



A Win for Grand Teton

By Sharon Mader

In the final days of 2012, a deadline was looming to secure the \$16 million needed to purchase 86 acres of threatened lands within Grand Teton National Park. This was the first of three parcels of 1,406 acres of state-owned land within the borders of the park that the state of Wyoming had agreed to sell to the federal government. Without adequate funds, the land could be sold at auction, subdivided, and developed into trophy homes. Thankfully, in January 2013, with just three days remaining before the deal expired, the National Park Service received the money from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and completed their transaction with the state. This was accomplished against all odds, and in the face of the most contentious congressional fiscal debate we've witnessed in years. Such a herculean task would not have been possible without close collaboration between the federal agencies, NPCA, the state of Wyoming, and the undaunted leadership of the Park Service at the local and regional levels.

The work is far from over, and NPCA will continue to provide a strong leadership voice for protection of these critical lands within the park to gain support for the additional funding necessary to preserve the remaining 1206 acres of land at risk.

Above: Black Wolf of Lamar Valley in Yellowstone National Park ©Mike Cavaroc

Protecting Wolves in Wyoming

By Sharon Mader

Last September, ignoring requests from the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) approved a wolf delisting plan for Wyoming that kept alive the possibility of a state-run wolf hunt within the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Parkway, a 24,000-acre Park Service unit that connects Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. Given the fact that national parks are supposed to serve as sanctuaries for wildlife, permitting the hunting of an animal fresh off the Endangered Species List within a national park unit is unprecedented. While the state has not yet attempted to permit a wolf hunt in the Parkway, it has claimed authority to do so, and says it will consider the park hunt option annually.

FWS authorized the Wyoming state plan which excludes Yellowstone from the possibility of a wolf hunt, but in stark contrast the agency chose to allow the state to keep hunting options open within the Parkway. During the plan development, the Park Service formally requested the Parkway be removed from the hunt area, but the request was ignored and the Park Service failed to take further action.

So now, not only has the State of Wyoming succeeded in keeping the Parkway in

the hunt area; it has also indicated that it will not rule out the possibility of a wolf hunt there—a bold assertion, considering it's the Park Service that is the lead in making decisions about the lands it manages.

The John D. Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Parkway provides a critical link for park wildlife, including wolves, to safely move between Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

In response, NPCA presented a formal petition to the Park Service this May requesting a rule prohibiting a wolf hunt in the Parkway, so that the issue can be put to rest before a single wolf is shot there. This rule will forever safeguard and protect wolves in the John D. Rockefeller Parkway, and ensure that our national parks continue to serve as sanctuaries for the animal whose reintroduction helped restore ecological balance to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

According to its enabling legislation, the Parkway—established in 1972—was intended

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FIELD REPORT

Summer 2013

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Newsletter Design by kelleyalbertdesign.com



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REFLECTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR, TIM STEVENS

Bad Timing! Parks Take A(nother) Hit to Start the Summer Season



Summer is upon us, and as we fan out to explore the majestic and historic park icons of the Northern Rockies we will unfortunately find national park units that have been further depleted of resources, which will no doubt impact YOUR park experience.

Our national parks have taken a double-funding hit. Most recently, funding was cut 6 % for fiscal year 2013, on top of a 6 % cut to the Park Service budget over the last two years. While things are still being sorted out, here are just a few examples of how this is affecting our region:

- In North Dakota's Theodore Roosevelt National Park, hours of operation for visitor centers have been slashed, and in some cases, the centers will only be open two days a week. All educational programs for school groups have been curtailed, and all vacant permanent positions will not be filled for now.
- In Montana, Glacier National Park's budget was slashed by \$682,000, which is leading to delays in access to campgrounds and visitor centers, significant

decreases in maintenance work on park facilities and roads, limited and delayed emergency response, and a delay in the spring opening of the Going-to-the-Sun Road. For the latter, fortunately, the Glacier National Park Conservancy has stepped in to temporarily help fund the plowing of Going-to-the-Sun Road, but the other cuts remain.

- For Grand Teton National Park and the JD Rockefeller Parkway, there's been a loss of \$700,000 in funding, resulting in closed roads, reduced visitor center hours, elimination of campfire programs and reduction of visitor educational programs. The complete closure of the Jenny Lake Visitor's Center and the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve was staved off by temporary funds from private organizations.
- Yellowstone's mandatory cuts led to a \$1.8 million dollar slice from the park's budget, which is leading to delayed gate openings and significantly reduced staffing for the upcoming season.

Above: Tim at Dauphin Island

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK! What do you like about this newsletter? What other topics or features would you like to see? Would you prefer to receive this newsletter electronically? Please contact us with your feedback at sjanicki@npca.org.

In years past when the Park Service has been asked to make do with less, it has soldiered along, stretching personnel and budgets as much as possible. This year, however, the magnitude of these cuts means the Park Service can only do less with less.

The sequester has significant implications for our national parks, park visitors, and the park gateway businesses that depend on park-related economics—\$30 billion in economic activity and more than a quarter million jobs every year. Locally, our national parks are economic engines, not only generating huge economic benefits for the second largest industry in the region—tourism—but also serving as a “quality of life” draw for new residents who are increasingly bringing their businesses and entrepreneurial spirits with them.



The entire budget for the Park Service is a miniscule 1/15th of 1% of the federal budget. Until Congress and the president reach a budget compromise on revenues and entitlements that grow the economy, national parks—and the visitors, businesses and communities that benefit from them—will continue to fall victim to a failed

budget process. This national debate will not only impact the precious resources of our national parks in the northern Rockies, it will also reach into the pocketbooks of our communities and local businesses.

Tim Stevens

Protecting our Last Best Places, From the Cradle to the Crown

By Michael Jamison

Last autumn, when we wrote to you with an update on our region’s national parks, we reported from endangered places under siege by oil and gas exploration and development.

Out on eastern Montana’s tallgrass prairie, where Glacier National Park runs headlong into the Great Plains, exploration companies have been fracking wells right up against the park’s front door. Farther east, in North Dakota’s wild open savanna, oil companies have been planning wells within 100 feet of the Elkhorn Ranch, in the “cradle of conservation” at Theodore Roosevelt National Park. And west of Glacier, where the first oil wells were drilled more than a century ago, lawmakers have been unable to gain traction for legislation that would keep oil and gas development out, once and for all.

But that was then. This is now.

Now, Anschutz Exploration Corp. has announced the abandonment of its leases along Glacier’s eastern front. That move came in March, after months of hard work by NPCA and our partners on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. Together, we lifted a strong and united voice of opposition, asking the agencies, tribal leadership, and company executives to reconsider their plans to industrialize Glacier’s borderlands.

Now, XTO Energy has withdrawn its application to develop four wells—including

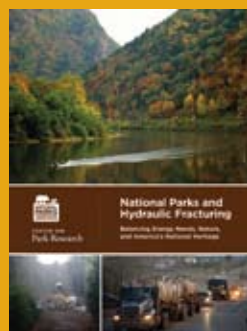
one proposed well that was “staked” just 35 yards from the fence lines of the Elkhorn Ranch, part of Theodore Roosevelt National Park where Roosevelt defined his conservation vision. We mobilized our members, our supporters, and our partners both inside and outside the Park Service, and together we made a tremendous difference. The Bismark Tribune, reporting on XTO’s withdrawal, noted that “it appears the hearing on the drilling plan scheduled for Thursday would have been packed with park supporters opposed to oil development there.” Indeed it would have.

Now, the legislation to protect 400,000 acres of Glacier’s wild western fringe from future oil and gas development has been revitalized, re-energized and, most importantly, reintroduced in the U.S. Senate. The North Fork Watershed Protection Act has been singled out as a top priority for Montana’s senior senator, Max Baucus (D-MT). And for

the first time in a quarter century, the state’s entire bipartisan Congressional delegation is backing a public-lands protection bill: In March, newly-elected Rep. Steve Daines attended an NPCA event to announce his full support of the bill in the U.S. House.

So, what next? NPCA still has much work to do. We must ensure that any new leases issued near Glacier and Theodore Roosevelt National Park borders come with strong protections for both natural and cultural resources. And we must pass legislation that shields our parks from adjacent full-scale industrialization. In other words, we must build on the fantastic momentum of recent months, must keep pushing, cajoling, encouraging, and advocating for our last, best places. So stay tuned, because for that work we will need your help more than ever.

Right (Top): Backpacking in Southeast Montana. ©Mark Wenzler **Right:** Wild Goose Island, Glacier National Park, Montana. ©Wellych | Dreamstime.com



NEW REPORT RELEASED: “NATIONAL PARKS AND HYDRAULIC FRACTURING”

NPCA’s new report, “National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing,” examines the impact of existing, proposed, and potential oil and gas development on America’s national parks, and offers recommendations to ensure that future drilling safeguards public health and the environment. With five in-depth case studies, the report connects the dots on how fracking near national parks can impact the parks themselves. To view the full report online visit: http://www.npca.org/assets/pdf/Fracking_Report.pdf

Meet the Staff: Bart on Board

By Tim Stevens

We are pleased to announce that Bart Melton has joined NPCA's Northern Rockies team as our Yellowstone Program Manager. Bart has been with NPCA for more than six years, serving in both the Southeast and Washington, D.C., offices.

Bart joined NPCA to manage our Southeastern Regional Office's large landscape conservation work, most notably the ongoing project to protect the headwaters of Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area from large-scale coal surface mining. While managing that campaign, Bart worked to gain new allies and advocates for his work, lobbied the Tennessee State legislature, and worked closely with regional and national

consultants and NPCA's legal team to advance the issue. As a result, the State of Tennessee is now poised for a victory of national significance: permanent protection of more than 400 miles of ridgelines in the Big South Fork headwaters from mountaintop removal coal mining.

Bart's role expanded four years ago when he joined NPCA's Washington, D.C., staff to work on several of NPCA's national priority conservation initiatives. Bart played an important role in the effort to enact climate legislation that included substantial resources to help national parks take steps to adapt to climate



change. Bart helped design and lead NPCA's national Landscape Conservation Program, in particular focusing on wildlife connectivity initiatives in the West. Most recently, Bart has helped develop and lead NPCA's Oil & Gas campaign, which is responding to the rapidly expanding impairment of national park resources from drilling due to the emergence of fracking technology.

All of these experiences have positioned Bart well to tackle the many critical and ongoing challenges and opportunities that will shape the future of the world's first national park. Please see page 2 of this newsletter for Bart's contact information.



Yellowstone Winter Use: An End in Sight?

By Bart Melton

The National Park Service has proposed a new rule that will guide winter visitor use in Yellowstone National Park. After 16 years of engaging the Park Service on the topic, and hundreds of thousands of comments from concerned park supporters, multiple proposed plans and revised plans, litigation, and more plans, we may finally be close to reaching a conclusion to winter use planning in Yellowstone. In its most basic form, the Park Service's proposed rule:

- Would allow 110 "transportation events" daily in Yellowstone, consisting of a mix of multi-passenger snow coaches and individual snowmobiles. The rule allows for no more than 50 daily snowmobile "events" per day in the park, as part of that 110 event total. A transportation event is defined as 1 snowcoach, or a group of 7 snowmobiles, averaged over the season. The Park Service developed this approach in an attempt to equally assess the impact of snowmobiles and snowcoaches.
- Continues to require that all motorized access be 100 % professionally guided. The guiding requirement has been considered critical to reducing snowmobile impacts on park wildlife. However, a total of four non-commercially guided trips would be permitted daily, one from each park entrance. Each non-commercial guide would be required to pass Park Service guide training before leading trips into Yellowstone, and their machines must comply with the "best available technology" clean-machine standards.

- Has proposed that by the 2015-2016 winter season, all snowmobiles (2016-2017 for snowcoaches) operating in Yellowstone meet best available technology requirements to control hazardous air pollution and noise pollution. The Park Service originally proposed phasing in best available technology requirements for the 2017-2018 for snowmobiles and 2017-2018 for snowcoaches.

While the proposed rule represents significant changes that will result in a cleaner and quieter Yellowstone with reduced impacts on park wildlife and visitors, it is critical that some key measures are locked in place in the final rule. Because the

technology now currently exists, all vehicles should be required to operate with the cleanest, quietest technology by no later than the 2015 season, and non-commercial guides must similarly be required to operate with the cleanest technology.

If you would like to learn more about the proposed Yellowstone winter use rule you can find NPCA's comments on our website at http://www.npca.org/protecting-our-parks/air-land-water/motorized-access/yellowstone_winter.html. It has been a long haul, but with a few minor yet significant changes to the Park Service's final rule, we believe we can end the planning and start working to implement the long-term winter use plan.



Above: Lower Yellowstone Falls, Yellowstone National Park. ©Gerard Coles | istockphoto.com

Protecting Wolves in Wyoming

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to provide a "spiritual and physical connection" between Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. It also provides a critical link for park wildlife, including wolves, to safely move between these iconic parks.

While the Parkway's enabling legislation does permit the consideration of hunting, it clearly gives the Park Service, not the state, the primary role in managing wildlife there. In addition, the Park Service is

required to evaluate the impacts on all hunted species in the John D. Rockefeller Parkway and to pass formal rules that either approve or reject hunting based on a consideration of the health and integrity of the natural resources, as well as the safety and enjoyment of park visitors. The Park Service has already stated that according to these criteria, they would be unlikely to support a wolf hunt in the Parkway. NPCA's petition simply asks that the Park Service use the authority it has to assure permanent sanctuary for wolves on this critical piece of ground.

DONATE TODAY!

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in the fight to safeguard the scenic beauty, wildlife, and historic and cultural treasures of the largest and most diverse park system in the world. Help us assure the future of our beloved national parks by making a tax-deductible gift to NPCA today!

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**JOIN US
FOR THIS
SPECIAL
EVENT**

Building Community for Heart Mountain

Date: Friday, October 18, 2013

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: The National Museum of
Wildlife Art in Jackson Hole,
Wyoming

Please join the Grand Teton Field Office and the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation as we host a community event in Jackson Hole to create awareness and build support for the protection and preservation of the Heart Mountain Japanese Internment Camp. This free public event will feature Steven Okazaki's Academy Award-winning film, "All We Could Carry." Steven is the son of a Heart Mountain internee, and his documentary provides a unique opportunity for people to learn about Heart Mountain. In conjunction with the film honorary guest Norman Mineta, former U.S. Secretary of Transportation and a former camp internee, will co-present with former U.S. Senator Alan Simpson. The two will share their story of an unbreakable and lifelong friendship formed at Heart Mountain, a bond that has endured through adulthood and forged their strong commitment to protect and preserve the camp and the legacy of the Japanese Americans whose lives were irreparably altered by their experiences at Heart Mountain.

Above: Okumoto Collection: Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation

