



Protecting the Badger-Two Medicine

By Michael Jamison

Along the southeastern edge of Glacier National Park, tucked between the Blackfeet Indian Reservation and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, is a wild corner of the world known as the Badger-Two Medicine.

Named for the two crystal-clear rivers that spill from its mountain heights, the Badger-Two Medicine is the place where America's prairie runs headlong into the Rocky Mountains. The Blackfeet call it the "Backbone of the World," and it's home to their origin stories, to sacred mountains with names such as Morning Star, Scarface, Spotted Eagle, and Curly Bear. This is the place of the Sun Dance, the Medicine Lodge, the wolf and wolverine and grizzly bear.

And it is, for the most part, wholly unprotected.

Park advocates have long partnered with Blackfeet tribal members in the Badger-Two Medicine, fighting side-by-side to turn back proposals for new roads, for expanded all-terrain vehicle access, for new gas wells and oil fields, and pipelines through elk winter range. We've made some headway—a prohibition on new energy leasing, restrictions on motorized access, protections of some cultural sites, temporary suspensions on old oil leases—but there remains much to be done.

continued on page 4

Yellowstone's Bison Could Get More Room to Roam

By Bart Melton

Take a summer trip to any of the 401 units of America's National Park System from Maine to Alaska and you will see bison everywhere (that is, if you look closely). The bison is prominently displayed as the centerpiece of the National Park Service's arrowhead—the agency seal that appears on all uniforms and signs. The bison serves as a powerful symbol of America's national parks and our conservation ethic. But despite all the symbolism, there's only one place where genetically pure bison still exist as part of a large functioning ecosystem in the United States: Yellowstone National Park is home to roughly 4,600 bison that are the last remaining continuously wild bison herd in the world.

This wild bison herd represents the natural heritage of all Americans, but there is much work to be done to ensure this herd will be around for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. Within Yellowstone's 3,468 square miles bison are well protected, but during harsh winters, when the snowpack in the park's high plateaus and valleys makes it too difficult for bison to graze, bison naturally migrate down to the park's lower elevations and often onto snow-free adjacent public and private land. Through the years, especially when hard winters have pushed large numbers of the Yellowstone herd beyond park

boundaries, conflicts have led to needless destruction of thousands of bison.

Recently, positive steps have been taken to provide bison access to some winter habitat outside the park and, as a result, Yellowstone's bison have had a bit more room to roam during the winter. But every spring, bison are hazed back into the park by land managers because agreements are not in place to allow the bison to migrate back into Yellowstone on their own, like other wildlife species such as deer, pronghorn, and elk. The State of Montana has proposed a common-sense solution to address this issue. Montana's proposed plan, if fully adopted, would offer bison about 421,000 acres of year-around habitat adjacent to Yellowstone and help to ensure the

continued on page 4



Top: Bison in Yellowstone National Park. ©Lorcel G | Dreamstime.com **Above:** A small herd of bison follow a snow covered trail in Yellowstone National Park. ©Roger Trentham | iStockPhoto

FIELD REPORT

Summer 2014

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR, TIM STEVENS



“Anything you do will seem insignificant.
The important thing is that you do it.”

— MAHATMA GANDHI

As we approach the National Park Service’s centennial in 2016 and NPCA’s own centennial soon after, in 2019, I’ve been thinking about why Steven Mather—the first Director of the National Park Service—established NPCA immediately after he left his National Park Service post. The charge given to NPCA by Mather was to ensure that the National Park Service remained true to its’ original purpose of protecting these special places for future generations.

While we have had countless victories, and defeats, over that time (thankfully more of the former than the latter), we continue to strive to live up to that mandate. When I say “we,” I mean the collective “we.” “We” are NPCA—not just the paid staff, but also the Board members, volunteers, members, donors, supporters, and all those who care for and act in support of our national parks. NPCA has around 125 employees nationwide. If the work were simply left to paid staff, we’d never have the power to sway decisionmakers to protect our national parks. The power of NPCA lies in this incredible partnership we have with YOU and the 799,999 other members and supporters of NPCA, as well as those who

are not members but nonetheless care about our national parks.

It is only through individual action that we can protect our national parks: writing a letter to the editor, picking up the phone, attending a public meeting, penning a comment letter to your local national park, meeting with your local member of Congress, etc. Each of these individual actions add up and make the national parks movement what it is today. You are an important part of that effort.

This issue of our field report highlights several critical issues in which NPCA is engaged in the northern Rockies. You’ll see that each article also has a request for your action and help. Whether you do it all in an hour or spread it out over a week or two, I thank you in advance for taking action on behalf of the places that we all love and for being a part of the (nearly) 100-year old movement started by a guy who understood the importance of individual actions.

Tim Stevens

Above: Tim at Makoshika State Park, Montana ©John Salazar

Lands Legislation to Benefit Grand Teton National Park and Wyoming Schools

By Sharon Mader

In March, the Wyoming Legislature approved a critical bill allowing the state to negotiate the exchange of 1,280 acres of state-owned land within Grand Teton National Park in return for valuable mineral rights on federal land elsewhere in the state.

Due to the high value of the lands, the \$100-million question was whether the state and federal government could reach a fair and equitable agreement. During this legislative session, lawmakers engaged in serious and thoughtful debate on that question, and ultimately passed a bill of great benefit to Grand Teton National Park, the State of Wyoming, and the school children of Wyoming.

The original agreement which allowed for the federal government to purchase the land outright expired on January 5, 2014, when efforts to secure funding became bogged down in the political congestion of congressional budgeting. So in February of this year, federal and state officials decided to amend the agreement and allowed the state to receive federal land parcels and mineral rights in exchange for those state-owned parcels.

This success would not have been achieved without the commitment and support of Wyoming Governor Matt Mead, the State Lands Board, Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell and her Bureau of Land Management staff. Teton County state legislators Leland Christensen and Ruth Ann Petroff were leaders, shepherding this bill through the Legislature with the strong endorsement of the Teton County Commission.

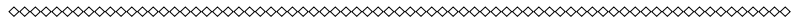
Currently, the state recoups only a small amount of income off the state lands leased for grazing in Grand Teton National Park. Were the land exchange to fall apart, the land would be worth millions on the open market and could be divided into 35 acre plots and sold to the highest bidder. An open market sale would also allow the threat of incompatible development in the middle of important wildlife habitat and pristine landscapes.

We now have a historic opportunity to preserve the Grand Teton landscape forever

while maximizing funding for state schools. Eighty-six acres were already purchased with federal Land and Water Conservation funds, last year. This victory in the Wyoming Legislature moves us one step closer to permanently preserving the remaining 1,280 acres of state land within Grand Teton National Park.

NPCA is committed to see the Grand Teton Land Exchange to its completion by January 2016, and will continue to support negotiations and federal funding to ensure the exchange prevails. There are sure to be hurdles along the way, but with your help, successes will continue. Together, we add these important lands in perpetuity as a rightful part of majestic Grand Teton National Park and provide an enduring legacy for the people of Wyoming and Americans across the country who cherish national parks.

Below: Gorgeous Sunrise, reflection in the water, Grand Tetons Oxbow Point. ©Kwiktor | Dreamstime.com

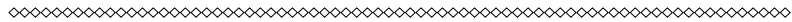


Please contact the Department of the Interior today to forever preserve these state lands as part of Grand Teton National Park.



Contact Secretary Sally Jewell and express your thanks and support for the exchange, and urge her to move forward expeditiously to ensure that the January 2016 deadline is met. You can provide comments on the DOI website at www.doi.gov/feedback.cfm, or by email to feedback@ios.doi.gov.

Mailing Address: Department of the Interior, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC, 20240



Yellowstone's Bison

continued from page one

long-term survival of America's last continuously wild bison herd.

Montana's draft proposal is a modest but extremely significant step towards appropriate bison management in the state. But for now, it's just a proposal. Montana's Governor Steve Bullock needs to act to push the proposal across the finish line.



Please take action and contact Montana Governor Steve Bullock today to urge him to provide year-round habitat for Yellowstone's bison! Let him know that, of the options Montana has proposed for year-round bison habitat, you prefer "Alternative B"—which would allow bison to utilize 421,000+ acres of new year-round habitat adjacent to Yellowstone National Park.

You can call the Governor's office directly at (855) 318.1330 or provide feedback online at governor.mt.gov/Home/Contact/shareopinion.aspx.

Protecting the Badger-Two Medicine

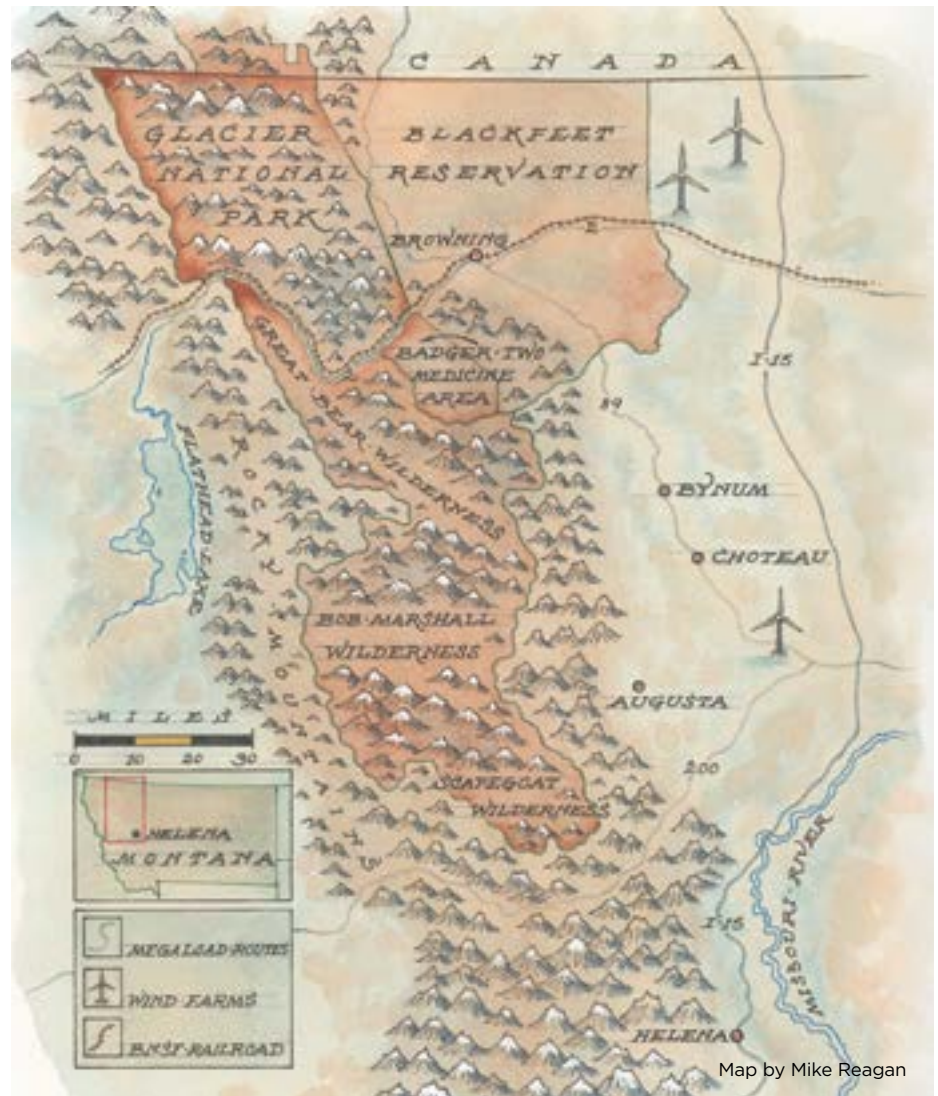
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Last summer, the holder of a 1980s-era oil lease sued the federal government, saying he had been delayed long enough. He wants to drill the Badger-Two Medicine. Other historic lease holders are watching closely, hoping for a ruling favorable to the oil industry.

So once again, NPCA has joined our partners both on and off the Blackfoot Indian Reservation to push for protection of these sacred, park-adjacent wildlands. Any solution, we know, will require the blessing of the Blackfoot Nation. But it also will require a mulligan stew of federal agencies—the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Department of Indian Affairs, to name a few.

It just so happens that most all of those agencies are administered by the Department of Interior, and this spring NPCA met with the agency's Secretary, Sally Jewell, to imagine a better future for the Badger-Two Medicine. She's a good friend of both conservation and Indian Country, so we talked about how best to retire those old leases, or perhaps to swap them for leases in other more appropriate places. We talked about the dire need for economic development in Indian Country, and the possibility of moving those leases onto suitable reservation lands where the Blackfoot might see some return on investment, rather than the industrial dismantling of their cultural heritage. We talked about grizzly bears, about park protections, and about what it will take to recover the Badger-Two Medicine's endangered species.

But so far, it's all just talk. The Badger-Two Medicine is a very long way from our nation's capital, and Blackfoot origin stories do not translate well into agency reviews. Which is why we need your help. If we are to find creative and long-term solutions for the Badger-Two Medicine, we will first have to inspire Sec. Jewell to make this wildland a top priority at the Department of Interior.



We need you to make a difference. Visit Secretary Jewell online at www.doi.gov and thank her for her interest in this very special place, and let her know that Glacier Park, the Blackfoot Nation, and the Bob Marshall Wilderness deserve better than a frack job. Drop her a line at DOI, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC, 20240. Give her a call at (202) 208-3100. Zip her an e-mail at feedback@ios.doi.gov. Together, we can write a new chapter on this landscape of ancient and sacred stories.

NPCA Engages Communities through Local Events!

A Celebration of the Tree: The Man Who Planted Trees

Since the 1988 Yellowstone fires, the park's forests have become renowned the world over for what they have taught us about fire and fire's relationship to ecosystem ecology. Twenty-six years after the fires, Yellowstone's forests now serve as an important scientific bellwether for the current and future impacts of climate change. This spring NPCA's Yellowstone Field Office and the Utah Taft Nicholson Center co-hosted an Arbor Day book reading by New York Times science writer Jim Robbins, followed by a panel discussion with scientists from the National Park Service and the Forest Service focused on climate change and the forests of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Robbins read from his latest book, "The Man Who Planted Trees" and the science panel provided an overview of what we know and don't know about the impacts of climate change on the forests of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Over 60 community members attended the event. To learn more about Jim Robbins' latest book visit: www.jim-robbins.net/

Below: Yellowstone National Park ©Oleksiy Khmyz

It's Time to Celebrate! Crown of the Continent, The Wildest Rockies Book Launch

It's been said that the world is run by those who show up.



A couple generations ago, John Muir made a choice to show up for this newfangled idea of setting aside national parks. George Bird Grinnell chose to show up on behalf of Glacier National Park. Hayden showed up for Yellowstone, Albright for Grand Teton. They ran their world, and their legacy is our inheritance.

On May 9, nearly 200 people celebrated that inheritance by choosing to show up in

Whitefish, Montana, for a book launch featuring photographer and wildland advocate Steven Gnam. Gnam's newest book—*Crown of the Continent: The Wildest Rockies*—pairs his stunning images with essays by National Geographic writer Doug Chadwick and NPCA staffer Michael Jamison, creating a powerful narrative on behalf of protecting the wild Crown.

Now Gnam is taking that story on the road, inspiring a new generation to lend their voices to wild nature. Every book he sells, every donation he collects, helps us to protect the Crown's wild nature. So make the choice to show up at www.wildestrockies.org/, and become the one who makes the change our world needs.

Stories from the Mountain, Songs from the Soul "Tales of Climate Change, Inspired by Glacier National Park"

Climate scientists love their data, their equations and formulas and careful calculations. But their jargon rarely inspires the rest of us to get up off the couch and do something about our changing world.

continued on back page





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NPCA Engages Communities through Local Events!

continued from page 5

Which is why U.S. Geological Survey scientist Dan Fagre appropriated the language of art. He combed the archives at Glacier National Park, digging up the historic postcards and photographs that first captured this alpine brilliance. Using that baseline, his team has paired powerful before-and-after images to tell a compelling story. Here's Boulder Glacier in 1932, thick with ancient ice. And here it is today, gone except for a few patches of mid-summer snow.

The jarring juxtaposition has, in turn, inspired a new generation of artists, creative painters such as Diane Burko and Joy vonWolffersdorff, who are telling the tale of climate change on a fine-art canvas.

In April, NPCA partnered with Glacier Climate Action to examine this intersection of art and science—two disciplines with roots in that most human need to question and explore. More than 200 people turned out to hear from Fagre and the artists,

looking beyond the data for hints about how we humans might adapt to live in our changing world. The science can tell us what's happening. The arts can tell us what that data really means. And we, finally, must choose to act, to protect our parks and our planet for future generations.

Below: Mountain goats in Glacier National Park.
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