



PLWA

The KEY



Unlocking Montana's access to public lands & waters

Summer 2015

Issue 20

Why I moved to Montana, Stream Access!

Video interview with Dr. Bill Mealer

At PLWA's summer 2015 annual meeting in Bozeman, PLWA member, Dr. Bill Mealer, stood up and gave an inspiring testimony why he chose to relocate his family and surgical practice to Montana. Bill is an avid conservation hunter and angler, husband and father to 2 sons, who 20 years ago was deciding between several western states - Wyoming, Oregon and Montana.

He wanted a western state, without a lot of people, wilderness resources and public lands, a place to renew their energy and renew their souls. After some fishing experiences in Wyoming, Bill chose Montana, primarily because of its stream access laws.

“Having moved to Montana, and practiced here... in southwest Montana, for now over 15 years, I think it was a good move. I made the right decision, I'm glad that I came here. Public land is very important to me and what Public Land/Water Access (Association) is doing in Montana is very, very important to me and I supported them for these reasons.”

Montana's stream access not only benefits residents, but helps to attract businesses and professionals to our great state. It is also a component in one of this states leading multi-million dollar industries – tourism.

View Dr. Mealers PLWA video interview on our new PLWA YouTube Video Channel (more info below).

The KEY is published by the
Public Land/Water Access Association
www.PLWA.org

CONTACT PLWA

Phone: 406-698-6021

Email:

Mail: Public Land/Water Access
Association, P.O. Box 80987, Billings, MT
59108

President: John Gibson

Vice President: Dennis Grundman

Secretary: JW Westman

Treasurer: Bernard Lea

The KEY editor: Kathryn QannaYahu
thekey@plwa.org

PLWA Annual Meeting

New Pilot Bozeman/Livingston Area Chapter

Adam Schafer, the Director of Policy Engagement from the Governors office was one of the guests.

PLWA had a short presentation and explanation on the Russ Vance Endowment Fund, which will be covered in detail in the Fall issue of The KEY.

Emma Lynn, of Montana PGS gave us a preview of two promotional PLWA videos being produced. Great to see all these founding members and their inspiring vision.

John Gibson and Dennis Grundman were re-elected President and Vice-President of PLWA.

During the meeting it was decided that PLWA needed a chapter in the Bozeman/Livingston area. The board appointed Dale Spartas as the lead, with Kathryn QannaYahu assisting. PLWA looks forward to building a broader membership of public access advocates in the area. If you are interested in participating, please contact both, Dale at sparky@spartasphoto.com (570-8244) & Kathryn at kathryn@emwh.org (579-7748).

Montana State University hosts a Catapalooza event for new students every year, to learn about state and local community organizations. PLWA Bozeman Chapter is registered for the 2 day event, Aug. 20 & 21st, from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm. Spreading the love of PLWA's mission - to maintain, restore, and perpetuate public access to the boundaries of all Montana public land and waters - with our younger generations.

2015 Shaping up to be good for Public Access

Presidents Message

by John Gibson

The year 2015 is shaping up to be a very good period for public access in Montana. There are two very big announcements and several lesser ones.

The first is the opening of the Cherry Creek drainage by a new road that the private land owner constructed to a point on the forest boundary, then the Gallatin N.F. has continued by building a road that ties into the original old road on the forest. The road was opened on July 15 and will open up some 16,000 acres of National Forest to all sorts of public recreation opportunities. The Forest Service and the landowner both deserve thanks for their work on this one.

The second is a signed agreement on the Salmond Ranch Road. I testified at the hearing on July 20, along with the Russell Country Sportsmen and the Montana Wildlife Federation; we witnessed the proposal approved by the State Land Board. This agreement came about after mediation between the public, the landowner and the Dept. of State Lands. Neither of these cases involved a lawsuit. PLWA

did not contest these accesses in Court because the responsible legal authorities were pursuing access on their own and local clubs became active. Details of these actions are covered later on in the newsletter.

In addition to the two big ones, there are several other actions that are worth mentioning. In March, a landowner was forced to remove a log archway that had been placed over the county road that followed the old Yellowstone Trail. Fences and “No Trespassing” signs were also removed after the Park County Attorney notified the landowner of the violation.

Later on in July the Tenderfoot land purchase was completed. This resulted in over eight thousand acres being added to the Lewis and Clark National Forest. It is noteworthy to recognize that this purchase would not have been possible without major funding from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. The road issue adjacent to this purchase has not been resolved, however.

There are several other noteworthy accomplishments that protects the public’s access opportunities. I’ll list a few...

The “No Fishing” signs are gone from the Boulder River in Sweetgrass County.

The locked gates are gone from the public trail easement on the Old Dunn Trail in Park County.

One of the great frustrations of this business is the fact that all of these obstructions were violations of the law. Yet not one resulted in any legal consequences for the violator.

PLWA's New YouTube Video Channel

Check us out

PLWA has now created our very own YouTube video channel for interviews, highlights, public awareness and informational video clips. We just uploaded our PLWA interview with Dr. Bill Mealer, “Why I moved to Montana, Stream Access!” We also have our new trailer for the two promotional videos being produced for us – “PLWA – Protecting access to Montana public land and water”.

To access our PLWA Channel, go to www.youtube.com - in the search bar at the top, type in, “Public Land/Water Access Association”. Then click on our PLWA logo to view our videos. Please feel free to subscribe to the channel to be notified when we release a new video. Click “Share” to send it to any of your social media accounts. Also, you may comment on the videos and hit the thumbs up icon, this increases PLWA's visibility and raises awareness of the issues involved with keeping our public lands and waters accessible. Stay tuned for more PLWA...

Tenderfoot Creek Drainage

Plus over 8000 acres, now open to the Public

The Tenderfoot Creek Drainage, in the Little Belt Mountains, and about 8,200 checkerboarded acres surrounding it, are now open and accessible to the public. From 2010 to 2015, nine phased land

acquisitions were purchased from the Bair Ranch Foundation using a combination of \$10.1 million LWCF and \$500,000 of nonfederal funds from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust.

The Bair Ranch Foundation recognized the outstanding recreation, wildlife, and resource values, wanted to make sure that those values and public access into the area would be conserved for current and future generations.

The acreage is habitat for a wide diversity of species; from west slope cutthroat trout to ungulates such as elk, moose, and deer. It also provides scenic views, many opportunities for recreation, including, hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, managed ATV use, snowmobiling and other uses.

West Deer Creek Road

Now Open!

On Wednesday, July 15, at 9:00 a.m. the gate barring public access to the West Deer Creek area of the Custer-Gallatin National Forest south of Big Timber swung open - thus restoring road access to more than 16,000 acres of public lands. PLWA played a key role in early efforts to keep public access to this area.

The gate is across a newly constructed bypass road named "West Deer Creek Road" (Forest Road #421, known locally as the Cherry Creek access). The new road provides a permanent public route on the Yellowstone Ranger District by replacing part of the old, now-private Cherry Creek Road.

Last fall, the Forest Service and two landowners reached a joint agreement for a permanent public access easement across the West Deer Creek Road. The Forest Service and partners, including the Public Lands/ Water Access Association (PLWA) have worked for years to restore the primary access route into the National Forest nearest to Big Timber. The road is located south of Big Timber, directly off the Main Boulder Road at mile marker 10.

"No alternative was found, however, and ten years later the landowners closed the road," Gibson said. "The Gallatin National Forest Supervisor then considered condemnation to gain access to the land, but Senator Jon Tester advised against condemnation and offered to try to work out a better alternative," Gibson said. "After several months of negotiation, the landowners agreed to build a new road across their land that would connect with old road beyond the point where it reached the National Forest. This was recently accomplished."

The new access on the West Deer Creek Road will provide for permanent year-long opportunities in the area including: dispersed camping in the Lower Deer Creek vicinity, hiking options on several forest trails such as Tomato Can Trail #156, Middle Fork #112 and West Fork of Upper Deer Creek #108, along with several spur connector trails.

For more information - <http://www.plwa.org/viewarticle.php?id=289>

Signed Agreement on Salmond Ranch Road

Restoring decades lost public access

An agreement was reached between Great Falls hunters, state and county officials, and a landowner that will secure walk-in hunting and recreational access to approximately 50,000 acres of public land along the Rocky Mountain Front west of Choteau. This agreement restores access that has been in dispute for decades.

The disputed access issue began in the 1930's, when Frank Salmond offered Teton County a right-of-way to ensure public access, in exchange for the county closing Road 380. Yet in 1989, the Salmond family posted "No Trespassing" signs on the road. 2012, the Salmond family then brought a quiet title action looking to clarify public access on the road. Teton County, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and Great Falls resident Randall Knowles intervened that same year, stating the road was public.

Russell Country Sportsmen's Association member Randy Knowles, as well as Public Land/Water Access Association (PLWA) president, John Gibson, testified at the hearing on July 20, along with the Montana Wildlife Federation saw the proposal unanimously approved by the State Land Board. This agreement came about after mediation between the public, the landowner and the DNRC. The agreement calls for a 30-foot easement along Teton County Road 380 road (paid for by the Salmond Ranch) to a parking lot on state land, then non motorized travel to many thousands of acres of state and federal land along the Rocky Mountain Front west of Choteau Montana. This road will open on October 1st. of this year and close December 31. Subsequent years will see the road open July 1st and remain open until Dec. 31.

PLWA did not contest this access in Court because the responsible legal authorities were pursuing access on their own and local clubs became active.

Membership and Support

We owe all that we accomplish to you – our dedicated PLWA members. Without your membership and support we would be a voice in the wind. Please give this newsletter to a friend who has a passion for the Montana experience and urge them to join us in protecting all of our rights.

Public Land/Water Access Association, P.O. Box 80987, Billings, MT 59108.

Name _____

Address _____ Zip _____

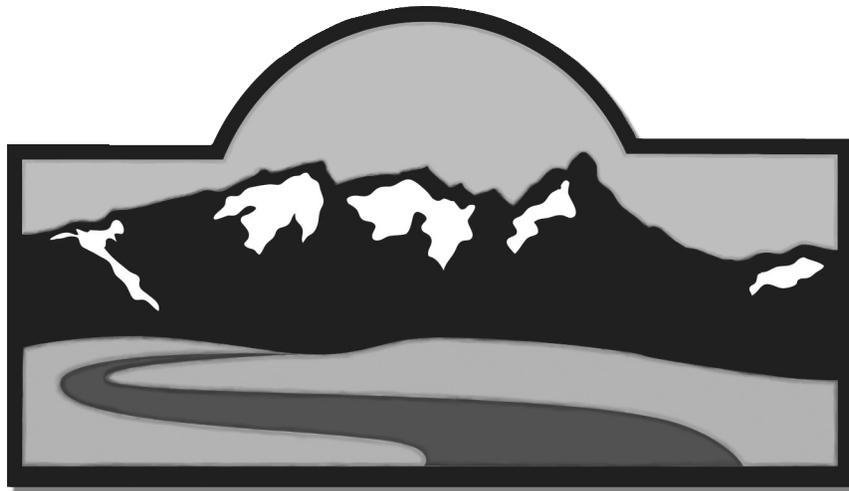
Phone _____ Email _____

Membership (\$20) _____ Contribution _____

(You can also join or make a donation via PayPal on our website – www.plwa.org)

THE KEY published by
The Public Land/Water Access Association
(PLWA)
P.O. Box 80987
Billings, MT 59108
www.PLWA.org

PRESORT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
BILLINGS MT
PERMIT NO. 104



PLWA