road in question. We sincerely hope the current easement holders continue to work with Teton County to ensure public access in perpetuity.

Brewer Road: The BLM has installed a sign clarifying public access at a gate located on public lands in Choteau County. The gate shall remain unlocked for public use. Additional signage at the boundary of private/public lands on Brewer Road was erected to prevent trespassing. A big thank you to the BLM employees that took this issue on and were willing to add clarity for the public who wish to use this part of their public lands.

Fiddle Creek Road: We received a recent complaint regarding

Fiddle Creek Road in northern Park County about ongoing issues accessing the Shields River. After further investigation by a volunteer, we were able to verify that signage indicating that reasonable public access exists is still up.

High Water Mark: In the summer months, we regularly receive inquiries regarding high water mark issues. According to MT's Stream Access Law, members of the public are able to move freely along navigable waters below the high water mark for recreational purposes. The law does not allow you to enter posted lands bordering those streams or cross private lands to gain access to those streams. To learn more, visit www.plwa.org/know-your-rights. If you have questions regarding a specific area, it's best to reach out to your local FWP authority to verify access.

Avalanche Gulch: In 2021, a landowner closed off access to two USFS trails historically used by the public in the bottom of Avalanche Gulch in Broadwater County. The Forest Service has an established right-of-way for the road, but it falls short (as little as 35 feet in one case) of the established trailheads. The local FS office and Capital Trail Vehicle Association (CTVA) sought grant funding to re-route the trailheads and restore access. PLWA wrote a letter of support, commending the efforts of the

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As the summer wildflowers carpet our mountain meadows and we all sigh in relief at afternoon rain, I realize how lucky I am to live in a state with a wealth of public lands and waters at our doorsteps.

I invite you all to come to our Annual Meeting and hear about the work PLWA has been doing over the past year to protect your access to those very lands and waters,

and to attend our Montana Public Lands Festival to celebrate with us and our partners in outdoor advocacy. It has never been more obvious that success will be achieved through partnership, and we are look forward to seeing you all on August 19th.



Drewry Hanes, MS, MPH

Townsend Ranger District and CTVA. We were informed this summer that the grant was awarded in full and work would start late summer/early fall to re-route Bilk Mtn. Trailhead and Doolittle Gulch Road back into the public's hands.

Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest & Forest Service Road 924: Through conversations with local FS officials, it is clear they intend to start the Travel Management Planning process in fall/winter of this year. This process is expected to take 3-4 years. We have been informed that until this process is complete, there is little to be done about access issues and conflicting agency documents throughout the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. It is unclear which documents and recommendations the public should currently follow when recreating in these areas as visitor maps, executive orders, and varying agency maps contain conflicting information. In the meantime, FS Road 924 in Beaverhead County remains open for exclusive vehicular use by the surrounding private landowners. We have also been informed the BLM will not be undertaking travel management updates in the Big Hole Valley anytime soon.

Seeking Knowledge on FLPMA Conversions: While investigating an ongoing access issue in Musselshell County, PLWA was informed that many counties are now converting RS-2477 roads to Federal Land Policy & Management Act (FLPMA) rights-of-way. We would appreciate more information on how this conversion works and the potential for roads to be abandoned or disregarded in the process. Anyone with information or case examples where this conversion is being applied is encouraged to reach out to haley@plwa.org

“Property owners have gradually forced traffic further toward the river using fencing, staking, and other markers. In many places, the once well-marked trail is now non-existent or impassable.”

Loch Leven: Volunteers performed a site visit after a call to action in our last Key Quarterly and it seems issues remain at Loch Leven Fishing Access. Several photos were provided indicating that many of the properties appear to be encroaching into the perfected public easement, which designates 50 feet horizontal to the high water mark. Property owners have gradually forced traffic further toward the river using fencing, staking, and other markers. In many places, the once well-marked trail is now non-existent or impassable. Trees, rocks, and other obstacles have been placed to force travel down onto the slope. The signage for the trail/easement is present on the upstream end, but needs replacing. FWP has been unresponsive in our many attempts to contact them regarding this issue. PLWA would encourage those attempting to use this public access to reach out to their local authorities. We will continue to monitor the situation and push for the entirety of the 50 ft easement owned by the public.

Crazy Mountain Land Exchange: PLWA submitted [comments](#) on the Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) for the East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange in December 2022. We are still waiting for a response.



Montana Public Lands Festival & Annual Meeting: Saturday, August 19th from 3-8 PM in Bozeman, MT!

PLWA is excited to host our Annual Meeting in person for the first time since 2019! From 3-4 PM at the Gallatin County Fairgrounds in Bozeman, MT we will assemble to vote on our

updated Bylaws, new Board of Directors Candidates, and hear updates from the past year from the Board President, Treasurer, and Executive Director. There will also be time for Q & A with members, Staff, & Leadership. The meeting is open to the public. Information can be found on our website. **Members must be in attendance and in good standing to vote.**

across the parking lot at the Fairgrounds. There will be music, food, drinks, a panel with outdoor access experts, and a silent auction with lots of great items to raise money for public access in Montana. Speak with partners from great nonprofits advocating in the outdoor industry and in conservation, and meet others who support public access. Entry is free and there will be fun & activities for all ages!

Following the meeting we will host our first ever Montana Public Lands Festival on the Treasure State Lawn & Stage

PLWA is still looking for volunteers to work shifts before and during the event. If you have 2 hours to volunteer please reach out to Ashley Helm: ashley@plwa.org

Keep up with us here:



[publiclandwateraccess](#)



[plwamt](#)



www.plwa.org

MEET KATIE REAMS

PLWA Welcomes Director of Member Services

PLWA is thrilled to welcome our new Director of Member Services Katie Reams to the team. Katie graduated with degrees in Environmental Studies and Ecology from the University of Colorado before going on to pursue a graduate degree in Physical Geography from Western Washington University. While working as a Hydrologic Technician for USGS Katie's team published papers on topics such as *Vegetation Succession in the Easton Glacial Foreland* and *Suspended sediment, turbidity, and stream water temperature in the Sauk River Basin, Washington*. She also worked as part of the social media team to raise awareness of water science issues.

Katie's most recent work has been as an Administrative Assistant to an Independent Financial Planner, working with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, helping optimize client interactions, and helping improve engagement with teams and their clients. She is also incredibly proud to be raising two great Montana kids and working to make sure they have the opportunity to grow up with a lifetime of wonderful experiences on public lands and waters.

“ The secret is out about Montana. As we see unprecedented growth, access to our incredible landscapes is what makes Montana so desirable and why we need everyone to join in the fight. ”

Welcome to PLWA Katie! What made you feel like being a part of this organization would be a good fit?

PLWA feels like a good fit for me because I am passionate about its mission and about providing member services that foster relationships, build engagement, and continue the growth of this organization. I appreciate PLWA's history of resilient individuals who have fought to protect public access since 1985. I am honored to now be a part of the work to ensure that Montana's public lands and waters are available to all who seek them.

How do public lands and waters play a role in the life of your family?

I grew up camping, hiking, skiing, and hunting public lands in the mountains of Colorado, which deeply shaped me as a child. Being able to share the same experiences with my children now is what makes public lands sacred for me. We often go hiking,



camping, skiing, hunting, or looking for rocks (kids love rocks!) on public lands throughout Montana, but mostly up the Gallatin Canyon and around Gallatin Gateway.

What do you hope to bring to PLWA as Director of Member Services?

I hope to bring organization, consistency, and a friendly face to Member Services. A lot of these tasks have been done by volunteers (which is amazing some of you volunteer to do this work-thank you!) but hopefully, by having one person dedicated to overseeing the member services, it will allow us to stay on top of things and utilize information to better serve our members. I am excited about creating more personalized experiences for our current members and engaging new members that we may not be currently reaching.

Why do you think it is important for everyone to be involved in the fight to protect access in Montana?

There are so many different ways to enjoy public lands and waters that protecting access is something everyone can benefit from. The secret is out about Montana. As we see unprecedented growth, access to our incredible landscapes is what makes Montana so desirable and why we need everyone to join in the fight. I'm eager to get to work!



PUBLIC LAND
WATER ACCESS
ASSOCIATION
· EST 1985 ·

2100 Fairway Dr., Suite 211
Bozeman, MT 59715
406-690-0960
www.plwa.org
plwa@plwa.org



Drew Mountain Biking on Public Lands

PLWA *Who We Are* Highlight: Drewry Hanes

Drewry is the Executive Director of PLWA. Growing up as the daughter of a cattle farmer who served on committees for both the National Cattleman's Association and the National Audobon Society, Drew formed an appreciation for the complexities and importance of the role lands and waters play in our lives.

Drew began her career with a focus on Africa – pursuing wildlife management research and conservation program design in East Africa before completing degrees in African Studies and Social Anthropology at SOAS in the UK. Returning to the States to study, she pursued graduate degrees at Columbia University as a Family Nurse Practitioner and in public health with a focus on Population & Family Health. After thirteen years in the health field, Drew returned to her roots in conservation and access joining PLWA's staff in 2020.

An avid hunter, angler, mountain biker, and forager, Drew values every day she spends on Montana's public lands. After seven years of involvement with PLWA as a supporter, member, and Board Member, she is proud to now serve the organization as its Executive Director.

Quote of the Quarter:

“Tomorrow is not guaranteed. If it is worth dreaming about, it's worth fighting for now.”

– Rebecca K. Sampson