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Big Sky workforce feels strain of J-1 Visa suspension



COVID-19-friendly Halloween activities



Skiers rejoice as La Niña approaches



FWP hosts Madison river recreation hearing



Prep your ski bod







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ON THE COVER:

Election day is Nov. 3. All ballots, mail-in or those cast in-person, must be submitted before or on this date in order to be counted in the 2020 general election. Mail ballots may be returned via the U.S. Postal Service or placed in an official ballot return box. **COVER DESIGN BY ME BROWN**

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Big Sky workforce feels strain of J-1 Visa suspension

Last year, Big Sky relied on nearly 200 work visas to fill in gaps in the local workforce. Due to a federal suspension on select international employment visas, businesses are now forced to seek new solutions this winter season in order to keep restaurants and hotels staffed and resort lifts spinning.

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COVID-19-friendly Halloween activities

With a global pandemic in full swing, it looks like many traditional Halloween events around the nation are being canceled. However in Big Sky, there are still ways to safely enjoy the holiday. Find out what Halloween traditions will occur this coming holiday weekend.

Skiers rejoice as La Niña approaches

A La Niña winter has been forecast by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which usually means lower temps and higher precipitation in the Rocky Mountains. However, while it is tempting to expect a massive snow year, it's important not to jump the gun.

FWP hosts Madison river recreation hearing

For more than 60 years, recreation on the Madison river has been discussed by public users, commercial outfitters and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks officials alike due to its increasing popularity. Yet, this year marks the first instance that two submitted rulemaking petitions and an Environmental Assessment have been distributed for public review and comment.

Prep your ski bod

The term "ACL tear" is enough to send shivers down the spine of any avid skier or rider. DPT's Heidi Bowman and Allie Poalino at Lone Peak Physical Therapy are no strangers to injuries acquired on the slopes and offered advice to prep even the hardest of shredders.



A bald eagle is perched, backdropped by Lone Mountain, with a fresh dusting of snow on Oct. 12. The weather officially turned to winter over the weekend, bringing with it wind and cold temps. PHOTO BY CHRIS KAMMAN

EDITORIAL POLICIES

EDITORIAL POLICY

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor allow EBS readers to express views and share how they would like to effect change. These are not Thank You notes. Letters should be 250 words or less, respectful, ethical, accurate, and proofread for grammar and content. We reserve the right to edit letters and will not publish individual grievances about specific businesses or letters that are abusive, malicious or potentially libelous. Include: full name, address, phone number and title. Submit to media@outlaw.partners.

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

For the November 6, 2020 issue: October 28, 2020

CORRECTIONS

Please report errors to media@outlaw.partners.

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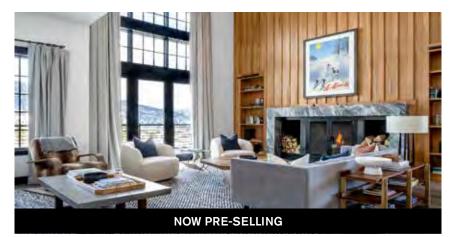


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Martha Johnson **VP OF SALES FOUNDING BROKER** MARTHA@BIGSKY.COM 406.580.5891





Moose Ridge Condos **BIG SKY TOWN CENTER** 5 BED + 5.5 BATH | 3,885 +/- SQ. FT. | \$1,800,000



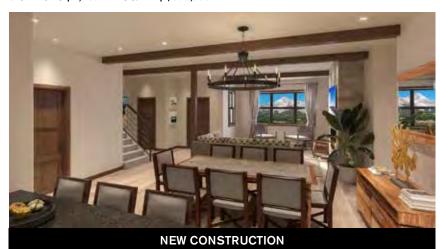
151 Pheasant Tail Lane #B **TOWN CENTER** 3 BED + 2.5 BATH | 2,076 +/- SQ. FT. | \$950,000



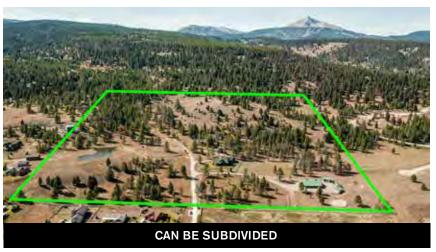
32 Market Place #1A **MEADOW VILLAGE** 5 OFFICES | 1,263 +/- SQ. FT. | \$599,000



89 Summit View Drive MOUNTAIN VILLAGE 1.12 +/- ACRES | \$550,000



Mountain Lake Phase 3 **BIG SKY MOUNTAIN VILLAGE** 2 - 4 BED + 3 - 4 BATH | 1,918 - 2,465 +/- SQ. FT. | \$959,500 - \$1,300,000 10% OFF LIST PRICE PRE-SELLING DISCOUNT



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Inspiration Point

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Highlands Neighborhood SPANISH PEAKS MOUNTAIN CLUB 3 - 6 BED + 3.5 - 5.5 BATH | 2,318 - 4,620 +/- SQ. FT. | STARTING FROM \$2,575,000







What method of voting are you using (in-person, absentee or mail-in) and why?



Sarah Maloney Big Sky, MT

"I've always done absentee voting because of the convenience of it. I've always voted in Gallatin County since I moved here ten years ago. I haven't received my ballot yet. I will try to mail it back unless it comes down to the wire in which case, I'll put it in the box. I'm super concerned about my ballot coming in because I leave on the 26th so I won't have a chance to vote in person if it comes to it."



Craig Smit Big Sky, MT

"I've got an absentee ballot, I'll fill it out, and I'm not sure if I will mail it in or drop it off. It all kinda depends on my circumstances. I heard they are doing a ballot drop; I'll probably drop it off there."



Benjamin Matheney Bozeman, MT

"Mine was mail-in just because it was easier just the day in age, and with COVID right now everything is at your fingertips. I don't know how accurate it's going to be, or exactly how it works but I thought why not try it. So, we'll see what happens."



Payton Hueler Big Sky, MT

"I'm flying back to Minnesota to vote because my residency is still there, to vote, and I am voting in person."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Keep the Gallatins wild

To the Editor:

Over a quarter-century ago, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition and The Wilderness Society testified in Washington, D.C. in strong support of land consolidations within the Gallatin Range east of Big Sky. I represented GYC that day. The overarching concept: convert private holdings to public lands so the wildlife-rich Porcupine and Buffalo Horn valleys could long endure undeveloped and not overrun.

We made it clear that our end goal was an "unbroken wilderness" for what we called the "Wild Heart of the Gallatin Range" from Bozeman to Yellowstone. The consolidation bill was approved in 1993.

Today, as this issue heads to Congress, the U.S. Forest Service and some others support smaller so-called "protection proposals" which will break the Wild Heart of this mountain range. (For more, read EBS columnist Todd Wilkinson's three-part series, published at mountainjournal.com, May 2020.)

Technology and a flood of new recreational visitors are putting enormous pressure on our national forests. We can no longer stand by and witness the demise of the best of Montana's last best places, which this is. The lower elevation lands comprising the Porcupine and Buffalo Horn represent the highest quality habitat for major species of wildlife (elk, mule deer, grizzlies, wolves, moose) left in the Lower 48. Many Montanans hope to honor the Gallatin Range and Lee Metcalf by having Congress complete the job of designating these unmarred drainages as "wilderness," building outward from the 1977 Wilderness Study Area boundary.

The wisest path ahead will not be easy. Take a good look at the proposal maps for the Gallatin Range. Then take a look in the mirror. We all know we can do better. I believe that deep in our hearts we can find the collective strength and grace to work together to grant the Porcupine and Buffalo Horn valleys the wilderness protections they so rightly deserve.

Bart Koehler Juneau, Alaska and Bozeman



Vigit Big Sky

Living with COVID-19 pandemic makes one's physical well-being more important than ever. With nearly 13 million visitors to Montana in 2019, having non-resident visitors during a time of heightened public health awareness has brought public safety to the forefront. As a result, Visit Montana—in partnership with statewide tourism regions and Destination Marketing Organizations including Visit Big Sky—launched the MONTANA AWARE campaign. Now, more than ever, the health and safety of Montana citizens and visitors is the top priority.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

For our resident visitors and visitors who are enjoying all that Montana has to offer, please be prepared for the following protocols and safety precautions:

- Masks are required in counties with more than four active cases for people over 5-years-old in public indoor spaces and outdoor settings where social distancing cannot be maintained.
- Know a destination's public health guidelines before you arrive
- Stay home if you're sick.
- Understand some services and destinations may be limited.
- There is currently no travel-related quarantine.

ILLNESS PREVENTION

The best way to prevent infection from COVID-19 and any respiratory virus is to avoid being exposed. The same preventative measures that are recommended during cold & flu season will also help protect against coronavirus:











TO LEARN MORE: VISITBIGSKY.COM/ABOUT-US/MONTANAAWARE

Mental health at this time is just as important as one's physical well-being. September 6-12th is National Suicide Prevention Week. This year's Big Sky Chamber's Eggs & Issues will focus on Behavioral Health Services. #NOTALONE

Save the Date

EGGS & ISSUES | WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18TH | 8:30 AM

BIG SKY & CHAMBER

OP-ED:

Off-Season during a pandemic: the effort to keep up

BY DOMINIC CARR

In a year filled with political, economic and global health crises, as well as an unprecedented use of the word "unprecedented," it is beginning to seem that there is truly no aspect of our lives that can remain untouched by the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Having come to Big Sky seasonally for the last 20 years, and having lived here full time for the last two, it is easy to see the one big question that's weighing on the minds of a lot of locals—where oh where is the off-season?

If this were a normal year, we would be expecting a very significant slowdown in tourism and traffic beginning almost immediately after the resort closes down its mountain biking season. During this time, shops reduce their hours or close completely, summer workers pack up and move on to their fall gigs, students go back to school, and Big Sky itself slows to a crawl. To compare it to a ghost town at times would not be an exaggeration.

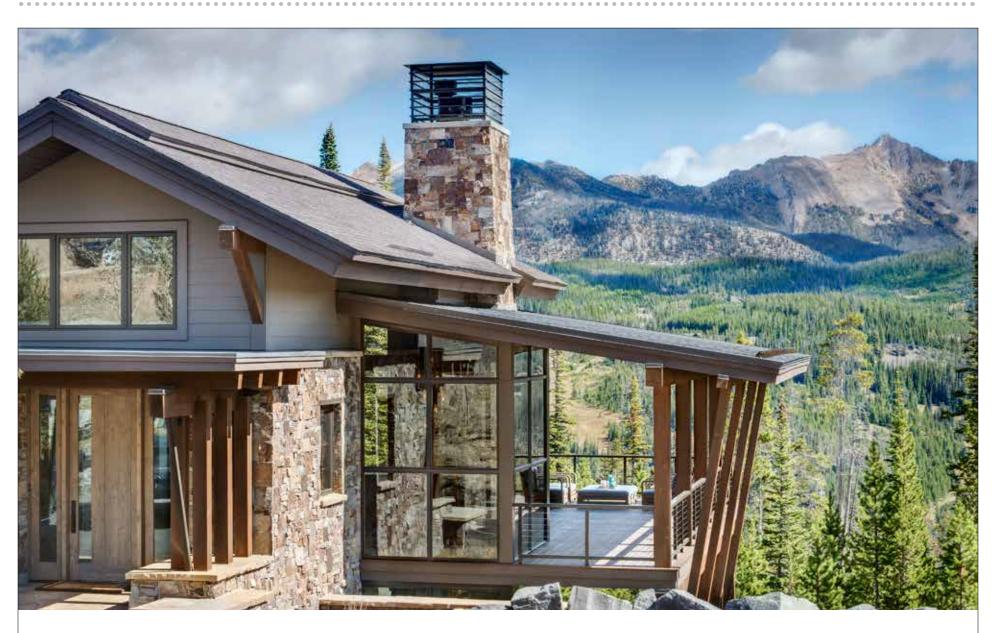
Instead, we saw no slowdown whatsoever in the end of September, and only a marginal slowdown moving into the early days of October. In contrast, most businesses, already under pressure from the pandemic, are reacting as they would any other year, if not with greater restrictions than usual. This has led to increased stress and responsibility on essential workers and a certain level of confusion for those who are coming to Big Sky, either for the first time or as returning visitors.

When you factor in the incredible amount of development occurring in the Big Sky, Moonlight, Spanish Peaks and Yellowstone Club areas, further issues arise. Not only are there more people "getting away" to their vacation homes for extended periods of time, there are also more contractors, trucks and heavy equipment making the arduous mountain commute up and down the more-crowded-than-usual main roads that define Big Sky's layout and traffic flow.

The ongoing bridge work, happening within Big Sky and down the canyon at mile 49 on Highway 191, has also substantially increased the burden upon commuters. A single car accident, regardless of severity, can render the entire exit-train of traffic completely unmovable for long periods of time, adding to the frustration of an already limited and uncertain population. When something like this happens, that frustration, and the inevitable rush of foot traffic into businesses from people that now have nowhere else to go, is transferred into the Town Center environment, which serves as both an economic hub and a nightmare-inducing bottleneck for vehicles trying to make their way out of Big Sky.

Thus, the question remains: where on Earth is the off-season and how are we as a community supposed to keep up with so many hurdles stacked on top of one another? The infrastructural and social burdens that are bearing down upon us will require open-minded consideration, progressive discussion and a willingness to acknowledge a changing economic landscape.

Thankfully, our resilience has so far outweighed our dilemmas. The hardworking people of Big Sky are pressing forward to ensure the continuation of quality service, all while combating mask-fatigue, increased workplace pressure and stressful day-to-day occurrences. With ski season and flu season both looming, it might be hard to say what the future holds, but one thing is for certain: we will be here, and we will be ready to do it "Big" in the face of "unprecedented" circumstances.





PREMIER LIFESTYLE CRAFTERS



NEWS IN BRIEF



Gallatin County seeks input on growth plan

EBS STAFF

GALLATIN COUNTY – As Gallatin County grows, county leaders are seeking input from those who live and work here that will help guide the Gallatin County Growth Policy Update, "Envision Gallatin." The plan will act as the county's overarching land use policy document for growth and development moving forward.

Envision Gallatin will outline the county's land use vision, set goals and provide a path to meet them. To gather community input, Envision Gallatin has released a questionnaire for the community to submit their input.

"I certainly think intrinsically being involved in your community is important whether your community is growing fast or not—it's just a civic duty," said Garrett McAllister, senior planner at Gallatin County Department of Planning & Community Development. "Folks will get a chance to express what's important to them."

Although Envision Gallatin is only 15 months in the making, the last plan was published in 2003, so the county quickly prioritized the creation of a new one. This survey is a part of chapter six out, of nine and the document in its entirety will be completed and released to the public before the end of the year. McAllister says it sets the foundation for everything else the county does.

"Our real goal of this chapter is to take all public outreach and distill it into meaningful, useful policy," he said. "At the heart of this document, it's really about what we do with the land in Gallatin County—do we preserve it, or develop it all?" You can take the questionnaire at EnvisionGallatin.com. Topics range from housing, culture and heritage to environment and transportation. Depending on what you care about most in the place you call home, the questionnaire provides residents the opportunity to have their voice heard.

Public input from the survey will be directly integrated into the plan, whether those values are to protect open space, increase access to recreation, meet growing transportation needs—whatever the community hopes for the future of the Gallatin valley they call home.

Famed resort artists James Neihues releases rare collection of mountain sketches

PALE MORNING MEDIA

PARKER, CO – Famed landscape artist James Niehues, known as the "Remembrant of Snow," and the Open Road Ski Company, which published his "Man Behind the Maps" book, are releasing a collection of sketches depicting 10 iconic mountains across the U.S. These black and white sketches are an important step in the creation of Niehues's hand-painted maps that have become synonymous with skiing.

Included in the release are sketches of Breckenridge, Colorado; Jackson Hole, Wyoming; Park City, Utah; Stowe, Vermont; Telluride, Colorado; Vail, Colorado; Alta, Utah; Alta and Snowbird, Utah; Big Sky, Montana and Mt. Bachelor, Oregon.

"The sketch is the cornerstone to providing the best configuration of a resort's slopes, and it's where the composition for the final painted view comes to life," Niehues said. "A ski map is first and foremost an accurate representation to guide the skier around the mountain—but it's also how the trees, rocks, slopes and topography all converge into a beautiful scene."

All ten sketches are available now in four different sizes on jamesniehues.com.

LPHS cancels sporting events due to COVID-19

EBS STAFF

Lone Peak High School athletic programs were impacted due to COVID-19 cases connected to the school recently as the varsity volleyball and football teams canceled contests on Oct. 17.

The football team, which did not earn a playoff berth this season, will visit the Absarokee Huskies on Oct. 23 for its final contest of the season. Meanwhile the undefeated girls' volleyball team will play their final regular season contest against Manhattan Christian early in the week of Oct. 26.

The Montana High School Association recently restructured the volleyball district tournament format to a single elimination field. Lower seeds will host playoff contests meaning that LPHS will likely host a district tournament match. Districts will take place Oct. 29-31.

Big Sky sees new COVID-19 cases, two confirmed at LPHS

EBS STAFF

BOZEMAN – Record positive case numbers across the state prompted Montana health officials to announce that they will begin releasing hospital capacity numbers to the public, including the total number of hospital beds and ventilators in the state along with capacities for Intensive Care Units.

"That may be the single most important thing to keep an eye on when we look at how we deal with future restrictions," said Gallatin City-County Health Department Health Officer Matt Kelley of hospital capacity numbers at an Oct. 9 press conference.

Big Sky has reported 16 positive cases in the last 10 days, two of which are connected to Lone Peak High School—one student and one staff member at the school. Both positive tests were confirmed by a letter released by Superintendent Dustin Shipman on Oct. 13.

"The staff member who tested positive has extremely limited access to students, staff and facility," the letter said. "If any staff or students are at risk of exposure, the Gallatin County Health Department will be in contact with that person to determine a safe and appropriate course of action."

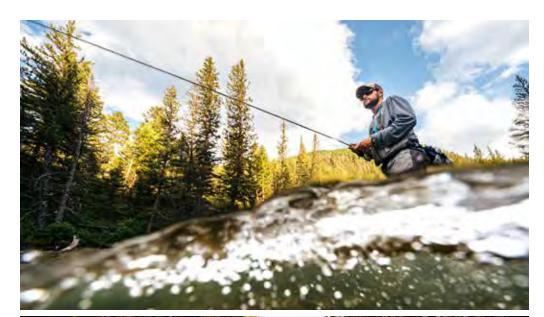
While testing capacity is not yet at risk, Gallatin County contact tracers are seeing their share of difficulties. The case load on contact tracers has directly affected their ability to reduce disease transmission in the community, and some are having difficulty reaching people and keeping them in quarantine.

"We cannot investigate cases in the same way we can when they get up to 50 cases or so," Kelley said. "When you have low cases, you can attack them like you attack the burning embers of a forest fire ... Right now ... it's burning."

As of Tuesday, Oct. 20, Gallatin County has 61 new confirmed cases of COVID-19, for a cumulative total of 2,420. There are 295 confirmed active cases and 15 current hospitalizations. There have been a total of 2,119 people recovered in Gallatin County. There have been sixth deaths reported due to COVID-19.

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Bozeman airport to open second concourse

Concourse B will add 75,000 square feet

BY BRANDON WALKER

BOZEMAN – Roughly a year and a half after breaking ground on its new concourse, the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport will open the 75,000-square-foot Concourse B to air travelers on Nov. 5. The \$26.5 million concourse addition will provide four new gates of service for the airport.

"This means a lot to us," said Airport Authority Board Chairman Kendall Switzer. "This has been years and years in the planning through a lot of ups and downs."

The airport terminal will now span 290,000 square feet and the new concourse is slated to be completed on schedule and within the established budget, according to Airport Director Brian Sprenger. When Concourse B opens next month, Bozeman's airport will have a total of 12 airport gates to service inbound and outbound passengers.

Parking garage renovation aside, Sprenger noted, this is the second major renovation the airport has undertaken since 2011. "The team did a great job of keeping it within budget and on time," Switzer said.

Martel Construction began work on Concourse B in April of 2019. The concourse will feature the new restaurant Ross Peak Grill, complete with a 5,200-pound pizza oven, Montana Gift Corral, two rooms for mothers to care for their infants, a pet relief area and multiple restrooms.

"Each time we do something, I think we step up the level and this is a level that we're just excited to share," Sprenger said.

Gates B3 and B4 will be utilized and serviced by United Airlines, according to Sprenger, and Alaska Airlines will provide service at B5. Meanwhile, the airport has currently elected to leave gates B6 and B7 without a designated airline service.

Completing the concourse in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic has airport officials and staff feeling trepidatious, Sprenger noted, but said the added space will also allow travelers to better social distance throughout the airport.

"While we're excited for what we're doing and seeing, we have to be aware of what is happening in the rest of the world as well," he said.

Nationally, Sprenger added, air travel decreased between roughly 55-60 percent in September compared to last year's data. The Bozeman airport reported a 35 percent reduction in air traveler numbers in September and anticipates a 25 percent decrease in the month of October.

Switzer cited the airport's ease of access, pilot training program and Montana State University as likely reasons for the continued travel to the region throughout the pandemic.

During an EBS Virtual Town Hall on May 18, Sprenger reported that air traveler numbers at the Bozeman airport were just 3 percent of average for the month of April.

"We have spent quite a bit of time throughout our board meetings discussing [whether] we slow the project down," Switzer said. "Do we stop it? This is a struggle for us and everybody acknowledges that personal and collectively, but I think that it was probably the best to keep it going."

Sprenger acknowledged the hit the airline industry has taken in 2020 but remains optimistic.

"This was a very significant challenge for the industry and all of the people around the world, but hopefully we're turning the corner and we're planning for the future without that challenge," he said.

Since May, the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport has added five seasonal direct flight services and one year-round direct flight option through various airlines and locations. On Sept. 21, the airport announced its latest service, a winter nonstop flight to Charlotte, North Carolina.



An inside view of Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport's Concourse B. The concourse will open to the public on Nov. 5. PHOTO BY BRANDON WALKER

After pausing new Big Sky subdivision approval, DEQ reviews plant capacity

Agency approves water and sewer district deviation request, says no building moratorium

BY GABRIELLE GASSER AND BRANDON WALKER

BIG SKY – In June, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality temporarily froze approval of new subdivisions in Big Sky citing capacity concerns at the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District's wastewater treatment plant. DEQ is currently reviewing documentation from the district to prove that the plant has capacity for new subdivisions, according to DEQ officials.

The approval freeze should not be equated to a moratorium, said water and sewer district General Manager Ron Edwards, adding that when the approval process was paused, there was concern that new Big Sky developments would be shut down.

"That was never the case," Edwards said.

DEQ officials told EBS that an official building moratorium has not been issued. In 1993, DEQ imposed a moratorium on any new wastewater connections in Big Sky and lifted it in 1996 after the water and sewer district upgraded its irrigation and wastewater systems.

While DEQ is still reviewing capacity documentation, Edwards announced at an Oct. 20 water and sewer district board meeting that the agency recently approved the district's deviation request. The approval means that the district can continue utilizing its Single Family Equivalent approach when allocating wastewater flow for commercial and residential establishments, a variation from traditional design requirements, DEQ officials said.

"DEQ requirements for how wastewater capacity is allocated per living and commercial unit were not being met in the capacity letters associated with COSA applications that DEQ was receiving from the district," said DEQ Environmental Engineer Ashley Kroon in a statement provided to EBS. COSAs refer to Certificate of Subdivision Approvals.

Once the water and sewer district became aware that DEQ wanted additional documentation demonstrating wastewater treatment plant capacity, the parties held a series of online meetings and spent a substantial allotment of time reviewing old data and permits.

"They wanted information on our side just to validate how much capacity is in the treatment plant," Edwards said. "Any time you have a new subdivision you need a capacity letter from the entity that would be serving you. The DEQ wanted information showing that we have plant capacity before they process any new subdivisions."

Kroon, with DEQ, said the agency requires proof that a system has capacity to serve a project proposing any connection to the public system.

"The discrepancy between the district's use of SFEs versus DEQ design requirements for calculating wastewater capacity resulted in confusion regarding the actual volume of capacity that had already been allocated through capacity letters associated with COSA applications," Kroon said.

Currently, the wastewater treatment plant in Big Sky has the capacity to handle 650,000 gallons per day. Of that capacity, 150,000 gallons per day is available to add new subdivisions, according to Edwards.

Terry Campbell, environmental engineer for DEQ, said the agency is "... still reviewing the data that [Edwards] had provided to us to determine if they feel that's adequate." DEQ officials said they intend to finish reviewing the documentation the week of Oct. 26.

Any submitted COSAs that were paused when DEQ halted its review process will not be subject to re-submission as a result of the freeze, Kroon said.

Once the upgrade to the wastewater treatment plant is complete—currently anticipated for the summer of 2022—the plant's total capacity will double to 1.3 million gallons per day.



BETTER TOGETHER

A monthly District bulletin

The Fall Funding Process is Underway!

Big Sky's Response to COVID-19 has once again confirmed that we are Better Together. Each year, the District awards funds for critical projects that make our community such a spectacular place to live and work.

Our funding decisions amidst COVID-19 will require us to make strategic investments through fiscally responsible decision-making. To do so, the District has temporarily moved funding decisions into 6-month cycles (spring and fall.) We invite YOU to engage in our 'virtual' process, send comments to Info@ResortTax.org, and make public comment at the meetings.



Tuesday, November 10th @ 5:30pm

Application Review and Q&A Session (Virtual)



Thursday, November 12th @ 5:30pm

Final Application Review Session (Virtual)

To Register for meetings and for more information visit: ResortTax.org.

REVIEW THE PROJECT LIST BELOW & LEARN WHAT BIG SKY'S ORGANIZATIONS ARE SEEKING TO ACCOMPLISH

GOVERNMENT ENTITIES:

BIG SKY FIRE DEPARTMENT

◆ Operational Support (\$420,713)

BIG SKY TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT

◆ BSTD Operations (\$295,000)

GALLATIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

◆ Big Sky/Canyon Patrol Division (\$155,664)

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

ARTS COUNCIL OF BIG SKY

- ◆ 2021 Music in the Mountains Programming (\$195,800)
- ◆ 2021 Music in the Mountains Infrastructure (\$11,000)

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF BIG SKY COUNTRY

◆ Youth Wellness (\$15,000)

BIG SKY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- Leadership, Staffing and Operations of the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce (\$187,256)
- ◆ Local Governance Facilitation Eggs & Issues/Gallatin-Madison Joint County Commission Meeting | Coordinating Council of Big Sky (\$5,500)
- ◆ Advocating for Our Community |
 Creating a Positive Business Climate MT Chamber Days and BBER Economic
 Outlook Seminar (\$11,000)

BIG SKY COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

- ◆ Case Management & Outreach (\$9,280)
- ◆ Operations/Admin & Food Purchase (\$6,174)

BIG SKY COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST

- ◆ BSCHT Operations Support (\$66,000)
- ◆ Down Payment Assistance (\$50,000)
- ◆ Future Property Development (\$1,400,000)
- ◆ Long Term Rental Program (\$9,000)

BIG SKY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

◆ Operations & Maintenance (\$239,255)

BIG SKY DISCOVERY ACADEMY & COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

- ◆ Early Childhood Program Tuition Assistance (\$15,400)
- Expanded Roles/Responsibilities for Discovery's Lower School/Early Childhood Program Director (\$5,100)

BIG SKY SEARCH AND RESCUE

 ◆ Wilderness First Responder Recertification and Initial Training (\$13,000)

BIG SKY SKATING & HOCKEY ASSOCIATION, INC.

◆ Operating Assistance (\$67,905)

CENTER FOR LARGE LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

 Developing Wildlife-Friendly Access to Big Sky for Residents and Visitors: Protecting Human Safety and Wildlife Corridors along US-191 for Generations to Come (\$15,000)

EAGLE MOUNT BOZEMAN

 Big Sky Ski and Snowboard Program/ EMBLEM Camps (\$25,000)

FRIENDS OF BIG SKY EDUCATION DBA WARREN MILLER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

 ◆ FY21 Artist Fees & Streaming Equipment Purchases (\$60,000)

FRIENDS OF THE BIG SKY COMMUNITY LIBRARY

◆ Library Operations (\$48,220)

GALLATIN INVASIVE SPECIES ALLIANCE

- ◆ Administration (\$4,060)
- ◆ Environmental Stewardship (\$2,725)
- ◆ Education & Awareness (\$3,725)
- ◆ Community Outreach (\$2,100)

All information contained herein is accurate as of 10.14.20.

GALLATIN RIVER TASK FORCE

- ◆ Operations (\$145,674)
- ◆ Education and Outreach (\$15,000)
- ◆ Watershed Monitoring (\$4,000)
- Watershed Restoration and Enhancement (\$10,500)
- Water Supply Resiliency Projects (\$22,500)
- Stormwater Infrastructure Mapping, Modeling, Project Identification, and Design (\$27,500)

GALLATIN VALLEY SNOWMOBILE ASSOCIATION

 Two Additional Groomings Per Week of the Buck Ridge/Doe Creek Road Snowmobile Trail (\$21,000)

MORNINGSTAR LEARNING CENTER

◆ Tuition Reduction (\$84,510)

THE BIG SKY ROTARY FOUNDATION

◆ Community Recycling and Compost Removal (\$2,665)

THE MONTANA LAND RELIANCE

 ◆ Permanent Conservation of Big Sky's Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Open Space (\$10,000)

THE POST OFFICE, LLC

◆ Big Sky Post Office - Operations (\$46,000)

VISIT BIG SKY

- ◆ Team Big Sky People and Place (\$66,600)
- Promote the Big Sky Destination (\$395,400)
- ◆ Develop and Steward the Destination (\$11,500)
- ◆ Lead the Destination (\$18,260)

WOMEN IN ACTION

- Direct Behavioral Health Services (\$19,500)
- ◆ Indirect Behavioral Healthcare Services (\$11,000)

TOTAL FUNDS REQUESTED: \$4,250,486

To view the complete applications, including details of all projects, please visit:

ResortTax.org/Funding.

Resort towns feel strain from J-1, other visa restrictions

Suspensions yet another hurdle for Big Sky employers

BY BELLA BUTLER

BIG SKY – Resort towns have long depended on a visiting labor pool from other countries to fill in gaps in the local workforce. Foreign nationals use work visas such as the J-1, designed for students seeking cultural exchange, to visit and gain work experience in these towns doing everything from waiting tables to bumping chairlifts.

But due to a federal suspension on select international employment visas, Big Sky businesses are now forced to seek new solutions this winter season in order to fill what have traditionally totaled nearly 200 staff positions.

On June 22, President Donald Trump issued a proclamation suspending certain immigrant and nonimmigrant visa categories through the end of 2020 in what he says is in the interest of preserving American jobs. This suspension halted a number of visa programs including the J-1 visa program, which placed 184 individuals in Big Sky to work through the 2019-2020 winter season. The U.S. Department of State defines the Big Sky site by zip code.

"It's an important issue and obviously with a crisis going on it's flying I think a little below the radar for many, but not for our employers," said Candace Carr Strauss, CEO of the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce and Visit Big Sky. "If we don't have people who can work in our businesses and provide services to our guests as well as our residents, then we're kind of out of luck."

While Big Sky Resort officials say J-1 workers comprise a small fraction of its staff, in years past the resort has played host and sponsor to additional J-1 visa holders, which includes providing them with housing. Other local businesses, particularly restaurants, have been able to take advantage of this work force, often providing secondary employment for these visa holders.

"A big part of that J-1 visa program is housing those employees," Carr Strauss said. "Not all small businesses have the ability to provide housing for their employees and so any pressure on the system of hiring workers that can be alleviated by this process, whereby entities like Big Sky Resort can provide employee housing, therefore frees up that labor force for our small businesses."

Alex Omania, owner of the Lotus Pad Thai restaurant in Big Sky, said she historically employs a dozen or so J-1 visa holders from Big Sky Resort each season at her restaurant. This year, due to the suspension, no J-1 visa holders are lined up for work anywhere in Big Sky.

In resort communities that depend on seasonal tourism, the labor market takes on different nuance, in addition to housing scarcity, that isn't present in other areas of the country. Carr Strauss noted Big Sky's summer and winter season schedules don't typically line up with the schedules of college students, eliminating that potential workforce.

Across the country in parallel destination community Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, Nancy Gardella, executive director of the island's chamber of commerce, echoed Carr Strauss's claim. Gardella says that places with smaller resident populations and high labor demand due to tourism struggle to find adequate local labor.

"We don't have Americans coming for these jobs," she said. "It's not because they're a lot of hideous jobs, it's because we don't have enough human beings living here." Gardella

added that the suspension, aimed to protect American jobs, is perhaps blind to communities like Martha's Vineyard that struggle with different labor dynamics.

With this novel hitch in an already slim workforce, equally novel solutions are shining through. On average, Big Sky Resort reports that J-1 visa holders make up less than 5 percent of the resort's total workforce, and the absence of strong dependency on an international employee base affords the resort a "solid outlook on staffing for the upcoming winter season," according to Troy Nedved, Big Sky Resort's general manager.

"This year, we have seen a strong response from domestic applicants interested in working at Big Sky Resort," Nedved wrote in an email to EBS. "We expect that trend to continue—especially as many college students are taking a gap year and choosing to spend a year in the mountains instead."

Mackenzie Cole, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort's benefits and compliances manager, articulated a similar trend in the employment paradigm at the Wyoming resort.

"Our experience in this upcoming winter is that we're actually quite fortunate with the change of tide that we are seeing that college students that are working remotely or college-aged students that are taking a gap year are applying for our company where our staffing numbers are looking great for this winter," Cole said.

Small businesses in Big Sky are seeking different solutions. At the beginning of 2020 Omania began looking into hosting her own visa holders rather than employing those hosted by the resort to avoid scheduling conflicts with the visa holders' primary employer. Following the president's June proclamation, Omania, with the help of an immigration attorney, began the process of obtaining H-2B visas, another nonimmigrant visa program suspended by the proclamation.

The president's proclamation allows for certain exemptions to the suspension, including one for foreign workers entering the U.S. to perform temporary labor or services essential to the country's food supply chain. Under this exemption, Omania has obtained five H2-B visas which she can use to host five new employees.

Though Omania described the process as cumbersome and expensive—roughly \$8,000 for the initial paperwork alone—the benefits of a guaranteed workforce, albeit limited, outweigh the alternative. During July and August, she said she lost as much as 6,000 every day the restaurant was closed.

"For me, it makes more sense to get the visa myself and to pay the fees, which are pretty high, than to have to close the restaurant because no one will show up for work," she said, "or lose money because we have to shut takeout [food options] off because we don't have enough people to cook."

On Oct. 1, a judge in a federal district court in California issued a preliminary injunction preventing further implementation of the June 22 proclamation resulting from a civil suit filed by a number of organizations against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

This injunction allows applicants—those sponsored by or petitioning through one of the plaintiff groups—to no longer be subject to the entry restrictions. For those not included in the civil suit, the suspension will expire on Dec. 31 provided the proclamation isn't extended into the new year.



Yechenchan, a former Lotus Pad J-1 employee from Malaysia, sorts through fresh ingredients on the kitchen line in 2018. J-1 employees have traditionally been a staple of Big Sky's seasonal workforce, but with the visa program currently suspended, businesses are looking elsewhere to fill vacancies. PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEX OMANIA



From used clothes to community service

Local Poshmark seller donates proceeds to those in need

BY MIRA BRODY

BOZEMAN – When she eventually retires, Carol Simpson imagines spending her time volunteering for a local nonprofit. While still working as Senior Customer Relationship Manager and raising two college-aged sons, Simpson has found a way to turn her Poshmark closet into an avenue to support not one, but many nonprofit organizations. In fact, she has such a growing list of charities that she hopes to contribute to that she has a schedule lined out for the weeks ahead.

Poshmark is a social commerce marketplace where people all over the U.S. can buy and sell new or used clothing, shoes and accessories. Simpson utilizes the platform to not only clear out her children's closets, but also as a way to rally her friends and family around a community-wide charity initiative. She calls her closet Collecting Clothes 4 Charity, and over the last several months, she has been collecting donations, listing them, and donating 100 percent of her proceeds to local Gallatin Valley nonprofits.

"It was my goal when I retired to volunteer my time at a charity," Simpson said. "Being in the Gallatin Valley, there are so many charities that are worthy of your time and you can't possibly volunteer for all of them, so this gave me the chance to help every charity I wanted to—it's the perfect scenario."

Simpson, who lives in Bozeman with her husband and sons Robbie and Ryan, started cleaning out the families closets a the end of February and posting items to Poshmark. Especially with the region's harsh climate, she says parents find that children's seasonal clothing is replaced often before it is used. Poshmark allows parents to recoup some money from their children's outgrown clothing, also providing them the opportunity to purchase gently used items at a more affordable price, while taking advantage of the environmentally friendly business model by reducing, reusing and recycling the items.

"I thought, what can I do if I were able to post more clothes," Simpson said. "I could potentially find a way to use this and raise funds for charities."

The idea turned into reality after Simpson received excess, used clothing items from her neighbor. She posted the items for sale on her Poshmark closest and a majority of the items were purchased that same evening.

After her early success, Simpson established a fundraising goal of \$500 every three months. Once word spread that she was collecting clothing donations to sell with the proceeds returning to the community, donations poured in. She reached her \$500 goal by the end of the first month.

"She's a cancer survivor," said Simpson of her neighbor. "So now when anyone donates to me, I ask if there's a charity in Gallatin Valley that's special to them, and that's how choose where we give at that time."

Both Robbie, who attends the University of Montana and participates on the football team, and Ryan, who is transferring to Montana Tech to play basketball, are both home due to their classes moving to online formats.



Carol's sons, Robbie and Ryan, are her clothes "runners" who do contact-less porch pick-up and leave a thank you note behind to every donor. PHOTO BY CAROL SIMPSON

By helping their mother, they are gaining money management skills while attending school virtually, and acting as her "clothing runners," going around town to those who have contacted Simpson with donations that are ready to be picked up. The transaction is COVID-19 safe and they leave a friendly thank you note on each door.

To this point, Simpson has raised \$10,300 by selling the gently used clothing. With the proceeds, she's made monetary contributions to Gallatin Valley Cancer Support, the Gallatin Valley Food bank, Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter, the Bozeman 3, Bridger Foothills Fire Relief, Thrive "Girls for a Change" and HRDC Homeless Services and Warming Center.

"I really try to take their recommendations because I want everyone in the community to take part in this," Simpson said. "It's just me using Poshmark as an avenue, but its really them."

Simpson hopes to grow her charity efforts as she moves into retirement. With the outpouring of support from her family and neighbors, it's no wonder her once side hobby, has transformed into a tidal wave of community giving.

"I think it's the one thing I love about where we live—this community is amazing," Simpson said. "When that fire hit I actually had a different charity set up, Love Inc., and moved them to a different month with their permission, so we could give money to where it is needed right now." Love Inc. was incredibly supportive, and because they were organizing a massive clothing donation for those who lost everything in the fire, Simpson purged some of her inventory toward their effort. Love Inc. is on Simpson's impending nonprofit donation list—the one that keeps growing.

"When I said I was going to donate those clothes to Bridger [Fire Relief], I was inundated with clothing," Simpson said. "What I do would not happen, the whole concept wouldn't work, if it weren't for the community we live in." Simpson has also made some strong connections within the community, both from donors and nonprofit leaders, who she calls "amazing people." "I have just a little piece of what they do and I get to meet all of them," she said with modesty. "It's pretty rewarding on my side."

Poshmark has been supportive of Simpson's efforts as well—it's exactly the kind of community involvement they stand by and encourage, according to the company's Senior Vice President of Community, LyAnn Chhay.

"It's incredible to see how Seller Stylists like Carol have become entrepreneurs and are giving back to their communities in meaningful ways," Chhay said. "In donating her earnings to local charities, Carol has demonstrated a distinct spirit of generosity and commitment to extending the life cycle of clothing in a sustainable way."

As we all continue to adjust to prolonged social distancing, especially heading into the long winter months, Simpson's story is an example of how we can remain connected to our communities, form new friendships and give back to those in need.

To donate gently used clothing, shoes and accessories to Simpson's Poshmark closet, you can private message her on Instagram: @cc4c406, Facebook: Carol Simpson Collecting Clothes for Charity, or shop her Poshmark closet.



October's beneficiary is HRDC's Homelessnes Services.

Each month we select a different Gallatin Valley charity as our beneficiary. This year we have donated to Cancer Support Community, Thrive, MSU's Black Student Union, Gallatin Valley Food Bank, Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter, The Bozeman 3 and the Bridger Foothills Fire Relief Fund.

2020 donations are up to \$10,300

Carol Simpson started distributing flyers requesting clothing donations for her Poshmark closet and was shocked by the outpouring of support from the community. PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROL SIMPSON

Local Halloween festivities occurring amidst pandemic

Big Sky's COVID-19 safe holiday activities

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY — Spooky season is upon us and with it comes cooler weather and the promise of ski season, looming just around the corner. But first, Halloween.

With a global pandemic in full swing, it looks like many traditional Halloween events around the nation are being cancelled. However, here in Big Sky, there are still ways to safely enjoy the holiday.

As Ody Loomis, a parent in the community, put it, "we need to find the silver lining."

A nurse at the Bozeman Health Big Sky Medical Center, Loomis has a 7-year-old son, Reed, who attends second grade at the Big Sky Discovery Academy. While she said that she would not feel comfortable taking her son trick-or-treating this year, she is excited for the Discovery Academy's "Historical Halloween" assignment, which gives the kids an opportunity to dress up on the Friday before Halloween.

The assignment is simple, pick a historical figure who is considered a peacemaker, learn about their life, then dress up as them and present what you learned to the class.

In past years, Reed has chosen to dress as John Muir and Gandhi. This year, he will be Maurice Hillman, a Montana native and a vaccologist who was responsible for developing more than 40 vaccines, remedying illnesses such as measles, mumps, and Hepatitis A and B. The student's findings will be presented online this year on Oct. 30.

"I think there's a silver lining in everything and I think this is a great opportunity to do something different and still make it fun and let the kids dress up and be someone else," Loomis said.

Loomis added that Reed will still dress up at home and they will go on an adventure for Halloween rather than trick-or-treating this year. Their Halloween adventure list includes a possible hike or even sledding—conditions permitting—since as Loomis said, "after 17 years in Big Sky I know it always snows on Halloween."

Even if you aren't a second grader at the Discovery Academy, there are still options for Halloween fun offered by the Town Center Owners Association and their partners.

The fourth annual Haunted Peaks Festival will still take place Oct. 30-31 with health and safety modifications in place. This year, the film festival will be held virtually through YouTube playlists, but the haunted house and door-to-door trick-or-treating at businesses will not take place.



Carving pumpkins outside is a great option to celebrate Halloween safely this year. Make sure to post your pumpkins in the Town Center's King and Queen Carving Competition event. PHOTO BY TUCKER HARRIS

Otherwise, there is still a full docket of events for the community to enjoy.

There will be pumpkin carving and window display competitions, a virtual concert, a geocache mystery, and Yappy Hour—a pet costume competition. All of these events will follow safety guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Gallatin City-County Health Department.

"As far as Halloween goes," said Candace Strauss, CEO of the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce, "we are working with Matt Kelley and the Gallatin City County Health Department in regards to anything that we do."

Right now, any gathering that will involve 50 people or more requires a special event permit from the health department. Erik Morrison, the events and social media manager for TCOA,

said that they were recently approved to hold the Great Pumpkin Giveaway.

"I'm super excited that they gave us the go ahead and we are happy with the strategy that we outlined to be COVID-safe," Morrison said.

The event is a huge food drive for the Big Sky Community Food Bank. The community is invited to come to the Town Center, make a canned food donation and receive a pumpkin in exchange. Due to COVID-19, all donations must be made at curbside pickup stations. All volunteers at the event will have their temperatures checked at the beginning of the day and will wear gloves as well as make frequent use of the available sanitization stations.

Along with these events provided by TCOA, there are also options for safe trick-or-treating for those who cannot, in good conscience, let Halloween pass without receiving their share of candy.

The CDC posted a helpful list of guidelines that categorizes potential Halloween activities as low, moderate and high risk. Along with these labels, they offer suggestions for safer activities that families can do.

One option is to team up with your "pod" or whoever your family is still interacting with and visit each other's houses for an abbreviated round of trick-or-treating.

Another option, if you do not wish to answer your door this Halloween, is to lay out pre-wrapped candies, spaced appropriately, that kids can access for a contact-less trick-or-treating experience.

Whatever your comfort level, there are various opportunities in Big Sky to safely enjoy the spooky holiday.



Adventurous trail users can follow clues and solve

Costume happy hour for people and pets at The Rocks.

Enjoy specials, enter yourself and your pet into the

costume contest, win prizes, and the many pet

mysteries to win hidden prizes all weekend long

in Big Sky Town Center.

friendly activities.

Yappy Hour 10/31 @ 5 - 6 p.m.

Didn't get a mail ballot? Here's what to do

BY GRIFFEN SMITH COMMUNITY NEWS SERVICE UM SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Hundreds of thousands of ballots were mailed Oct. 9 to registered Montana voters in 45 counties doing mail-in voting. Although most ballots should safely reach voters at their homes, it's possible some may be late or missing.

According to the Helena Independent Record in May, more than 85 percent of registered voters successfully received ballots during the June 2 primary, but some voters did not receive a ballot due to an address change or a possible error by the U.S. Postal Service.

For the general election, multiple election administrators said a person's ballot should take a couple days to mail to an address, especially in the case of rural Montanans and voters on Indian reservations. They added that if a registered voter does not see a ballot by Thursday, Oct. 15, then voters need to get in touch with their election office.

Bret Rutherford, the election administrator of Yellowstone County, said this will be a rare occurrence in the general election but added there are ways voters can still get a ballot.

"The best resource people can use right off the bat is the My Voter Page app on all election administrator websites," Rutherford said. "You can click on there and see if your address is correct, or if you are registered at all."

Potential voters who did not register or change their address can change it on the My Voter page and mail in a new voter registration packet to the election office. There will be a waiting period during which the office will send a new ballot to the person.

AND MORE ABOUT VOTING IN GALLATIN COUNTY.

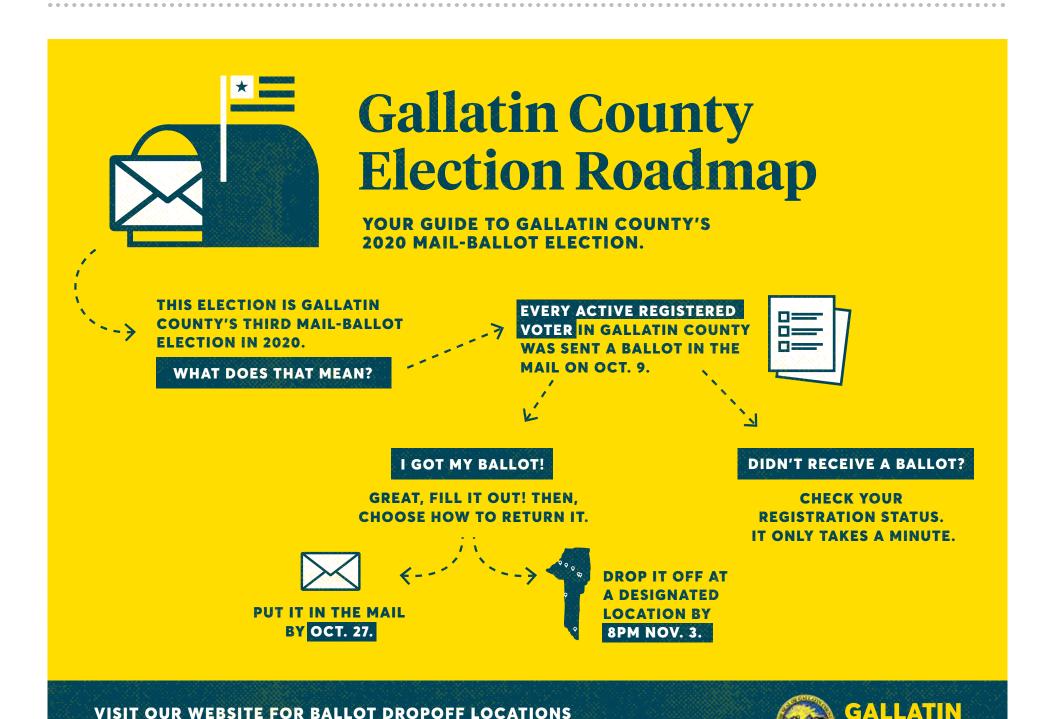
For the 11 counties holding in-person elections, the system will operate as normal. Rana Wichman, election administrator of Fergus County, said while people are voting in person, absentee ballots are also being sent to voters.

If voters request an absentee ballot and do not receive it, Wichman said, they can go to their local election office and request the ballot in person. Voters in all-mail election counties can also request ballots in person at their local election office.

Ballots are due in all counties by 8 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 3.

Visit the My Voter Page at app.mt.gov/voterinfo for additional voter information.





OUTLAW

News from our publisher, Outlaw Partners

Town Hall recap:

Community leaders talk ski season, COVID-19

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY — Winter is coming and with it comes a concerning spike in COVID-19 cases as well as a revised operations plan for Big Sky Resort.

In the Town Hall discussion on Oct. 19, Troy Nedved, general manager of Big Sky Resort, and Matt Kelley, health officer with the Gallatin City-County Health Department, discussed concerns about COVID-19 headed into winter, as well as the resort's plans for operating during a pandemic.

Town Hall also included special guest Missy Botha, head volleyball coach at Lone Peak High School who is celebrating the girls' undefeated season.

Although their regular season was cut short as the entire team as well as Botha are in quarantine due to a positive COVID-19 case, the postseason still remains. Botha said the Lady Bighorns are now scheduled to play Manhattan Christian, their last regular season game, the day after they are cleared to leave quarantine.

After a challenging season affected by a lack of fans and injuries, Botha has big expectations for the girls and expects them to be competitive in the postseason.

Kelley discussed the recent spike in COVID-19 cases and attributes the current surge to how connected Gallatin County is with the rest of the world. He expressed worry both for what will happen to case numbers and hospitalizations over Halloween weekend and for the entire winter.

"We are at the cusp of cold and flu season which will make it difficult to determine who has COVID and who just has the crud," Kelley said.

While he is worried, Kelley is also hopeful that we will have a vaccine in the next five to six months. Though all of our problems will not be immediately solved by the arrival of

a vaccine, it will be a "light at the end of the tunnel," according to Kelley.

"Going back to late March, the first press conference we had in Gallatin County was the day we got our first case. One of the things I said was, 'we need to treat each other with respect and dignity and kindness and grace' and I think we need to keep doing that and making sacrifices for one another."

In order to ensure that Big Sky can stay open, Kelley emphasized that, even though we are social creatures who want to be together, we need to make sacrifices for the benefit of those around us.

Nedved echoed Kelley saying, "It's a collaborative effort and we all need to own that responsibility."

Big Sky Resort has been working with other resorts in the industry to develop a plan to "get open and stay open" according to Nedved. "It's really nice to see that everyone in the industry got together. It wasn't a competition," he said.

Nedved, who has been general manager for just under a year, spoke about how the North American ski industry was able to learn a lot from South America to inform their operating plans for this winter. Big Sky will be requiring face coverings in lift lines, on lifts and inside public buildings. They will also put an emphasis social distancing and encourage visitors to eat outside if the weather allows.

According to Nedved, "Big Sky resort is different, we have a lot of acreage to work with which means a lot of elbow room."

In addition to a COVID-19 operating plan, Big Sky Resort is also still working towards their goal of net zero emissions by 2030.

Kelley and Nedved wrapped things up on a more positive note—they are both looking forward to hitting the slopes again and getting in some therapeutic powder turns.



SAVE THE DATE JANUARY 27 - JANUARY 30, 2021

A Live And Virtual Event

TEDXBIGSKY.COM

Richard Waltz Harper

Richard Waltz (nee Gill) Harper, age 77, passed away peacefully on Oct. 2, 2020 after a short illness in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. He was born in Portland, Oregon on July 21, 1943 to Dorothy Doris Brown and Richard Waltz Gill, who was killed in action during World War II. He was raised by Doris, his mother and Ralph Harper, who adopted him in Portland and predeceased him.

Dick attended James Madison High School, 1961, Willamette College, 1965, Oregon State University, 1968 and received his Ph.D from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1973. He was a member of the Phi Delta Theta and Sigma Xi fraternities.

Dick spent his entire career as a chemist at Eli Lilly, Indianapolis, retiring after 38 years in 2009 where he held over 25 patents. After retirement, he became an adjunct research professor at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. He was a 50-year member of the American Chemical Society, Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association and the Rotary Club of Big Sky. Among his hobbies were photography, ham radio, flying, skiing, reading, listening to classical music, U2, Pink Floyd and cooking.

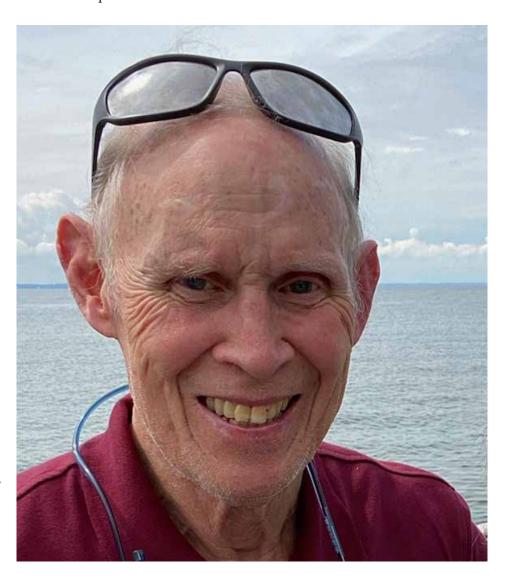
He will be remembered by all who knew him for his kindness, patience, gentleness, smile, generous heart, his dry sense of humor and "dad" jokes. Maude is especially grateful for helping her to grow into a better person. His very special companions were his dogs: Teddy Bear, Skippy, Kallie, Zoe, Mittie and Farley.

He is survived by his wife, Maude E. Glore of Rehoboth Beach and Big Sky. He was a loving and influential father to his six children: Jennifer (Jose), Jill (Blaine), Jonathan; his children by his former wife: Susan Harper and Robert (Jennifer), Benjamin (Melissa), and William (Candice); his stepchildren by Maude Glore. He also has 11 amazing grandchildren who called him "Grampy:" Isabel, Lucia, Gunnar, Charles, Emma, Hixon, Logan, Henry, Tyler, Caroline, Charles. He is also survived by his sister, Teri Moore of Portland.

A memorial service will be held privately at a later date. Arrangements are being handled by Parsell Funeral Homes and Crematorium, Lewes, Delaware.

In lieu of flowers, any memorial donations should be made to the ASPCA in his memory at https://secure.aspca.org/team/RichardWaltzHarper

Please visit Mr. Harper's Life Memorial Webpage and sign his online guest book at www.parsellfuneralhomes.com





HOW TO VOTE IN THE 2020 ELECTION

COUNTIES HOLDING A MAIL BALLOT ELECTION

All active, registered voters will be mailed a ballot starting October 9th. Early in-person voting at the county election office will be available from October 2 through noon on November 2, and in-person voting will be available at the county election office on Election Day. Additional locations and hours vary by county. For more details about your county, visit www.406votes.com/how-to-vote.

Beaverhead	Garfield
Big Horn	Glacier
Blaine	Golden Valley
Carter	Granite
Cascade	Hill
Custer	Jefferson
Daniels	Judith Basin
Dawson	Lake
Deer Lodge	Lewis And
Fallon	Clark
Flathead	Liberty
Gallatin	Lincoln

Madison	Rosebud
McCone	Sanders
Meagher	Sheridan
Missoula	Silver Bow
Musselshell	Sweet Grass
Park	Teton
Phillips	Toole
Pondera	Valley
Prairie	Wheatland
Ravalli	Yellowstone

Richland Roosevelt

Return your ballot by mail or in person ASAP!

Your completed ballot must be received by 8pm on November 3rd.

COUNTIES HOLDING A POLLING PLACE ELECTION

Early in-person voting at the county election office will be available from October 5 through noon on November 2. The county will mail absentee ballots to active voters who have requested them on October 9. Polling places will be open on Election Day, but your polling place may be different this year. For more details about your county, visit www.406votes.com/how-to-vote.

Broadwater Mineral Stillwater
Carbon Petroleum Treasure
Chouteau Powder River Wibaux
Fergus Powell

how to vote? Call or text the Voter
Assistance Hotline at
(406) 272-4046 or
(844) 406-VOTE. Or
visit SteveBullock.
com/vote

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SECTION 2: ENVIRONMENT & OUTDOORS, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT







THE NEW WEST



BY TODD WILKINSON EBS ENVIRONMENTAL COLUMNIST

Greg Carr has come a long way from growing up in Idaho Falls not far from the Snake River. After doing well as a businessperson in the tech industry, he became an eco-humanitarian philanthropist in Africa, helping to resurrect a national park often compared to Yellowstone.

Carr and his colleagues in Mozambique's Gorongosa National Park were featured in the

first of a new three-part series that aired recently on PBS. Called "The Age of Nature," it airs Wednesday nights through Oct. 28.

Not long ago, I had a conversation with Carr, who is proud to be a native of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

TODD WILKINSON: National parks are human creations that sometimes assume larger importance with age. Has this happened with Gorongose in a similar way that it has happened with Yellowstone?

GREG CARR: Gorongosa Park has changed from "night" to "day." Night would be the 20th-century colonial era when regular Mozambicans were not allowed to visit the park. The park's mission then was simply to protect wildlife and have visitors from far away come to see them. "Day" is the 21st century for Gorongosa.

The vision and mission of the park have expanded and are more inclusive. We have more than 600 employees and 98 percent are Mozambican. Mozambican citizens enter the park for free (school groups, teachers and parents) or for \$1. The park belongs to the Mozambican people; it is their treasure and the symbol of their nation.

TW: Gorongosa is a bright spot that really offers hope in these uncertain, very trying times. What does "hope" mean to you?

CARR: I do believe that we can all imagine a future 30 years from now—think 2050—that looks like this:

- a) All energy is renewable.
- b) All children in the world are in school.
- c) Women have their full rights to participate in society.
- d) Every family is lifted from dire poverty. They may not be "wealthy" but they will have the basic needs required for dignity.
- e) A large number of national parks and other protected areas (reserves, etc.) have been protected (some expanded) and function as biodiversity reservoirs, and provide ecosystem services to their regions and the Earth globally.
- f) Most nations have found their way to democracy and human rights. I do believe the above is possible. We have to envision it, and then take steps each day toward this outcome.

TW: Part of "The Age of Nature" series is aimed at highlighting the power of educating people. Riff a bit on this.

CARR: People are healthier and happier when they are out in wild nature. Trees make us happy. Vistas of water, mountains, grasslands and wildlife make us happy. These experiences affect our psychological well-being. I have seen many visitors come to Gorongosa for a week and tell me that the park changed them. I have seen couples fall in love again. I have seen children connect with their parents again. I have seen lifelong friendships form between two strangers after one night ... talking by the fire under the stars.

TW: When you describe the GYE to your friends and collaborators in Gorongosa country, what do you say?

CARR: I usually just have to say one simple thing: "I grew up near Yellowstone, visited it frequently as a child, and I have loved national parks my entire life."

TW: What's important to you when you hear the reassessment going on in the U.S. related to how conservation has happened, at the expense of

A conversation with philanthropist Greg Carr

indigenous people and without regard given to the rights of all People of Color? CARR: I am not an expert on these topics in the U.S. In Gorongosa, Mozambique, we have visitors from all over the world—speaking every language, coming from every culture—we have Islamic women in burkas, we have Mennonites from Canada, we have Australians, Chinese and Europeans. And, of course, we have Mozambican families. I see them all react to magnificent wilderness the same way. The love lies deep in our DNA.

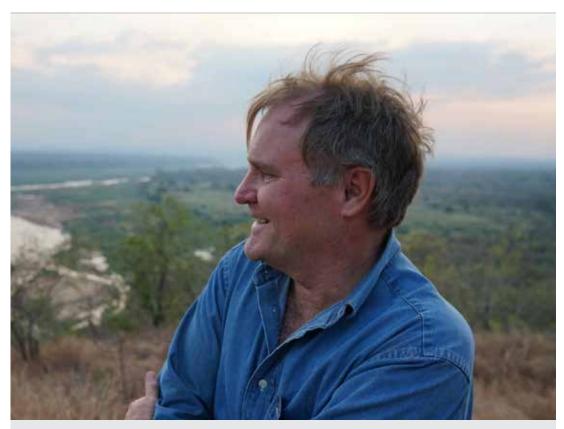
TW: What kind of an impact have these COVID-19 times had on Gorongosa? CARR: I know that COVID has affected some other national parks in Africa more than us, and I worry about them. These are places that depend on tourism for their budget. In our case, tourism is never more than 10 percent of what we do

TW: Many see restoration as the yang to conservation with preservation representing the yin. Do you describe what's happening in Gorongosa as "rewilding"? **CARR:** In Gorongosa, I don't often use the word "rewilding" for the following reason. In most places, nature will restore itself when humans stop the disturbance. Probably 95 percent of Gorongosa's restoration happened naturally. We needed to remove 27,000 snares and traps so that wildlife numbers could increase on their own, and a new equilibrium could be established among tens of thousands of species. We brought in some wildlife in the beginning but less than I originally thought we might need to do. I think of rewilding as a complete reversal. E.g.: taking a cattle ranch and trying to bring back the American prairie species.

TW: What are your thoughts on the tenor of urgency that's been set?

CARR: I am a practitioner. I see my job as helping the Mozambicans do something they want to do, restore and protect their national park, Gorongosa. I was invited to help so I'm doing it. I do believe that conservation is largely a "local science," i.e.: what works in one place might not work in another. I think the best thing we can all do is take action in our own homes and neighborhoods. Install solar power, use less plastic, etcetera because when done in mass numbers the impact carries momentum.

Todd Wilkinson is the founder of Bozeman-based Mountain Journal and is a correspondent for National Geographic. He's also the author of the book "Grizzlies of Pilgrim Creek," featuring photography by Thomas D. Mangelsen, about famous Jackson Hole grizzly bear 399.



Idaho Falls native Greg Carr in Goronogosa National Park. PHOTO COURTESY OF GREG CARR

A Recap: 2020 fire season wreaks havoc

How local agencies cooperate and respond to fires

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – This summer, smoke from western wildfires smothered the U.S., many people fled their homes, thousands of structures were destroyed and millions of acres were obliterated.

In Colorado, the Cameron Peak fire recently became the largest in the state's history according to the Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center.

According to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection in California, five out of the six largest wildfires in their history occurred this year.

The number of U.S. acres that wildfires have chewed up in 2020 exceeds the National Interagency Fire Center's 10-year average by about 2 million acres. As of EBS press time, more than 46,000 fires have burned nearly 8.5 million acres of land so far this year, according to the NIFC.

During the summer of 2020, 63 wildfires burned across the Custer Gallatin National Forest. Of the 36 in the Greater Yellowstone portion of the forest, only two were larger than 10 acres according to Scott Schuster, the Fire Staff Officer for the forest.

Greg Megaard, Fire Chief at the Big Sky Fire Department, noted that 63 fires was low, "especially with how dry the conditions were this summer."

In the Big Sky fire district, Chief Megaard said there were roughly 10-12 very small fires this summer.

The 2020 North American fire season has been staggering in scale. Fire departments and other agencies across the country have met the record-breaking burns with a coordinated and collaborative response. In southwest Montana, Chief Megaard is glad it wasn't worse.

"We were extremely lucky here," Megaard said, "people really paid attention."

Part of fighting fire in rural areas like Big Sky is being a good neighbor. Fire suppression is a team effort and fire responders often provide support or "mutual aid" beyond their own jurisdictions. As Seth Barker, a Battalion Chief and Chief Training Officer with BSFD, puts it, "... we really try to help our neighbors out."

BSFD has a variety of mutual aid partners in the area. Each of these partners are in neighboring jurisdictions and can call on each other for help any time.

One such partner is the Custer Gallatin. "We have an agreement with the Forest Service that they come help us out if there is any wildland fire near our town and they get on scene very quickly and are very professional and good to work with," Barker said.

On Oct. 10, the BSFD responded to a fire right near mile marker 39 on U.S. Highway 191. The blaze began when a powerful wind cell took down a powerline.

Though this location was technically outside of BSFD's district, the department and mutual aid partners responded and managed the situation until the Forest Service arrived. Barker said they were able to contain the fire to under a half-acre and secure the area. "The potential threat of that fire would have been catastrophic," he said "because this was before we started getting all the rain."

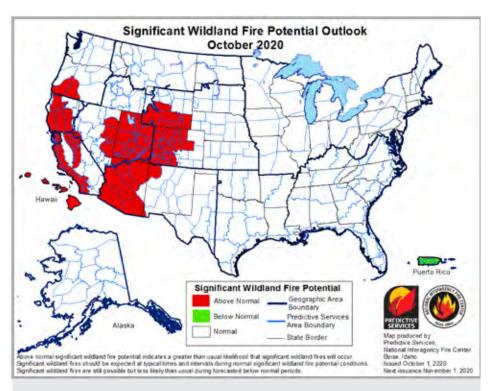
This September, the Bridger Foothills Fire was one of two in the Custer Gallatin that exceeded 10 acres, and it was the only wildfire this season that took more than a couple days to suppress.

"It wasn't an unusual fire season for us, it was just the unfortunate location of the Bridger Foothills Fire," said Scott Schuster, fire staff officer with the Custer Gallatin.

A holdover lightning strike on Sept. 4 started the Bridger Foothills Fire approximately three miles northeast of Bozeman near the "M" trail. In total, the fire burned 8,224 acres and was not fully contained until noon on Oct. 12, according to the interagency Incident Information System.



The Bridger Foothills Fire burned over 8,000 acres and involved agencies from across the country. PHOTO BY EMILY STIFLER-WOLFE



The Wildfire Potential Outlook from the NIFC calls for a higher than normal wildfire potential in much of the west through October. Montana, however, is predicted to have a normal potential. GRAPHIC COURTESY OF THE NIFC

The response to the Bridger Foothills Fire was far reaching in that, according to Schuster, even a fire engine from Florida eventually joined the effort. The coordination of the suppression effort included the Forest Service as well as BSFD, alongside seven other local agencies.

The response to any fire is coordinated by an on-site Incident Commander, which in the case of the Bridger Foothills Fire was a representative from the Bozeman Ranger District. The IC then evaluates how successful the suppression of the fire was and orders more resources through dispatch as necessary.

After the first day of the Bridger Foothills blaze, fuel and erratic wind conditions necessitated more support, according to Schuster.

"Once it becomes a large fire, there's folks from all across the country that respond and represent other federal agencies, other state and local agencies, private contractors, a whole gamut of folks," he said.

Many fire response collaborations this season have been reciprocal. While numerous outside resources supported fire suppression efforts in Bozeman this summer, local agencies also lent a hand on the West Coast.

"We've gone to California once this year with full engines and crew and a command staff," Barker said. "That's the third year in a row we have gone to help out in California."

The Custer Gallatin National Forest coordinates with area agencies to respond to fires, including the National Park Service the Bureau of Land Management and other national forests.

"We spend a tremendous amount of time assessing the risk to the public and firefighters and balancing that when we decide exactly what we are going to do and how we are going to respond," Schuster said.

In addition to working as a team to suppress fires, federal agencies like the Forest Service also spend a lot of time evaluating risk, implementing national fire policies and mitigating hazardous fuels through thinning, education and coordination with other agencies.

BSFD works on hazardous fuel mitigation with grant funds and through home consultations. "Once a year we do a grant-funded program that puts four to five firefighters on people's property and helps them to mitigate some of their wildland hazard," Barker said.

The outlook for the rest of the fire season in Montana is normal, according to NIFC's Wildland Fire Potential Outlook released in early October. Regardless of the danger, Montana is well prepared to meet any new fire challenges, according to Gov. Steve Bullock, who announced on Aug. 17 that the fire fund for the state reached its statutory maximum.

On Aug. 15, nearly \$47 million was transferred from the state's general fund to the suppression fund increasing it to its maximum of 101.5 million for the first time in history.

Big Sky has been lucky in that there have been very few blazes, but Chief Megaard still advises caution.

"The potential is still here; it is certainly less than what it was when we had an extreme high fire danger a few weeks ago. I would say we have a low to moderate danger now, but things can still burn."

The West's population grows and churns

BY JONATHAN THOMPSON WRITERS ON THE RANGE



Ever since 1790, when the U.S. Census started keeping track of such things, the migratory flow of non-Indigenous people within the United States has moved from East to West, into lands they erroneously saw as a blank slate, and not so erroneously as a land rife with natural resources to exploit.

Americans are still mobile and still moving West, but over time, the trajectory of the human flow has shifted to something more

complex, with shifting patterns that sometimes double back unexpectedly. It's a sign of changing economics, but also, perhaps, one of a maturing region.

During the 19th century the federal government lured colonizers West with vast land giveaways. The masses came seeking what Frederick Jackson Turner called "the richest free gift that was ever spread out before civilized man." Erasing from view the peoples who had lived on the land for millennia, he described the West as "vacant"—an irresistible "opportunity for a new order of things."

Later, during the Dust Bowl and Great Depression, hundreds of thousands of people flocked from the lower Midwest to California, seeking refuge from drought and economic distress. The trend continued after World War II, as a wave of returning soldiers and their families moved westward for opportunities in the growing cities of the region, along with the oil and gas booms and the uranium frenzy and then the big coalpower buildup on the Colorado Plateau.

Those same trends continue in many parts of the West, but over the last few years, some of the same migration-magnet counties of the past have seen a greater number of people leave—often for other parts of the region—than move in.

Take Farmington in northwestern New Mexico. Once a quiet agricultural town, a succession of energy-related booms beginning in mid-century drew droves of joband opportunity-seekers to it from all over the nation. The population of the county ballooned from just 18,000 in 1950, to 130,000 sixty years later. But when natural gas prices plummeted at the end of 2008, the main pillar of the economy crumbled. Energy workers followed the drilling rigs to more lucrative oil patches, and the population started shrinking and continues to do so today as the coal industry also erodes away. The pattern—of as much as eight percent of the population moving away—is repeated

in other natural gas and coal-dependent counties, including Sublette and Campbell counties in Wyoming, Rio Blanco County in Colorado and Uintah County in Utah.

Drill rigs and draglines—or the lack thereof—are not the only factors driving migratory movement in the West. Denver, which once housed enough energy executives to inspire the Dynasty television series, still attracts migrants, only this time they are millennials coming to take advantage of high-wage jobs, a growing marijuana economy and recreational and cultural amenities. On the other hand, the population continues to drain from some of the agricultural, non-resort counties of Colorado and every other state in the West.

Meanwhile, in California, the exodus is outpacing the influx, with Los Angeles County losing about 30,000 people a year and the state of California some 200,000 per year. Many of them are equity refugees—cashing out of the inflated California real estate market and putting their money into places like Maricopa County, Arizona, home of Phoenix. It's one of the nation's fastest-growing places, despite this July experiencing the city's hottest month in the past 125 years.

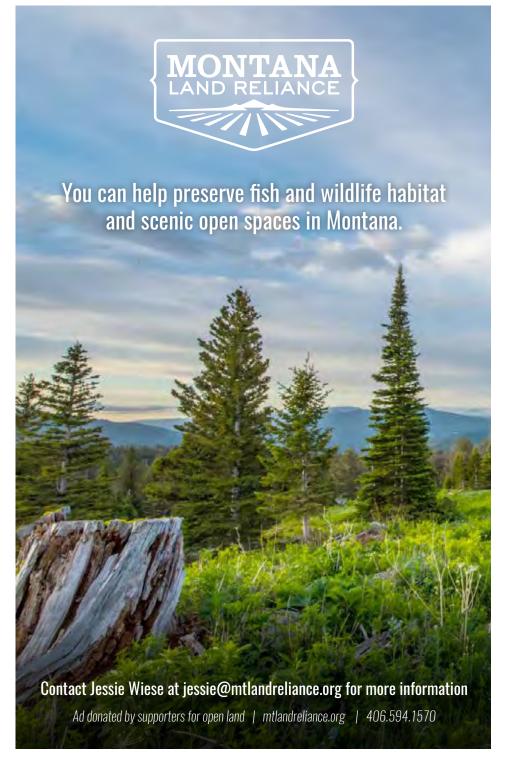
Relatively reasonable housing costs in Phoenix and a revitalized downtown remain a draw, and energy-intensive air conditioning, for those who can afford it, helps offset the brutal temperatures —even as it helps trigger them.

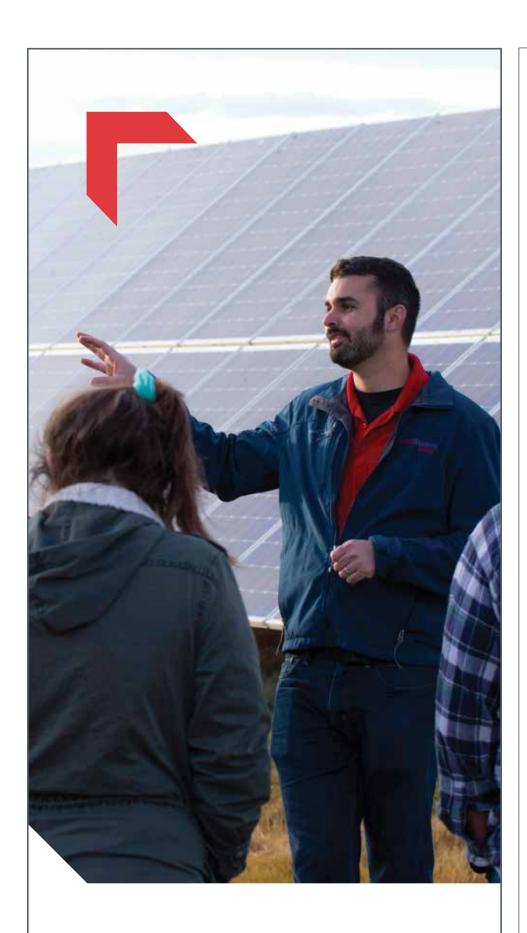
Yet another pattern-shift is upon us, as urbanites and telecommuters flee from the pandemic or social unrest to smaller, more affordable "Zoom towns" and rural areas. Although coronavirus-era migration data has not yet been released, the real estate brokerage Redfin reports that, after taking a dip this spring, the rural real estate market nationwide has taken off much faster than in urban areas.

Amenity-rich, rural places like Chaffee County, Colorado, or Bonner County, Idaho, have seen noticeable spikes in median home prices and home sales over the last few months. Whether this represents a wave of second-home buyers looking for a part-time refuge or people looking to permanently relocate is not clear. But it may signal a new wave of urban migrants crashing into the suburban and rural West once again. You could even call them COVID migrants.

Jonathan Thompson is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, a nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He's a veteran reporter on the West and the author of "River of Lost Souls: The Science, Politics, and Greed Behind the Gold King Mine Disaster."







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Water Wisdom

BY DAVID TUCKER EBS CONTRIBUTOR

"It's the nutrients, stupid."

That's a paraphrase of the now-classic campaign line by James Carville, but when it comes to improving water quality in the Big Sky area, the solution is almost that simple. If we want cleaner water, we must reduce the concentration of nutrients entering our ground and surface water resources. Thanks to a study by Chris Allen, PhD at WGM Group, we can now quantify the harmful pollutants entering the West Fork and main stem Gallatin River.

Based largely on 20 years of data collected by the Gallatin River Task Force, Allen's Big Sky Nutrient Assessment identifies the largest sources of nutrient pollution and recommends mitigation strategies. Many of the strategies and sources have been identified in the past, and indeed GRTF has already completed projects recommended in the assessment.

Those projects include but are not limited to streambank restoration along the Middle Fork, public-awareness campaigns focused on septic-system maintenance and advocating for the already-approved upgrade to the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District's wastewater treatment plant. With Allen's assessment in mind, we can scale our efforts to increase the long-term impact of such projects.

The Healthy Headwaters Alliance identified primary sources of wastewater irrigation, septic systems, equestrian and grazing operations, stormwater and potentially even dog poop. The nutrient assessment provides preliminary quantification of these sources to identify where the best "bang for the buck" is to see measurable improvements, primarily in the West Fork, but with an overall benefit to the Gallatin as well. Using an analysis of baseflow, an estimated 5,000 pounds per year of nitrogen appear to make it into the West Fork from human sources with an estimated 40 percent potentially attributable to wastewater irrigation and 30 percent to onsite wastewater treatment (septic) systems.

Based on those numbers, it's clear that irrigating with wastewater, while it has eliminated the threat of direct discharge into the Gallatin and has significant nutrient removal benefits, has negative environmental impacts of its own. Once online, however, the new wastewater treatment plant will reduce the nitrogen load of irrigation by 70 percent, when compared to current concentrations. "Upgrading the treatment plant is likely the single most effective step in reducing nitrogen concentrations in the West Fork of the Gallatin River," Allen reiterated in his report, underscoring the environmental benefits of the new plant.

Toward a nutrient deficit

While it's a big step in the right direction, improving the quality of our municipal wastewater won't solve the nutrient problem entirely. In the canyon and Big Sky area, individual septic systems leach an estimated 5,000 pounds of nitrogen annually into the watershed, and this area is expected to develop rapidly in the coming years. Without centralized water and sewer services, that already high number will undoubtedly increase, posing perhaps the greatest yet-to-be-realized threat to the Gallatin.

According to the Canyon Area Feasibility Study conducted by Mace Mangold of the WGM Group, instream loading in the canyon could more than double in the next 20 years. Additionally, "onsite systems have an average life of 20-30 years, meaning that many systems built in the 1990s are reaching the end of their design life," added Allen.

While regular maintenance and well-sited systems can reduce loading from individual septics, forming a canyon area water and sewer district and connecting to the BSCWSD's new treatment plant would likely lead to the greatest reduction in nutrient loading to the main stem. This connection is likely to be expensive for homeowners in the canyon, but by forming a district, funding opportunities such as grants and low-interest loans become available, which could help in shouldering some of that financial burden.

In addition to wastewater-related loading, concentrated livestock grazing represents a notable pollutant in the upper Gallatin watershed, and may be the single most

cost-effective nutrient load to remove. Many horse operations exist directly adjacent to water resources, making this a particularly troubling source. Low-cost runoff management, manure handling practices and riparian protection can nearly eliminate impacts to streams.

With this assessment in hand, we have a detailed blueprint for water-quality improvement.

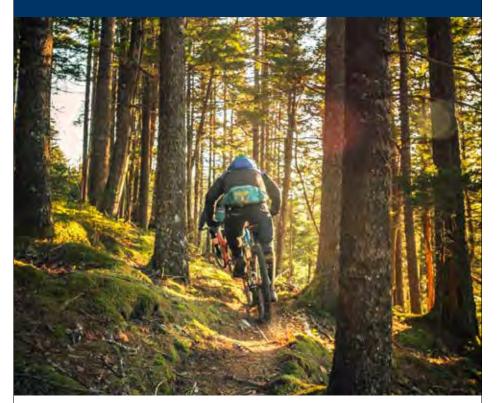
David Tucker is the communications manager for the Gallatin River Task Force.



Willows along the Middle Fork as it flows adjacent to the Big Sky golf course. The Gallatin River Task Force replanted this streamside vegetation several years ago as part of their ongoing nutrient-reduction strategy. PHOTO COURTESY OF GALLATIN RIVER TASK FORCE



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500 years ago, at least 30 million bison roamed the plains. That number is now less than 30,000. The depletion of free range bison has been attributed to:

- Decades of over-exploitation
- Decline in genetic diversity
- Habitat loss
- Human Interaction

Yellowstone National Park boasts the nation's largest free range buffalo herd, but only two others remain - the Henry's Mountains and Book Cliffs herds, both in southern Utah.

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NOAA forecasts 85 percent chance of a La Niña winter

What to expect this ski season

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY — A La Niña winter has been forecast by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which in theory, means lower temps and higher precipitation in the Rocky Mountains this winter. However, while it is tempting to expect a massive snow year, it's important not to jump the gun.

The forecast was originally made by NOAA on Sept. 10 and since then, the chance has risen to 85 percent. While this seems promising, it remains only a chance for now. Lucas Zukiewicz, a water supply specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service of Montana, emphasized the fact that even if La Niña conditions persist, this could still be an average or even below average winter.

Zukiewicz runs the Snow Telemetry and Snow Course Data and Products network across Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota. He measures macro-scale weather and snowpack patterns in this area and tracks the water supply.

Karl Birkeland, the Director of the National Avalanche Center, joined Zukiewicz in advising caution.

"It's important to understand that this [forecast] is a probability and there is no certainty associated with that," Birkeland said. "If you look back over winters, you'll find La Niña winters where we had big winters and dry ones. And El Niño winters that were wet and dry," he added.

So, what exactly is a La Niña winter and how is it predicted?

La Niña and El Niño, according to NOAA, are global weather patterns resulting from variations in ocean temperatures in the Equatorial Pacific. These two patterns are opposite phases of the El Niño Southern Oscillation cycle. El Niño is the warm phase of this cycle and La Niña is the cold phase. These phases generally last 12 months but can last for years with the tendency of El Niño to occur more frequently.

La Niña is predicted based on sea surface temperatures and atmospheric circulation anomalies over the tropical Pacific Ocean. Additionally, the Atlantic hurricane season, which has been record-breaking this year, is impacted by La Niña conditions and serves as another indicator that the cycle will continue.

In the U.S., a La Niña cycle promises a warm, dry winter in the South and a cool, wet winter in the North. Theoretically, this means more precipitation and more snow in the Mountain West.

Realistically, as Birkeland and Zukiewicz said, the prediction simply means a higher chance of increased precipitation, not a certainty.

Zukiewicz emphasized the complexity involved in predicting long-term global weather patterns, and La Niña is not the only index. The Pacific Decadal Oscillation is another important factor as well as the Arctic Oscillation, which Zukiewicz said, can be an even bigger factor for Montana.

According to Zukiewicz, "A big factor for us is the cold air stream that comes from the arctic oscillation." This circulation pattern directs the cold air coming out of Canada and can be instrumental in bringing snow to the Rockies.

The last decade in Montana has been fairly wet according to Zukiewicz. "For our area the two strong La Niñas for the last decade or so were in October of 2010 to April of 2011," he said.

What is interesting about these back-to-back La Niña winters is the difference in snowfall between the two. Zukiewicz described the winter of 2010 as an average year, and 2011 as record breaking. It is likely that 2011 was notable because it was the second consecutive year of the La Niña cycle, according to Zukiewicz.

Regardless of how much snow the possible La Niña brings to Big Sky this year, Birkeland expects to see a big uptick in backcountry traffic in the area. The network of avalanche centers throughout the West are gearing up for a busy winter and a higher demand of their services, especially advisories and classes.

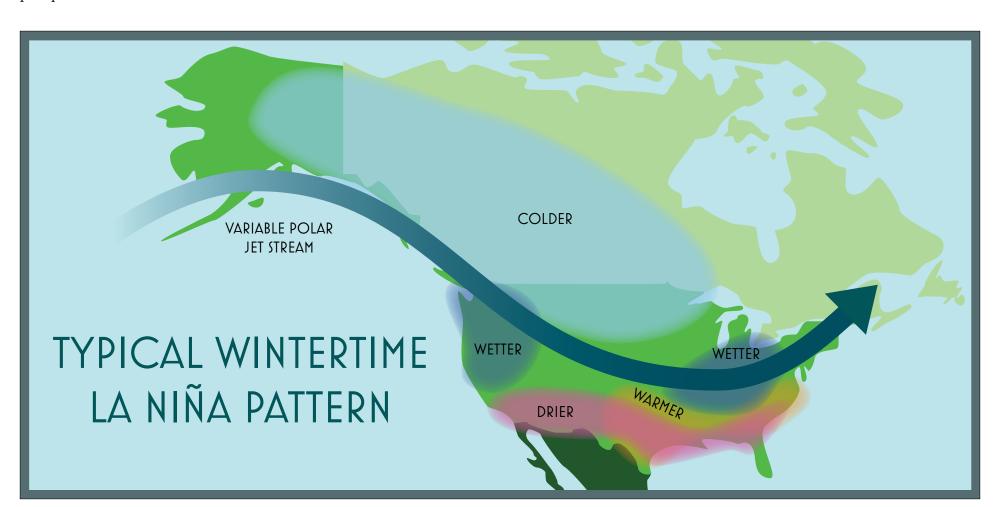
This summer, due to the lack of communal activities available, there was an increase in public land use, according to Birkeland.

"I think this winter we will see lots of people in the backcountry on skis, snowmobiles snowshoeing, the whole nine yards," he said.

His advice to all seasoned and new backcountry users is simple, get the training, get the gear and get the forecast.

Although we cannot be certain that this La Niña winter will be anything special, Zukiewicz is hopeful.

"We always hope for a lot of snow," he said. "I like being outside and to play outside as much as anybody else, so we are always hoping that La Niña forecast is cold and really wet."



FWP hosts virtual public hearing on Madison River recreation

BY BRANDON WALKER

BOZEMAN – For more than 60 years, recreation on the Madison River has been a widely-discussed topic by public users, commercial outfitters and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks officials alike due to its increasing popularity. Although a heavily discussed topic, this year marks the first instance that two submitted rulemaking petitions and an Environmental Assessment have been distributed for public review and comment. Both petitions attempt to address the recreation goals of the Madison River and propose rules that would better protect the increasingly-trafficked waterway.

"What we're trying to figure out is what is the best way to handle recreation management on the river," said Montana FWP Fisheries Division Administrator Eileen Ryce.

Ryce noted that although this is the second instance rulemaking petitions have been submitted to FWP this year, no others have progressed to this point.

The two separate regulation petitions were submitted by the Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana and another, collectively composed by the George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Skyline Sportsmen Association and the Anaconda Sportsmen Association. The petitions were originally presented to the FWP Commission in August. They progressed to the public comment period that began on Sept. 25 and will conclude on Oct. 30 along with the FWP composed EA.

"A lot of people from very different groups that use the river are now coming together and more cohesively saying something needs to be done," Ryce said.

The EA outlined the recreational goal of the Madison River as "1) ensures long-term health and sustainability of the fisheries; 2) diversifies angling opportunity while reducing conflicts; and 3) sustains the ecological and economic benefits of the river to Montanans and our guests."

FWP hosted a virtual public hearing to gather additional comments on the two petitions as well as the EA on the evening of Oct. 20. Ryce said as of Oct. 21, FWP has received more than 400 public comments, not including those verbally stated at the public hearing.

"Hopefully we can put some rules in place that will protect that experience, as a high quality experience, for all recreational users for years to come," said FOAM President Jason Fleury.

"I just hope we can find [a] balance that everybody has to give up a little," said GGTU President Mark Thompson. "I mean that's the only way that this can work."

According to the EA, key points of the GGTU petition include, limiting commercial fishing trips to the 13,909 guided trips that occurred in 2019 for future years, the addition of a river recreation user stamp for all recreationists and instituting a development restriction to preserve natural areas past the Greycliff fishing access.

The most heavily debated portion of GGTU's proposal involves the implementation of sections of river that would prohibit commercial use on certain days of the week from June 15 to Sept. 30. One identified restricted section spans from Varney Bridge to Ennis Fishing access and the other runs from Lyons Bridge to the Palisades day use area. All forms of commercial use would be restricted on specified days by the GGTU proposal, not limited to only commercial float fishing expeditions.

Additionally, it would, "Create two walk/wade sections from June 15 to September 30 to prohibit the use of watercraft or floatation devices to access fishing on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from Quake Lake to Lyons Bridge FAS and from Ennis FAS to Ennis Reservoir. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays watercraft



A fisherman tries their luck on the Madison River. PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTANA FISH WILDLIFE & PARKS



Recreation regulations on the Madison River have been discussed for more than 60 years. PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTANA FISH WILDLIFE & PARKS

or floatation devices may be used to access fishing but no fishing can occur from watercraft or floatation devices from the outlet of Quake Lake to Lyons Bridge FAS and Ennis FAS to Ennis Reservoir. This would replace existing walk/wade section regulations that prohibit fishing from a boat at all times of year," according to the EA.

Both Lyons Bridge and Varney Bridge are frequently used access points along the Madison River for commercial fishing trips to launch and retrieve their watercraft. They are the two most highly-trafficked in regard to percentage of total use of all access sites along the river, accounting for 13.3 percent of use at Lyons and 12.7 percent at Varney, according to FWP data.

Fleury said the FOAM petition is aimed to ensure the commercial users needs are addressed when considering possible recreation regulations for the Madison River. According to the EA, key points of the FOAM petition include, capping commercial fishing trips based on either 2019 total guided trips completed or from 2020 trip totals, creating a Madison River user stamp for all recreationists to help gather non-commercial user data and eliminating the GGTU proposed watercraft prohibited section of the Madison River between Raynolds Pass to Lyons Bridge.

"Our greatest hope is that, with having surveyed our membership and having 78 percent of them on board that we've come together to be a proactive player as part of a solution for the plan, as opposed to just trying to fight it and deny that there is an issue maybe today and certainly down the road with the crowds on the Madison," Fleury said.

FOAM's proposal would also create a method for allocating allotted commercial trips to the various outfitters that operate on the Madison River.

"The social conflicts and all the things that come about because ... it's being loved to death is one thing," Thompson said. "[But] having a world renowned fishery like the Madison and the potential that we do get too much pressure and it does crash, to me that's my biggest fear."

Both Thompson and Fleury acknowledged that their parties' respective petitions weren't without flaws. Aside from the petitions, FWP outlined a third option for recreation management in the EA. That option would maintain the current Madison River fishing regulations.

FWP data in the EA reveals a consistent increase in use on the Madison River since 2011. Angler days on the lower section of the river hovered around 40,000 in 2011 and increased to more than 61,000 in 2017. On the upper section, the increase is even greater, growing from more than 80,000 user days in 2011 to approximately 207,000 in 2017, according to the data.

"Montana has done an excellent job of promoting outdoor recreation and to that end, every river has gotten busier," Thompson said.

Current 2020 FWP fishing regulations prohibit fishing from watercraft in two portions of the Madison River. One such section spans from the outlet of Quake Lake to Lyons Bridge and the other runs from Ennis Lake to Ennis Bridge.

Any proposed regulations would not be valid in the Bear Trap Wilderness area as it is under jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, excluding it from any implemented regulations by FWP.

The next phase of the rulemaking process occurs Nov. 18 at the FWP Commission meeting where Ryce and the FWP department will present and make an official recommendation for proposed recreation management on the Madison River that the Commission will then vote on. Fleury is hopeful action will be taken, stating that a regulatory starting point is necessary.

"At that point, there will be some sort of version of the rule [that] will come out the other end of the Commission meeting and then that's what will go to final rulemaking with the Secretary of State," Ryce said.

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Prepping your body for the slopes

Avoid injury, shred harder and stay healthy this ski season

BY MIRA BRODY

BIG SKY – "This is an ACL tear that's waiting to happen." A phrase no skier or rider wants to hear. It's an issue Lone Peak Physical Therapy's Heidi Bowman DPT, CAFS, and Allie Poalino, DPT, are attempting to address before incident with their Ski Mobility and Stability clinics.

There are three elements Bowman says are crucial to preventing injuries, while staying nimble and active throughout the season:

Take care of old injuries Aim for symmetry Train for the unexpected



Heidi Bowman performs a common ski prep exercise meant to test a patient's shoulder mobility. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

Caring for your old injuries and addressing your body's weaknesses will prevent further harm once you hit the slopes. Bowman says a majority of the time athletes focus too much on their strengths. If you're strong, you're more likely to strength train, while if you're flexible you might enjoy yoga more. While we thrive on our successes, she says cross training is absolutely essential.

"Address old injuries," Poalino said. "Because, so much of the time those old lingering things really have an effect on how you move going forward."

This is where a couple visits to a physical therapist will help. LPPT provides "ski screens" as part of their clinic, in which they'll identify where your body needs extra training.

"We are movement experts and our job is to identify areas you need to address," Bowman said. "Sometimes it is screening an old injury, sometimes it's faulty movement patterns we can help correct before it leads to an injury."

Screenings will usually result in two or three exercises for individuals to focus on, in order to address weaknesses and pay dividends in the long run.

Although there is no magic number regarding the range of motion an individual needs in each joint to avoid potential injury, you will be more prone to one if you don't maintain a healthy level of symmetry. LPPT knows from experience—they work closely with seasoned ski patrollers and racers on ski movement exercises to aid in maintaining symmetrical strength.

"Generally we screen hip and thoracic motion, because ski turns require good movement at these joints," Bowman said. "When these areas don't move well, your knees and low back are more at risk for injury because they take up the slack and move extra."

Bowman and Poalino also screen single leg strength, side to side with a timed split squat to measure control and endurance and determine if you favor one leg over the other, as many do. Although every routine is catered to the individual and they will sometimes recommend additional strength training—such as additional squat reps—on one leg as opposed to the other to even out that symmetry. They'll also make good use of the 1080 Quantum resistance machine—often only found at private pro-athlete training facilities—to gauge a patient's symmetry and mobility.

Finally, LPPT trains their athletes for the unexpected. Anyone who has skied for a few seasons knows that hitting unexpected terrain, an obstacle, or unintentionally overturning is a common occurrence on the hill, so training your body to react quickly and safely to those instances will prevent serious injuries. Bowman's favorite piece of equipment for this is the BOSU ball, an inflated half-ball with a flat surface on one side, making it perfect for balance exercises.

"We are able to train for unpredictability, because skiing is so much of that," Bowman said. "Where you are thrown into weird terrain and your body has to be like 'I got this, I know how to do this."

Anterior cruciate ligament tears, most commonly known as ACL tears, are the most common ski injury they see at LPPT, and a painful, costly and time consuming one at that. When dealing with an injury, the most difficult thing is having have to tell an athlete that they can no longer do something they love. Instead, LPPT staff members focus on little goals as patients progress towards getting back on the mountain.

"We like to focus on the mini goals throughout that process," Poalino said. "Say they're not skiing this year, but they're able to squat a certain amount of weight at the gym and they're able to go on their favorite hike. Little things that, they enjoy that we can get them back to."

Overall, people in Big Sky value their health and time outdoors—it's a part of the area's identity. Bowman and Poalino have seen many new inquiries in recent months as people have moved, staying permanently in the area.

"I think people are placing more focus on their health and their body just with everything going on," Bowman said. "I think it's a positive for the community for sure."



Allie Poalino uses a BOSU ball to assess the balance and motion in her hips and legs, a good exercise for those looking to hit the mountain this winter. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY



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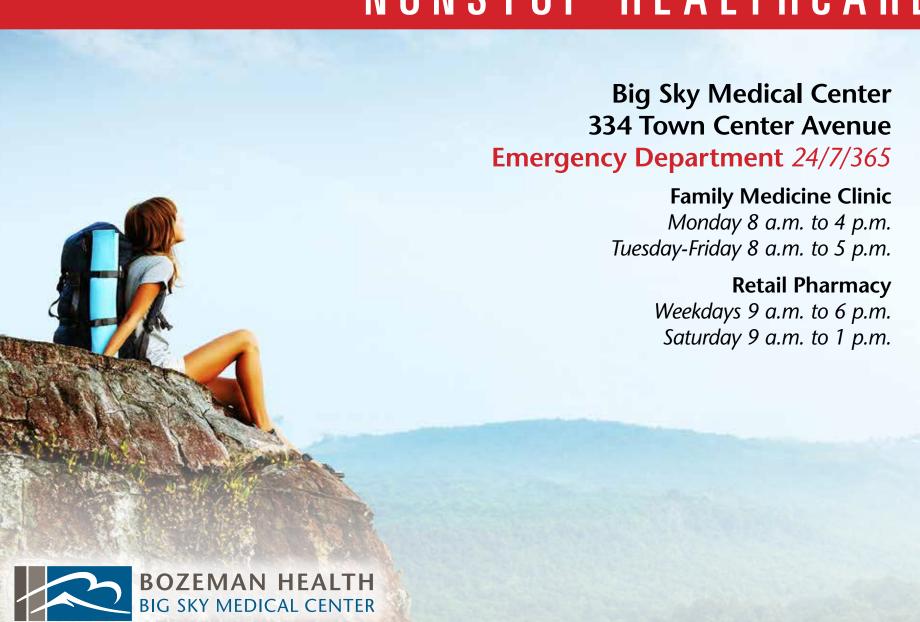
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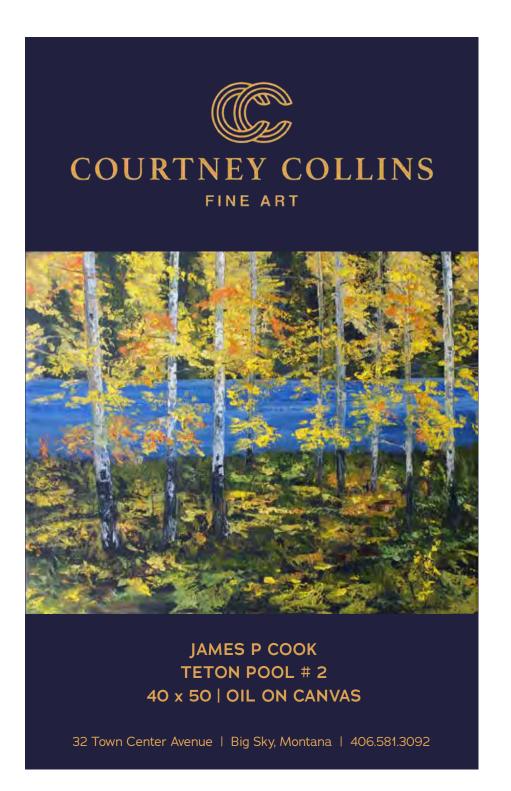




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Album Review: 'Tickets To My Downfall' by Machine Gun Kelly

BY SAMUEL ORAZEM EBS CONTRIBUTOR



Mentioning the name Machine Gun Kelly, often abbreviated as MGK, in a conversation about rap always feels a bit taboo. He clearly possesses

the vocal chops necessary to make a decent career for himself, but he's never appeared to be particularly interested in carving out his own niche in the genre. Instead, MGK has spent the last decade in one-sided "beefs" with Eminem, doing things to keep himself in the tabloids and haphazardly crafting narratives of his own victimization.

The self-image MGK wants to craft always seems to come before the actual music, and his discography is, more or less, a catalog of every rap trend that hit the mainstream in the 2010s. However, the bleached blonde, graphic T-shirt wearing boy from Cleveland realized something on his 2019 album titled "Binge." The final track,

"I Think I'm OKAY," was a 2000s pop-punk banger written with Blink-182's drummer, Travis Barker. It was far and away the most popular track of the album. It was also the only one where he actually sounded like he was having fun.

MGK brought Travis Barker back to write "Tickets To My Downfall" with him and, for the first time, I can say I genuinely like one of his albums. It is overflowing with energy, nostalgia and, most importantly, an artist who sounds comfortable with his product.

Barker's fingerprints are all over "Tickets To My Downfall." His lightning quick and robotically precise drumming drives tracks like

"kiss kiss" and "forget me too" to heights blink-182 has failed to reach on its most recent projects. Barker and MGK find a way to stir-up the rebellious, youthful energy that made artists like blink-182 and Avril Lavigne superstars in the early 2000s without ever crossing into the realm of being overly nostalgic.

Yet, MGK does not entirely abandon the genre that kick started his career. "all I know" and "my ex's best friend" feature rappers Trippie Redd and blackbear, respectively, and expertly blends the two, seemingly contradictory genres of rap and pop-punk. While MGK clearly never felt like the rap scene was where he truly fit in, these tracks show that he still has an artistic interest in the evolution of the former.

The only major detractor from "Tickets To My Downfall" is that, after getting over the initial intrigue of an MGK pop-punk album, the 22 song, 53-minute runtime of the deluxe edition feels bloated. While the energetic nature of the genre ensures that the album never feels like its dragging

on, a full listen will definitely leave you feeling out of breath and ready to give your ears a rest.

The most interesting part of "Tickets To My Downfall" is that anyone familiar with MGK's previous work will probably find its content eerily familiar. The radical shift in genre was not accompanied by a change in the content of the lyrics. Instead, he just bellows all of his old material over frisky drumming and heavily distorted power chords. The angsty stories he wants to tell fit better in a pop-punk setting, though, and it seems like abandoning rap has led to him finally finding his own identity and place in the broader music scene.







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Friday, Oct. 23 – Thursday, Nov. 5

If your event falls between Nov. 6 and Nov. 19, please submit it by Nov. 4 by emailing media@outlaw.partners

Friday, Oct. 23

Whiskey Tasting

Copper Whiskey Bar, Bozeman, 5 p.m.

Chilling Campfire Tours

Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 24

2020 Great Pumpkin Giveaway

Big Sky Town Center, 12 p.m.

Pumpkin King & Queen Carving Competition

Online, 12 p.m.

Halloween Fun ShowEpona Equestrian Center, Belgrade, 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, Oct. 25

Sunday FUNDday Benefit for Gallatin Valley Friends of Cuba

Bozeman Brewing Company, 2 p.m.

Silly Spookies: Halloween Improv Show & Crafts Bozeman Pond, 2 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 26

Special Sip&Slam Pint Night

Mountains Walking Brewery, Bozeman, 5 p.m.

Pints With Purpose: The Compassion Project Bridger Brewing, Bozeman, 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 27

Live Music

Devil's Toboggan, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

Trivia Tuesday

Union Hall Brewing, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 28

Special Sip&Slam Pint Night

Nordic Brew Works, Bozeman, 4 p.m.

Ghosts of the Last Best Place with Ellen Baumler

Bozeman Public Library, 7 p.m.

Access online here: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86997 229167?pwd=eEQ2cmI4VzUrRHk0Nk4ybkZ4cWtD UT09

Thursday, Oct. 29

Halloween Grossology

The Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, 4 p.m.

Halloween Feast

Eagle Mount, Bozeman, 4 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 30

4th Annual Haunted Peaks Halloween Festival

Big Sky Town Center, 3 p.m.

Geocache Mystery

Big Sky Town Center, 3 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 31

4th Annual Haunted Peaks Halloween Festival

Big Sky Town Center, 3 p.m.

Yappy Hour

Big Sky Town Center, 5 p.m.

Saturday Sweat: Free Community Workout

Moving Mountains, Big Sky, 8 a.m.

Sunday, Nov. 1

Afternoon Tea

Starlite Bozeman, 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Trivia Night

Bar IX, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 2

Music Mondays

Red Tractor Pizza, Bozeman, 6:30 p.m.

Sunrise Karaoke

American Legion, Bozeman, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 3 (Election Day)

Ice Skating

Ressler Motor's Ice Rink, Bozeman, 1:15 p.m.

Music and Margaritas

Santa Fe Reds, Bozeman, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 4

Satsang with Cole Thorne

The Filling Station, Bozeman, 7 p.m.

Educator Wednesdays

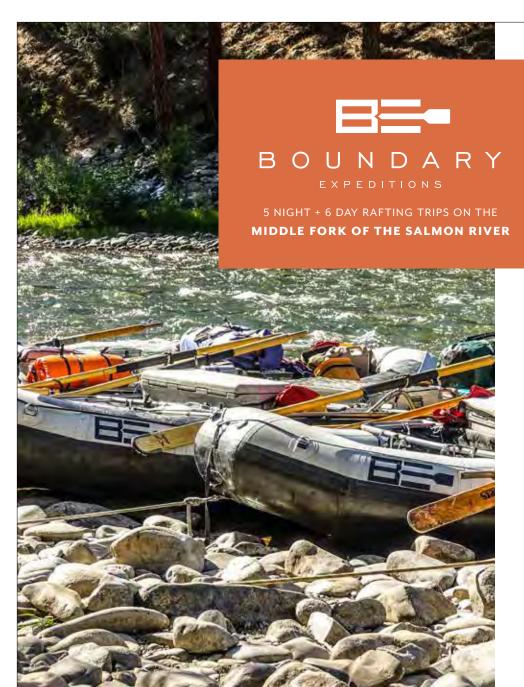
Bunkhouse Brewery, Bozeman, 2 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 5

Thursday Night Ice Climbers #30

Hyalite Canyon, Bozeman, 5 p.m.

Bicycle Repair Classes - Session 2 The Gear Wizard, Bozeman, 9 a.m.





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SECTION 3:BUSINESS, SPORTS, HEALTH & FUN









Making it in Big Sky: Lone Peak ADVENTURE Concierge

BY BRANDON WALKER

BIG SKY – New Canaan, Connecticut native Carolyn Cole was captivated by Big Sky at just 12 years old. Visiting the Elkhorn Ranch for a family vacation at the time, she developed a budding desire to eventually relocate to the small Montana community.

"It felt like home when I was here when I was a kid," she said.

In 2018, Cole's dream became a reality. Wielding bachelor's degrees in both mass communications and studio art from the University of Denver, and a master's degree in social science from Columbia University, she returned to the mountainous terrain that she'd admired since her childhood.

Upon first arriving, Cole held positions with the Yellowstone Club, Big Sky Vacation Rentals and Lone Mountain Ranch before becoming a realtor at Engel & Volkers—a position she still maintains. While performing her daily tasks as a realtor, Cole realized the drastic need for a transportation service in Big Sky. Seeing the opportunity, she quickly sprung to action, founding Lone Peak Concierge in December of 2019 and purchasing the first vehicle in her fleet with a loan from her friend.

"I've started other businesses before and when I just feel the need, I just do it," she said. "I'm a little spontaneous in that way."

Cole says she witnessed overwhelming success when she first started, including late night and early morning trips to and from the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport. After only two weeks of operation she needed a second vehicle and driver to keep up with demand. Big Sky locals Adam Harman and Kaley Burns stepped in to assist Cole to meet the growing demand. Harman became the second driver for Lone Peak Concierge and Burns drove on an as-needed basis.

Then the calendar turned to March 18, a day that is etched into Cole's memory—it was the first day since founding her business that she did not field a single request for transportation. The following weeks and months presented Cole with a challenge that she met by adapting her

business model, including a name change: Lone Peak ADVENTURE Concierge.

Cole recently spoke with EBS to discuss her new approach and how she worked to keep her business alive and relevant throughout the pandemic.

Explore Big Sky: You founded your business last December and you said business was booming to start with. Can you describe why you believe you were successful right out of the gate?

Carolyn Cole: "I was successful right out of the gate because there was no competition, period. Nobody would explain to visitors coming to vacation in Big Sky ahead of time that there was no Uber, because everybody assumes there's Uber everywhere. And since we didn't have anybody driving door to door and people found out about me, I would get the calls. I was the only one doing it, period. It was a shocker that it's 2020 and somebody else hadn't started."

EBS: March 18 was the first day ever that you didn't receive a single request for transportation. What was going through your mind as a business owner in the transportation industry as cancellations started to rack up due to COVID-19?

C.C.: "I was in a place where I was like, 'What am I going to do?' When I came to Big

Sky I literally started from scratch in every way, so I didn't come with like a nest egg or anything. So, I had to really get my act together and figure out a way to pivot and I applied for the PPP loan. [It was] not that much money but all of that assistance helped get me through the time and allowed me to think about what I was going to do next to survive."

EBS: You adjusted your business model to remain relevant as a result of the pandemic. Can you walk me through your brainstorming and idea process as you pivoted your business strategies?

C.C.: "Obviously driving people—providing door to door transportation, transportation to the airport, any transportation—is a here and now service, like a restaurant. You have to be here to use the service. ... I was listening to a lot of travel like conferences, listening to people and what they're talking about doing and one of the ideas someone had was we could start talking about helping people get back into traveling somehow. And from that, I thought well, what I could do, because nobody else is doing this, is do custom vacation planning. I'm not working for any company, so I don't have any reason to point somebody in any direction. I don't take commissions, so that's what I'm doing now."

EBS: What do you believe is the largest factor in becoming a successful business owner in Big Sky?

C.C.: "I think you really need to have an entrepreneurial spirit, which I believe people are born with. I think we all share the desire to be outside, to explore. If someone was not like that, they're a very indoor [oriented] person, I don't think that would necessarily be helpful. Sharing experiences with people that are vacationing here, on the slopes or wherever it is, really does help build a relationship that then turns into someone really relying on you or turning to you for whatever service you're providing or recommendations and things like that. So, flexibility and friendliness I think comes naturally here. ... Big Sky draws that type of person and I think that type of person will be successful in business here."

EBS: Aside from the pandemic, what has been your greatest operational challenge as a Big Sky business owner in the nearly 10 months since you opened?

C.C.: "The biggest struggle, which I still have, is I'm literally doing everything. ... I build my own website, I do my own marketing, social media, I reach out to the clubs and the hotel and the rental companies, so I feel like I'm always struggling and the bottom line is providing service and getting paid for something. But in the meantime I feel like there's always something to do and I think everybody that has their own business feels that way. So, it's hard for me when I know I've got something to do to then say, 'I'm not going to do that today. I'm going to go mountain biking.' So that's been my struggle."

EBS: For anyone contemplating starting their own business currently, what advice would you offer them?

C.C.: "To find a mentor, or at least someone who you can talk to, to bounce ideas off, period. ... I turn to people all the time and get their thoughts and I couldn't just do it by myself. It's just tremendously valuable to have feedback from as many different types of people as possible."

EBS: What's the best business advice you've ever received?

C.C.: "If you consider starting a business, make sure you're providing a solution to a problem that exists."



Lone Peak ADVENTURE Concierge founder Carolyn Cole pictured in one of her company vehicles. Cole has successfully adapted her business model in response to COVID-19. PHOTO BY TONYA HARRINGTON

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BY SCOTT BROWN EBS CONTRIBUTOR

As a wealth management professional, investing money is one of my core competencies and an integral part of my client relationships. Individuals, families, non-profits and businesses all invest. They also all invest for their own specific reasons and to meet their own stated objectives, but the most basic reason for investing is to earn a return on your invested capital.

Every investor invests with the intention of earning a return. Most want the best returns they can achieve. This always reminds me of the Van Halen lyrics, "But everybody wants some. I want some too." Although, I think they were referring to something a bit different than investment performance (rest in peace Eddie). So, how do we calculate the performance of your investment dollars? In most cases we evaluate investments based on total return.

Total return is the actual rate of return of an investment or a portfolio of investments over a given time or evaluation period. Total return includes income like business or rental income, interest income from investments like loans or certificates of deposits and capital appreciation from owning stocks, mutual funds or possibly even real estate. Finally, it includes dividends from stocks, mutual funds or exchange traded funds as well.

Total return is kind of like the multi-sport athlete of investment performance. It's not simply a one trick pony like owning only bonds and receiving only bond coupon income. Instead, it's the full suite of investment talent. To summarize, total return accounts for two categories of return, the first is income—including interest paid by fixed-income investments, distributions or dividends—and the second is capital appreciation, representing the change in the market price of an asset.

Now let's look at an example. Say an investor buys 100 shares of Stock A at \$30 per share for an initial value of \$3,000. Stock A pays a 5 percent dividend that the investor reinvests, buying five additional shares. After one year, the share price rises to \$33. To calculate the investment's total return, the investor divides the total investment gains (105 shares multiplied by \$33 per share equals \$3,465 current

value minus \$3,000 initial value equals \$465 total gains) by the initial value of the investment (\$3,000) and multiplies by 100 to convert the answer to a percentage (\$465 divided by \$3,000 multiplied by 100 equals 15.5 percent). The investor's total return is 15.5 percent.

As another example, if an investor buys shares of Company B, and the share price increases 11.5 percent in one year. The investor gains 11.5 percent from the price change alone. Since Company B also paid a dividend during the year, adding in the stock's yield of 3.1 percent to the price change, the combined return is 14.6 percent. Quite simply, total return determines an investment's true growth over time.

It is important to evaluate the big picture and not just one return metric when determining an increase in value. In fact, more sophisticated and/or institutional investors will also analyze performance using some modern portfolio theory statistical measures like beta, standard deviation, tracking error, asset-class drift and others to calculate risk-adjusted returns.

Furthermore, when analyzing pooled investments like mutual funds or maybe an entire portfolio's performance, investors should analyze their average annual total returns for different periods of time. For instance, say one, three and five-year performance history because comparing returns to a benchmark can indicate how the fund or portfolio has performed, relative to an index. When analyzing average annual total returns, it is important to remember that the numbers almost always reflect reinvestment of dividends and capital gains distributions. In many cases the analysis may not account for the impact of sales charges or some other fees, however, this fee information is disclosed with return data.

In closing, total return is also often used when comparing different hikes or mountain bike rides. Both options might have similar elevation gain, length, difficulty etc. but the one with the breath-taking views and opportunities for abundant wildlife sightings almost certainly has the best total return. Remember, old man winter is just around the corner so get outside, make the most of what is left of the fall and as always enjoy the ride!

Scott L. Brown is the co-founder and managing principal of Shore to Summit Wealth Management. His wealth management career spans more than 25 years and he currently works and lives in Bozeman, MT with his wife and two sons.

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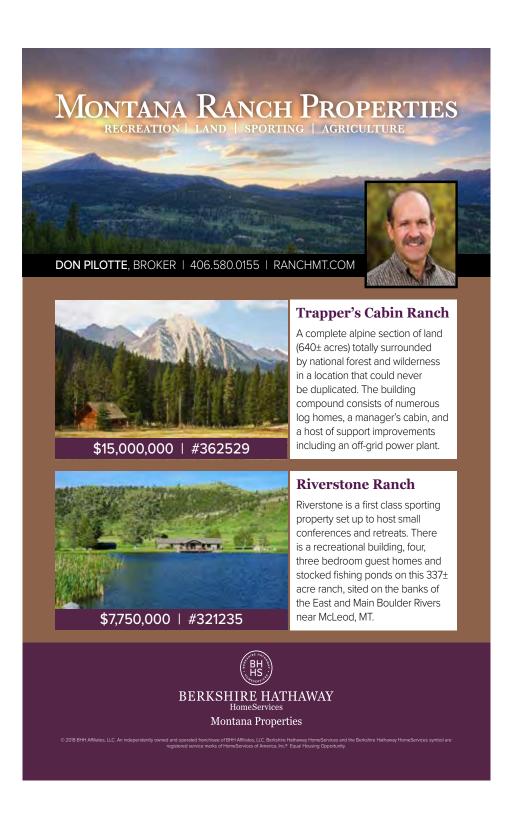
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LPHS varsity soccer closes out inaugural season, makes history

BY BRANDON WALKER

WHITEFISH – The inaugural Lone Peak High School varsity soccer season came to an end Oct. 17 when the Big Horns fell to the Class-A Whitefish Bulldogs on the road, 3-0. But the LPHS boys' and girls' soccer programs made history in their first season, becoming the lone Class-C school in Montana to field varsity teams.

The Big Horns earned a playoff berth, finishing the regular season third in their conference with a record of 2-3-2. When they traveled to Whitefish to face the undefeated Bulldogs, LPHS was clashing with a team with a 10-0-1 record.

Three early first half goals by Whitefish were the determining factor in the match, but LPHS created scoring opportunities and shut out the Bulldogs in a well-played second half.

"Whitefish is kind of like the Class-A powerhouse and we definitely played well," said Lone Peak Head Coach Tony Coppola. "We definitely kept up with them."

LPHS's final record was 2-4-2, while the Lady Big Horns finished their season at an 0-7-0 mark, but that doesn't include two friendly matches that they won.

"Years from now, I hope they take a lot of pride in the fact that they started the program here in Big Sky," said Big Sky Futbol Club founding member and coach Kim Dickerson.

Records aside, Coppola said the success of the programs should be measured by the progression of the athletes and the camaraderie that they developed while representing their school and community.

"I would say that we exceeded the school, the community and the coaches and the players expectations," he said. "Overall, it was a total success and I think what it'll do, is it gave us firm footing to continue the program for years to come."

LPHS Athletic Director John Hannahs said the squads caught a number of larger schools off guard.

"I think that both teams surprised a lot of people with how well they competed against the bigger schools, both teams got wins this season and the boys made it to the first round of the playoffs, so I would call that a great year for our first go [around]," Hannahs said.

The winding road that led to the formation of the LPHS varsity soccer teams was at least 12 years in the making. Coppola said that while he and Lady Big Horns Head Coach Jaci Clack coached the Bozeman Blitz club teams, they had discussed launching varsity teams at LPHS, fueled even more by a continually growing community wide interest.

"That's always been the end goal, just to get this program at the school," Coppola said.

Big Sky's soccer enthusiasts received a welcomed addition to the community in June of 2018 when BSFC was founded. Dickerson, also the former BSFC programs director, recalled that the motive was simple: Bozeman offered the nearest soccer programs and high school-aged athletes were left without a team in fall when school started back up.

"Kids were having to drive into Bozeman to play on soccer teams and in the fall most of the kids who were in high school couldn't play on any clubs because there weren't any club teams for them [since] all those kids went and played for their high school team," Dickerson said.

Coppola and Dickerson spearheaded the first BSFC team in the fall of 2018 to serve



Big Horn senior Jackson Lang (7) cuts with the ball as a Whitefish Bulldog defender pursues. LPHS fell to Whitefish in their playoff matchup on Oct. 17. PHOTO BY STEVE SCHLIMACHER

high school-aged athletes in Big Sky, giving them the opportunity to play soccer. That coed team rostered 15 athletes and was the only one offered by BSFC at the time.

"Soccer depends on others to put the ball in the back of the net, so it's just teaching kids how to get along with others and enjoy getting out and playing a game that I grew up loving to play," Dickerson said. "So to be able to pass that along to other kids is exciting."

In spring of 2019, BSFC's participation ballooned to 112 athletes split among seven teams, serving players ranging from 4 years old



Lone Peak senior Nolan Schumacher (13) corrals the ball in the Big Horns playoff contest versus the Whitefish Bulldogs on Oct. 17. PHOTO BY STEVE SCHUMACHER

to 19. Then the pandemic hit. BSFC did not host a spring season in 2020 due to COVID-19, but participation in the 2020 fall season increased again to 130 athletes and 10 teams.

Dickerson recalled the deep community interest she witnessed in the varsity program this season, one that trickled to BSFC participants.

"It was really fun seeing our little kids leave practice and then go and watch the high school kids in the afternoon," she said.

Dickerson is thrilled for LPHS's varsity soccer program and believes it will bode well for the continued growth of both BSFC and the LPHS programs moving forward.

"Now kids know that they can play, kind of when they're itty bitty, all the way up through high school and hopefully beyond," she said.

Logistically, it took some heavy lifting to make the varsity programs a reality, according to Hannahs.

"First, we had to determine if the [Montana High School Association] would approve another team into Class-A soccer at all, especially with our school being Class-C according to our enrollment, so we had to prove that we had a sustainable program," he said. "Of course when we were approved came the question of scheduling, where to get officials, navigating new regulations, outfitting a new team with uniforms and equipment, finding a place regulation size to practice and host games, etcetera, the list goes on and on."

Hannahs said Coppola was instrumental in assisting with necessary behind-the-scenes tasks such as placing equipment and uniform orders and receiving permission from the Big Sky Community Organization for the teams to play at the Big Sky Community Park facilities this season.

Coppola says the effort was worth it, adding that his efforts were all for the students.

"I would do it again ... next season or for the next five seasons, I don't really care," he said. "That's where the level of dedication is on my end and definitely [Clack's] too."

Being the only Class-C school to field a team, coupled with the fact that Class-B schools don't hold competitive varsity seasons, allowed LPHS to make the leap to Class-A soccer, according to Hannahs. Hannahs is encouraged by the participation and looks forward to future growth for the teams, even as he praised the squads in their inaugural season.

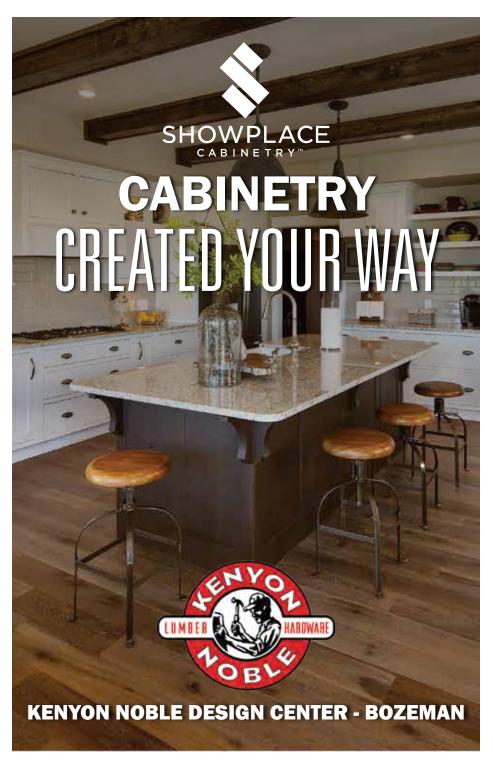
"This year's teams set the bar high," he said.

With one varsity season in the books, Coppola said the future of soccer in the Big Sky community is bright. Speaking with palpable gratefulness in his voice, he thanked the LPHS athletes and the Big Sky community for their support throughout the season.

"I'm sure we surprised a lot of places," he said. "It was remarkable and I can't be happier with the kids and how it all panned out."

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Contests canceled, relationships mean more

BY AL MALINOWSKI EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Over the past many months, COVID has changed all of our lives. It seems every time our world begins to appear "normal" again, we are reminded of another way the pandemic has taken something that we treasure. In the absolute worst case, those losses include the people that we love.

For many of us, sports serve as an escape from the challenges in our daily lives. However not even athletics are immune to the uncertainty caused by the virus. Thankfully, professional and many college sports leagues are very carefully pursuing abbreviated seasons. Though artificial fan noise and cut-out spectators remain a little strange, at least the games are taking place.

More importantly, high school and elementary sports in Montana mostly began as scheduled this Fall. Over the course of the season, many programs have experienced cancellations due to positive COVID tests. No doubt, the teams who have worked hard to prepare for competitions have had to be frustrated to lose games as a result of the virus. Add to that the recent MHSA decision to postpone the start of winter sports by three weeks and fall sport participants have to be wondering if their seasons could be cut short.

This past week, the Lone Peak High School volleyball and football teams each experienced canceled competitions due to COVID. For the volleyball team, who has been cruising through the season without losing a match, I'm sure the break was certainly unwelcome. The football team, who has had a more challenging season, had to cancel their final home game as well.

Traditionally, the final home game of each team's season is Senior Night. Both teams will lose this opportunity to recognize their senior participants as a result of the canceled games. In the case of the football team, it would've been an opportunity to celebrate their lone senior player.

While Big Horn lineman, Kole Maus, won't follow tradition for his moment, one could easily argue that his moment came a couple weeks earlier in a game at Park City. At 6 feet, 7 inches tall, Maus rarely goes unnoticed but it was a decision by his teammates to unleash the "Kole Special," that revealed the respect that Maus's peers have for him.

The more experienced Park City Panthers secured a solid lead against the Big Horns. Refusing to quit, on the Big Horns final drive of the night, quarterback Isaiah Holst launched the football to the end zone as time expired. The ball was tipped multiple times, before being caught by Pierce Farr for a touchdown. Even though the Big Horns trailed by double-digits, they huddled and anticipated a play call for a two-point conversion. But when the call came in, it wasn't the one they expected, and they decided to change it to the "Kole Special."

The "Kole Special" is a clever play that includes a unique formation in which Maus disguises himself as a lineman. This isn't a difficult disguise given that Maus's primary position is lineman, but in this formation he is also an eligible receiver. While the opposing team focuses on the players who have been running pass routes all game, Maus, "sneaks" his way into the end zone.

The Big Horns players insist that it was a unanimous decision in the huddle to change the play to the "Kole Special." And while it may seem hard to accept, Maus found himself all alone in the center of the end zone and caught a perfectly thrown pass for the score. While the Big Horns still lost the game, you would not have known from their reaction to the final play and true to form, the biggest smile on the field belonged to Maus.

The play worked so well, that the very next week versus Absarokee, the Big Horns used it again, this time to score a touchdown. While the "Kole Special" may be renamed in future seasons, the play will never be used more appropriately to reward a well deserving young man than it was on a Friday night in Park City, MT.

Maus may not receive a traditional Senior Night experience on the field due to COVID cancellations, but the bonds formed through high school athletics were already on full display when his teammates honored him in their own way. COVID can never take that bond away.

Al Malinowski has lived in Big Sky for over 25 years. He has coached middle school and high school basketball at the Big Sky School District for 22 of those years. He believes participation in competitive athletics has been critical in establishing his core values.



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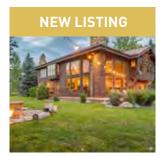
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The Ranches at Yellow Mountain - Tract 1A-1 21 +/- ACRES / \$795k



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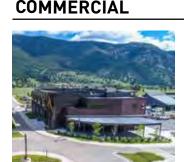
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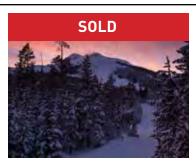
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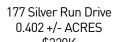
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CONGRATULATIONS

to our molecular pathologist, Dr. Christopher Nero, who was recognized by Montana Hospital Association as their 2020 Caregiver of the Year!



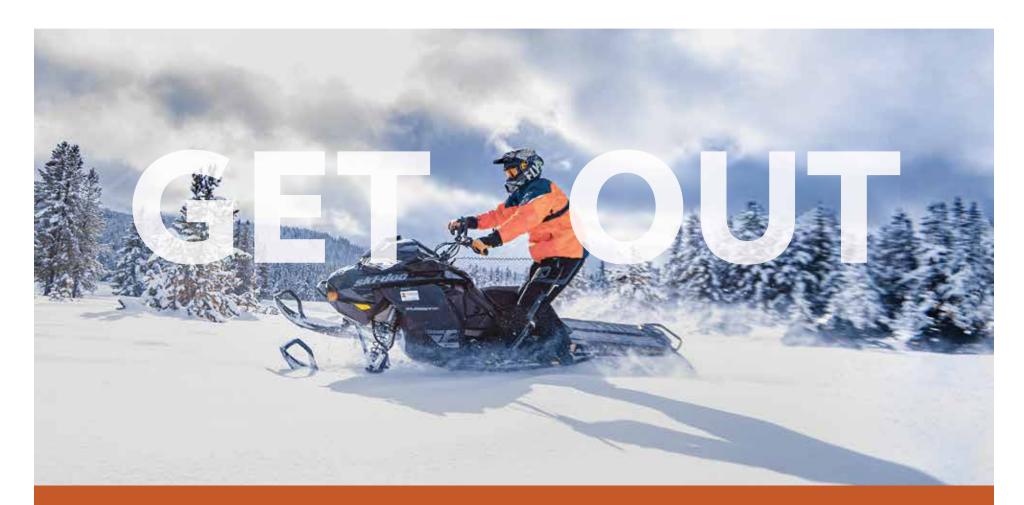
This distinguished award recognizes a caregiver who, on a daily basis, demonstrates extraordinary commitment to the delivery of care, addressing and meeting the overall health and wellness needs of hospital staff, patients, caregivers and the communities they serve.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic reached Southwest Montana, Dr. Nero has devoted countless hours to research and consultation to quickly establish molecular diagnostic testing for SARS-CoV-2, the COVID-19 virus. He's been instrumental in establishing our COVID-19 research and testing collaboration with Montana State University (MSU), and when testing supplies were low, Dr. Nero partnered with MSU researchers to develop test kits and transport media options. His dedication and efforts have resulted in accurate, rapid SARS-CoV-2 testing in Bozeman benefiting patients, their families, the public health of our community, as well as critical research.

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Breast Cancer and Chemical Toxicity

BY DR. ANDREA WICK EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Amidst breast cancer awareness month, I think it's important that we address the issues of chemical toxicity and its contribution to causing cancer. Some popular women's magazines state that we put up to 515 chemicals on our skin daily—yikes. The scary part is at least half of those chemicals are absorbed directly into the blood stream. We are what we put on our skin.

Fragrances are one of those love/hate topics that need to be addressed. According to Breast Cancer Prevention Partners, many of the chemicals used in fragrances are linked to chronic health issues such as: cancer, hormone disruption, reproductive harm or even asthma.

BCPP does scientific testing on beauty, personal care and cleaning products. Their tests revealed that one out of every four fragrance ingredients are linked to cancer, birth defects, respiratory harm, neurotoxicity, endocrine disruption or water toxicity. Shockingly, in some cases three out of four of the chemicals linked to these chronic health effects in the products tested, were fragrance ingredients.

The best option in this case, is to pick products that are "fragrance-free" or companies that disclose all of their fragrance ingredients. Unfortunately, current laws do not require companies to list the chemicals used in the fragrances they manufacture.

According to the Journal of Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, endocrine disrupting chemicals such as diethylstilbestrol, bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates (plasticizers), atrazine (pesticides/herbicides), and heavy metals (such as cadmium) can increase the risk of developing breast cancer later in life.

Cadmium is a heavy metal that can enter the blood stream through water, food and air. The scare factor with cadmium is that it can mimic estrogen and

9:00-10:00am

Warrior Flow

4:15-5:15pm

All level Yoga

10:00-11:15am

All Levels Yoga

5:00-6:00pm

Body Melt

8:00-9:00pm

Yoga Nidra

therefore cause an increase of breast cancer. Other metals such as lead, zinc, mercury, nickel and chromium can also perform in the same way. I've also learned that these heavy metals also mimic the molecular configuration of iodine. Since iodine is not prevalent in our diet, whereas heavy metal exposure is inevitable, these metals will attach to the thyroid receptors.

This leaves iodine, which is extremely important for breast health, high and dry with nowhere to go. Even with iodine supplementation, it will not be able to attach to the thyroid receptors if there is a heavy metal overload in the body. If there is a deficiency of iodine uptake by the thyroid, this can compromise the health of the breast tissue and may also increase the risk of fibrocystic breast disease. Eating foods such as cilantro, parsley, chlorella, and lemon can help the body detox metals. Adding in iodine containing foods such as seaweed, kelp and fish may help with any deficiencies.

What else can you do for yourself to avoid unnecessary exposure to certain chemicals?

- Avoid fragrances
- Ditch plastic products with recycle number 3 and 7 (more likely to contain BPA)
- Eat from BPA free tin cans
- Eat organic whenever possible
- Drink clean, filtered water

When using cosmetics or cleaning products, avoid talc, parabens, phthalates, formaldehyde, petroleum and ethoxylated ingredients. The Environmental Workers Group is a great source for information on cosmetics as well as the BCPP website: bcpp.org.

Dr. Andrea Wick is a chiropractor and applied kinesiologist. She graduated from Life University in Marietta, Georgia, and now practices at Healing Hands Chiropractic in Big Sky. She has a passion for holistic health care and being active in the outdoors.



7:30-8:30am

All Levels Yoga

10:00-11:15am

Core Flow

4:15-5:15pm

All Levels Yoga

7:30-8:30am

All Levels Yoga

11:00am-12:15pm

All Levels Yoga

5:30-6:45pm

Heated Flow

7:00-8:15pm

Virtual Raja

Vinyasa Yoga

7:00-8:00am

Ashtanga Based Vinyasa Flow All levels

10:00-11:15am

All Levels

Vinyasa Flow

5:30-6:45pm All Levels Yoga 9:00-10:15am

All Levels Yoga

Town Center Plaza

(weather permitting)

5:00-6:15pm

All Levels

Kundalini Yoga

7:30-8:30am

All Levels Yoga

Community

Acupuncture

11:00am-1:00pm

5:30-6:45pm

Heated Flow

7:00-8:15pm

Virtual Raja

Vinyasa Yoga





Amuse-bouche refers to an appetizer, and by French translation means, "to entertain the mouth." It offers a glimpse into what you should expect from a meal. Also it's free, compliments of the chef.

Amuse Bouche: My favorite classic beers around the world



BY SCOTT MECHURA EBS FOOD COLUMNIST

Gather a group of beer enthusiasts and scholars anywhere in the world and ask them to name 50 of the world's greatest beers. I would bet money the lion's share of that list would include a high number of Belgian brews—a country the size of Iowa mind you.

In reality, there are hundreds of beers around the world that are regarded as standards in their respective style or country. Since I'm often asked what my favorites are, I'll share a handful that I believe are the best of the best.

Duvel. The devil in Dutch, this beer is sometimes evil in the way it will sneak up on you with its understated 8.5 percent alcohol content. Like many Belgian brews, the yeast strain is unique to this beer only. A testament to its impeccable brewing process, it's one of the only beers in the world where after you've taken the last sip, there is still a creamy, white head at the bottom of the glass. This one ranks among my top five in the world.

Samichlaus Doppelbock. Brewed only one day each year on Dec. 6, this is one of the worlds most unique brews. At 14 percent, with a rich malt character and low natural carbonation, it packs a punch. This beer isn't for everyone, but if you can get your hands on a bottle it'll be a treat, I promise.

Ayinger Celebrator: Another doppelbock, this German classic is rich with malt character and a bit higher alcohol by volume content. With a flavor profile boasting notes of coffee, maple and wood this beer has won numerous awards and is one of the world standards as far as doppelbock's go.

Pilsner Urquell. Thanks to a new British malting technique, this was the worlds first pale brew and one of the earliest lagers. This beer is notoriously soft and smooth, despite its generous Saaz hops. The area around Pilsen has some of the softest water in the world and when it comes to brewing, water matters big time. The Saaz variety of hops are known for their spicey, herbal notes. These two characteristics are what make this beer stand out and their name translates to "original source". Since 1842, this is the beer all pale beers were patterned after.

Fullers ESB and London Pride. Historically, an Extra Special Bitter or ESB, was the draft version of a pale ale in old England. That's mostly still true today in the United Kingdom. Americans continue to increasingly believe that more hops are better. But the malt-hop balance in this beer, while still showcasing classic English hops and flavor, make these two beers world classics.

Liefmans Goudenband. I saved the best for last. This beer could be my all time favorite. Originating in the rolling hills of the Belgian countryside, this beer has perhaps more character than any other. It is first spontaneously fermented with wild yeast, then a second controlled strain is introduced when it undergoes a second fermentation as it bottle conditions. A sour, malty, subtle hop character, make the flavor profile deeply complex and at 8 percent alcohol, this beer both drinks and ages as a wine might.

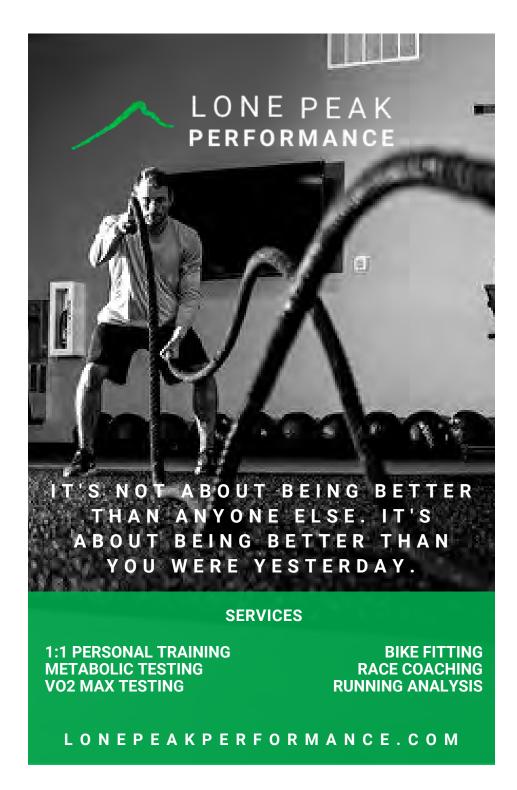
Honorable mention:

Aecht Schlenkera. Made with smoked malt, this beer is truly unique. It's not for everyone, and sometimes it's not even for me, but it has been brewed the same way for the better part of 200 years.

Orval. A pale ale made by Trappist monks, this beer is nearly impossible to categorize, yet has a global cult following when you can get it.

Rodenbach Grand Cru. The original sour beer, the grand cru undergoes lactic fermentation in two stages and is aged in oak barrels for two years.

Scott Mechura has spent a life in the hospitality industry. He is a former certified beer judge and currently the executive chef at Buck's T-4 Lodge in Big Sky.





American Life in Poetry: Column 812

BY TED KOOSER U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Jehanne Dubrow is the wife of a recently retired naval officer and has written very moving poems about their life. This fine love poem is from an as-yet unpublished manuscript. She lives in Texas and has, at quite a young age, already published eight collections of poems. The newest, due out this year, is Simple Machines, from University of Evansville Press.

Pledge

Now we are here at home, in the little nation of our marriage, swearing allegiance to the table we set for lunch or the windchime on the porch,

its easy dissonance. Even in our shared country, the afternoon allots its golden lines so that we're seated, both in shadow, on opposite

ends of a couch and two gray dogs between us. There are acres of opinions in this house. I make two cups of tea, two bowls of soup,

divide an apple equally. If I were a patriot, I would call the blanket we spread across our bed the only flag—some nights we've burned it

with our anger at each other. Some nights we've welcomed the weight, a woolen scratch on both our skins. My love, I am pledging

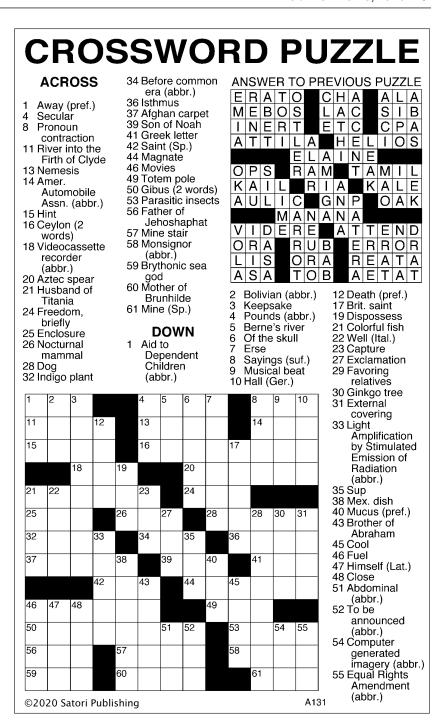
to this republic, for however long we stand, I'll watch with you the rain's arrival in our yard. We'll lift our faces, together, toward the glistening.

We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts. American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of Poetry magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2020 by Jehanne Dubrow, "Pledge." (2020). Poem reprinted by permission of Jehanne Dubrow. Introduction copyright @2020 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004–2006.

Corner Quote

"Be soft. Do not let the world make you hard. Do not let pain make you hate. Do not let the bitterness steal your sweetness. Take pride that even though the rest of the world may disagree, you still believe it to be a beautiful place."

- Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.



BIG SKY BEATS



"Eruption"

Eddie Van Halen, the leader of the popular rock band Van Halen, died on Oct. 6 after losing a more than decade-long battle with

cancer. He was considered by many as one of the most influential guitarists of all time and in 1972 formed the band Van Halen with his older brother Alex on drums, Michael Anthony on bass and David Lee Roth as the lead singer. The band's debut self-titled studio album was released in 1978 and includes some of their best-known songs, including "Eruption." The guitar solo in "Eruption" is still considered one of the best electric guitar solos of all time. It also popularized tapping, which is a guitar playing technique

where the string is set into vibration by being tapped on the fretboard as opposed to being picked. "Eruption" segues directly into the song "You Really Got Me" and the two songs are often played together. A great way to remember Eddie Van Halen and honor his musical legacy is to listen to the

album "Van Halen" which was remastered in 2015.



BACKLI

For Explore Big Sky, the Back 40 is a resource: a place where we can delve into subjects and ask experts to share their knowledge. Here, we highlight stories from our flagship sister publication Mountain Outlaw magazine.

Noun: wild or rough terrain adjacent to a developed area **Origin:** shortened form of "back 40 acres"

Mountain Outlaw magazine: summer 2015 edition

The Coming Infernos

For over a century, Montana has figured at the center of American wildfire policy. Climate change is again making it ground zero.

BY TODD WILKINSON

"Hypocrites! You know how to interpret conditions on earth and in the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret the present time?" Luke 12:56

From Lone Mountain's towering ivory zenith, all would seem right with the world. It's late winter 2015 and a fresh dump of powder has padded the snowpack on Montana's best-known skiing icon, pushing total accumulation for the season to around 20 feet, half the snow Big Sky Resort received in the 2013-2014 season. Off in the distance, I see tiny plumes of smoke puffing out of chimneys on rooftops tucked snugly into evergreen groves.

As I kick into descent, I'm not thinking of what meteorologists are forecasting in their crystal balls for the dog days of summer. Writing about the American West for nearly 30 years, I've never forgotten the old agrarian adage: Only fools predict the weather.

Still, the harbingers this year are hard to ignore. California is tinder dry, gripped by its worst drought in 1,200 years. The Golden State's science-informed governor, Jerry Brown, is calling lower precipitation "the new normal." Across the Colorado River plateau, lakes Mead and Powell have dropped to their lowest levels since the reservoirs were first created to store water for tens of millions. In the northern Rockies, snow in the high country was fractionally below "average," while balmy temperatures in the valleys made this past winter one of the mildest in recollection.

My backyard in Bozeman, where in years past I could reliably freeze an outdoor hockey rink for the kids, held bare grass in February. And some stretches of Yellowstone National Park's roads this spring were plowed and made accessible to motorists earlier than any year since 1988, when wildfire scorched 1,250 square miles of the park.

As of late May, many public land managers believe the West may be in for another epic, budget-busting year of battling wildfire, with federal hotshots, smokejumpers and Pulaski-toting Type 2 handcrews being deployed to halt nearly unstoppable flareups. Very likely, as you are now reading these words, woodsmoke might be drifting into view.

Montana has her own place within the lore of modern firefighting. The state's western-forested mountains served as a main front for the "Great Fire of 1910." Over a span of just two days in late August of that year, about 3 million acres were blackened, earning the "Big Blowup" distinction as the largest forest fire in U.S. history. A handful of small Montana towns were completely destroyed in a hydraheaded blaze that touched 10 national forests in three states.

Montana's mystique is also immortalized in literature. Second only to A River Runs Through It, Norman Maclean's next best book is Young Men and Fire, his nonfictional exploration of the tragic Mann Gulch Fire near Helena. The 1949 inferno claimed the lives of 13 smokejumpers and served as a catalyst for research into wildfire behavior.

Today, Montana remains a hub for firefighting and training. Missoula is home base for a legion of smokejumpers and to Neptune Aviation, a private company that has provided a squadron of fire-attack aircraft enlisted by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, responsible for thousands of sorties. On top of it, some of the nation's crackerjack Native American fire teams deployed west-wide hail from the Treasure State.

No matter where one lives in the West – especially if you dwell in what's called the forested "wildland-urban interface" – the looming threat of wildfire is never far away.

I'm reflecting on wisdom imparted to me 27 summers ago by Dr. Don Despain. In 1988, the Yellowstone National Park botanist watched nearly 800,000 acres – more than a third – of America's first national park burn in a historic outbreak of wildfire. That was the same year the first-ever public hearing on climate change was held on Capitol Hill, featuring warnings from a mid-career NASA climatologist named James Hansen.

Half my life ago, Despain shared these pearls: You can never gauge the probable

severity of a fire season solely by gauging mountain snowpack in March because weather patterns can change, he said.

Second, while it's inordinately difficult to forecast the weather, it's actually easier to project the trajectory of climate since it involves an accumulation of objectively traceable trend lines, Despain said. Experts note today that six of the hottest years on record worldwide have happened in the last decade. A recent issue of the journal *Yellowstone Science* confirms that the Yellowstone interior has been drying out, having potentially radical implications for wildlife and even geothermal features that function like clockwork, based on natural availability of precipitation.

Third, parts of the West are always going to burn, Despain noted, because the very environment we love has been forged by fire for eons.

When Despain and I visited again this April, the retired scientist offered an addendum to point number three: The West is indeed going to burn, but it is going to burn bigger and more often due to climate change. What's left in its wake may not be the kinds of ecosystems we and our ancestors are accustomed to interacting with.

"We need to adapt because our previous approaches to suppressing major conflagrations, declaring war on them, and trying to pay for them have been both an exercise in futility and we know it's economically unsustainable," he said. The U.S. government isn't far off from Despain's observations, according to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

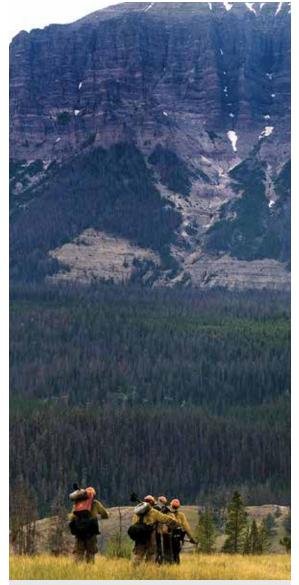
"Climate change, drought, fuel buildup and insects and disease are increasing the severity of catastrophic wildfire in America's forests," Vilsack declared in a 2014

report that noted the Forest Service's ability to function was being crippled by the costs of fighting wildfire.

"In order to protect the public, the portion of the Forest Service budget dedicated to combating fire has drastically increased from what it was 20 years ago. This has led to substantial cuts in other areas of the USFS budget, including efforts to keep forests healthy, reduce fire risk, and strengthen local economies." It's a robbing-Peter-to-pay-Paul scenario, though Uncle Sam, Vilsack noted, has got a hole burning in his pocket.

Consider these facts: Today, firefighting costs and prevention have soared past \$2 billion annually and engulf almost half of the Forest Service's total budget. Add in firefighting costs on BLM holdings and it rises well past \$3 billion. The number of wildfires has doubled on public lands since 1980, and those fires ever increasingly are threatening the same watersheds that deliver the aqua flowing to 20 million taps and yielding clean rivers.

According to the USFS, fire season lengths have increased between 60 and 80 days over



The Wyoming High Desert Helitack crew hikes out after a burn operation on the Norton Point Fire. Shoshone National Forest north of Dubois, Wyoming, 2011. PHOTO BY KARI GREER

the last three decades. While the agency claims that 230 million acres of public lands in the West are in need of fuel reduction, at most 3 million acres a year are receiving treatments, meaning the backlog only grows. Plus, Agriculture Secretary Vilsack noted in 2014 that about a half-billion dollars' worth of Forest Service fire-prevention projects were put on hold and spent instead fighting fires.

"You don't need to be a genius to do the math," says Ray Rasker, co-founder of Bozeman-based Headwaters Economics, which has become an important national player in trying to address this vexing conundrum.

Last year, Headwaters published a report whose primary author was Dr. Ross Gorte, a retired senior policy analyst with the Congressional Research Service, renowned for its fact-finding advisory role to Congress.

"Wildfire threat and protection costs are likely to rise because of climate change and continued home development. Currently, the majority of private wildlands are undeveloped; only about 16 percent of the wildland-urban interface in the West is now developed, and the remaining 84 percent is available for development," Gorte wrote. If just half of the wildland-urban interface is developed in the future, the \$2.2 billion annual firefighting costs could more than double. By comparison, the Forest Service's total average annual budget is \$5.5 billion.

Another Headwaters' report found that, statewide in Montana, protecting homes from wildfires costs an average of \$28 million annually. If development near fire-prone forests continues, costs to protect homes likely will rise to \$40 million by 2025. Just a 1-degree F increase in summer temperatures would at least double home-protection costs. Additional development and hotter summers combined could increase the annual cost to exceed \$80 million by 2025, and that doesn't include the likely hundreds of millions to safeguard watersheds important to drinking water and to forest rehabilitation – costs currently underwritten by the federal government.

The firefighting question figures prominently at the heart of a controversial issue. Gorte's examination throws cold water on assertions from conservative lawmakers in state legislatures and Congress that federal lands should be turned over to states for "better management." Not only is it currently illegal to transfer federal lands, but the costs and liabilities of having states take over firefighting costs could obliterate their budgets.

That assessment is corroborated by another recent report, "The Wildfire Burden: Why Public Land Seizure Proposal Would Cost States Billions of Dollars," prepared by the Denver-based conservation group Center for Western Priorities.

U.S. Sen. Steve Daines of Montana has called for more intensive logging which he and others claim will prevent wildfires from erupting, a contention disputed by Yellowstone's former fire guru, Despain.

When ecologist George Wuerthner with the Foundation for Deep Ecology edited the coffee table-sized book *Wild Fire: A Century of Failed Forest Policy*, he cited numerous scientific studies showing that the "logging-one's-way-out-of-fire-danger" mentality was misguided.

The Smokey the Bear era that dominated the 20th century brought decades of wildfire suppression while, ironically, setting the stage for even bigger fires and leading to the arrogant attitude that development could occur anywhere.

"We are used to doing things as we please and being left alone," said University of Montana economist Thomas Power. "The federal and state governments pick up the tab. Some of us even demand that the entire forested landscape be fireproofed – as plausible a concept as stopping a hurricane or earthquake, at a cost of billions of taxpayers' dollars and untold environmental costs."

Every journalist I know who was covering the Yellowstone fires of 1988, has scenes seared in our brains. Vivid in my memory are the mushroom clouds that erupted like atomic blasts with each major blowup.

Nothing will ever compare to the surreal vision of Sept. 7, 1988, when the North Fork Fire made a dead-aimed run at the development complex encircling Old Faithful Geyser.

Meteorologists predicted that the breeze would pick up briskly the following day. The forecast prompted Park Service officials to evacuate thousands of visitors and concession employees. Staying behind was a corps of firefighters, park staff, and maybe two-dozen journalists.

Indeed, the zephyrs picked up, attaining gale force and driving the inferno straight toward the historic Old Faithful Inn in a deafening roar. Scurrying for safety, we huddled around the treeless apron of Old Faithful Geyser as blackness engulfed us, firebrands racing horizontally overhead. Some firefighters believed the inn would be lost. At the last minute, the wind changed direction only a few degrees and miraculously the building survived.

No major irreplaceable structure was lost in Yellowstone that entire summer, a testament to the fact that thousands of firefighters and most of the then-record \$120 million was spent on protecting people and buildings.

Despain notes that it's a huge waste of money to continually attack a fire that is rolling across wild country. No matter how much retardant expensive slurry bombers drop, no matter how many fire lines are cut by bulldozers, and, poignantly, no matter how many trees are felled in the name of reducing fuel loads, fires are going to start and race as long as conditions are dry.



Fire explodes near the western boundary of Yellowstone National Park in early September during the 1988 wildfires. PHOTO BY MIKE COIL

The decision before us is where we build. "We're not going to stop fire but we can anticipate, just as we do with rising water in flood plains, where they're going to be," Headwaters' Rasker says.

Where does personal responsibility begin and end? Let's be clear, no one who owns an abode in the woods wants to be lectured about fire risk any more than the folks who build dream homes along rivers want to be chided about floods. But should risky decisions be supported with federally subsidized firefighting and federally subsidized flood insurance?

Rasker argues that the more America denies it has a serious problem, the deeper a hole it is digging. He believes strongly that federal and state land managers having to answer to an increasingly frugal public see the writing on the wall.

Thoughtful investments in smarter planning now will deliver exponential dividends in the years to come, he says. Rasker's evangelizing earned him an audience in 2014 with top officials in the U.S. Interior and Agriculture departments in Washington, D.C., including a meeting with Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell and wildfire and budget strategists.

"At first, thinking like an economist, I thought the solution was simply to bill county and city governments for their share of the subsidized federal firefighting bill," Rasker says, admitting that his own opinion has shifted. "I thought that would correct the moral hazard of allowing any development to occur in dangerous places while the rest of us pay the bill and young men and women risk their lives. I thought this would create a powerful incentive for better land-use planning."

But given the deep partisan divide that exists in Congress, that kind of approach, albeit a paragon of fiscal responsibility, was still a non-starter.

So Rasker went again to Washington in April 2015 and offered a carrot. Of the Forest Service's \$2.2 billion annual firefighting budget, he proposed devoting just 1 percent of it – \$22 million per year – to create a land-use planning assistance grant program that communities can apply for. These communities would be eligible for \$200,000 to hire land-use planning consultants who specialize in fire-risk reduction, and specialists who can do fine-scale risk mapping just as flood zones are mapped.

"We need to create a series of incentives and regulations that force future developments to consider and prepare for the reality of wildfire being accelerated by climate change," Rasker says. "It doesn't mean we don't develop. It means we develop smarter."

Already, a pilot project in the downhill ski industry province of Summit County, Colorado, is showing how the program can work and Rasker fully expects that it can be applied more widely across the West and forested Montana. The Forest Service is now looking to expand the project to five more Western communities.

As Yellowstone National Park burned in 1988, its fires were defeated only by snow and not human combat. Still, members of Wyoming's Congressional Delegation invoked their own incendiary rhetoric. One elected official demanded that Despain and Yellowstone Superintendent Bob Barbee be fired for "allowing the park to burn." Another characterized the national park as a charred moonscape that would never recover. They were wrong.

Today, every study affirms that Yellowstone is none the worse for wear. Not long after that distant summer, John Varley, the now-retired Yellowstone research chief, offered a poignant observation.

Mother Nature never does anything that results in her own destruction, Varley said. What people do to the environment, jeopardizing their own life-support system by exacerbating climate change, however, is another matter. We ignore it at our peril and when the heat gets turned up we'll pay the price.



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