

Big Sky

Sept. 10 - 23, 2021
Volume 12 // Issue #19

Running the Rut: Inside one of the world's toughest ultra races

LPHS students build relationships in the mountains

Rockin' through Labor Day

Big Sky Community Library's new director

Fall sports take the stage



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ON THE COVER:

Runners from the 2021 Rut Mountain Runs traverse the razor edge of Headwaters Ridge on Lone Mountain. The weekend-long running festival includes VK, 11K, 28K and 50K courses as well as a Runt Run for the little runners. PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG SKY RESORT

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The Rut: Inside one of the world's toughest races

While most families are out camping or barbecuing over the holiday weekend, EBS New Media Lead Mira Brody chose to partake in the Rut Mountain Runs' crown jewel—the 50K, traversing Lone Mountain and many miles in-between.

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LPHS students build relationships in the mountains

Lone Peak High School students participated in the traditional last year expedition, an outing that kicks off the start of the school year. Freshmen, sophomores and juniors are sent out on multiday backpacking trip in the Spanish Peaks.

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Rockin' through Labor Day

Over Labor Day weekend, Tips Up hosted two big names in rock—Thunderpussy and Jamie McLean Band—treating fans to a wily set of evenings as indoor concert season begins in Montana.

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Big Sky Community Library's new director

After bidding farewell to Kathy House, who retired after 35 years, the Big Sky Community Library welcomed a new director, Danielle Kabisch. Meet Kabisch and learn why the library is such a special facet of the community.

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Fall sports take the stage

Lone Peak High School sports are moving full-speed ahead with the football, volleyball and soccer teams playing multiple games and preparing for a new field. Catch up on the latest action and current team standings.

Opening Shot



Catching some alpenglow through the tent door while camping in the Spanish Peaks. See pg. 8 for the full story. PHOTO BY BELLA BUTLER

CORRECTIONS

The version of the story "Big Sky schools implement mask mandate ahead of semester" which ran in the Aug. 27 - Sept. 9 issue of EBS referred to the Montana High School Association. All instances have been corrected to refer to the Montana School Boards Association. A correction has also been made to a statement in the story that said Montana is the only state that has banned vaccine requirements. The article has been corrected to specify that the law applies to governmental entities including public schools and that Montana is the only state that has banned vaccine requirements for employees. An updated version can be found at explorebigsky.com/big-sky-schools-implement-mask-mandate-ahead-of-semester/40622

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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.

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For the September 24, 2021 issue: September 15, 2021

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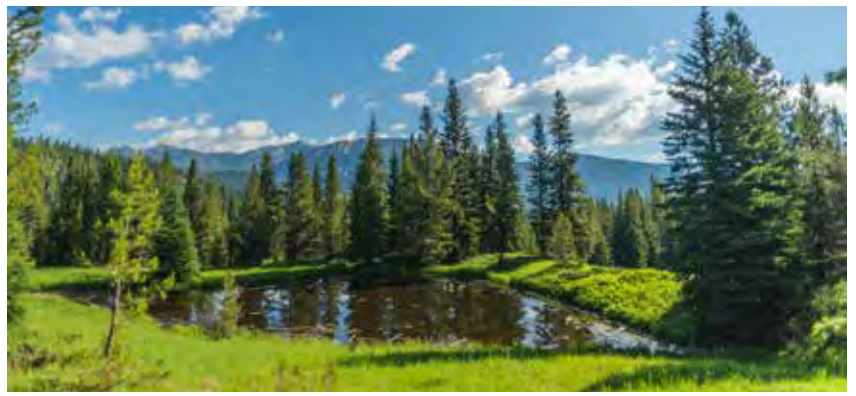
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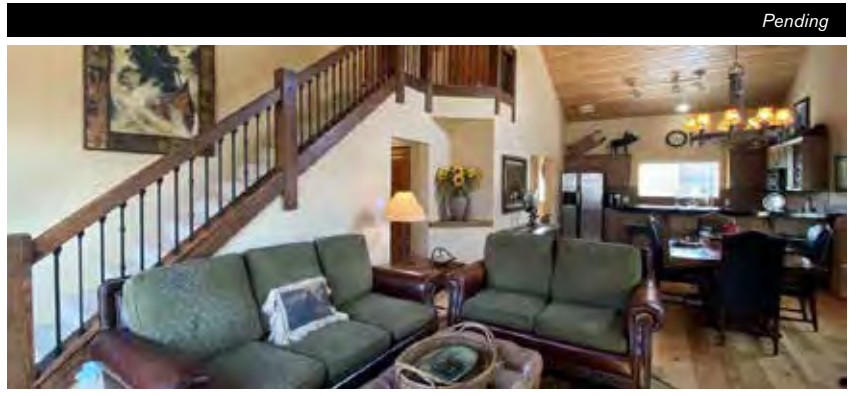
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OP-ED:

APR land proposal would set terrible precedent

BY CHUCK DENOWH

An important deadline approaches for Montanans fighting to stop the American Prairie Reserve from decimating the agricultural economy of Eastern Montana.

The Bureau of Land Management will take public comment until Sept. 28 on APR's proposal to "rewild" their federal grazing allotments by removing them from agricultural production. The stakes of this proposal are high due to the precedent it would set.

Specifically, APR has proposed to change seven federal grazing allotments, totaling 57,000 acres of public land, from cattle grazing to open range for free-roaming bison. APR seeks permission to remove interior fences and other improvements from these allotments.

Today, APR's bison are considered domestic animals, but they've made it clear they intend to convert those animals to wildlife at the earliest opportunity. They even attempted to make a secret—and illegal—deal with the Bullock administration to accomplish this goal last year.

The problem with APR's proposal is that "rewilding" is not a legal use of BLM land. BLM (originally the National Grazing Service) was created in 1934 under the Taylor Grazing Act, which reserved unclaimed public lands for agricultural production. BLM land is intended to benefit the public by ensuring an adequate and affordable food supply for the country.

If APR is successful in removing their allotments from agricultural production to use them for rewilding and eco-tourism, a new precedent will be set that affects all BLM grazing land. We'll see a rush by deep-pocketed and taxpayer-subsidized nonprofits to buy up ranch land in the West in order to take over BLM allotments with the intention of removing them from ag production. APR is the test case that many environmentalists are watching closely.

BLM has a larger presence in Montana than any other state in terms of the number of ranching operations it interacts with. There are currently over 3,800 BLM grazing leases in Montana with a combined usage of over 1.1 million AUMs, or animal unit months. Simply put, grazing on BLM land is a vital component of our cattle industry. Taking away some portion of that grazing has an economic impact on the state that affects us all.

Montana ranchers have spent the past 87 years working with BLM to develop seasonal grazing practices that have improved the range to pristine condition. The year-round grazing APR proposes presents serious implications to the health of the affected range and compromises the ability to respond to changing conditions.

Wild bison roaming in and around APR's property presents a number of serious issues. The risks of brucellosis transmission from bison to cattle and wildlife are well documented. The state spends a great deal of resources to keep Yellowstone bison from comingling with cattle. APR is now proposing to recreate this expensive problem in another part of the state and wants taxpayers to pick up the bill.

BLM needs to hear from Montanans with skin in the game about why they should reject APR's radical plan. Instructions for commenting can be found at upom.org/blm-comments. In addition, Attorney General Austin Knudsen is holding a public hearing to facilitate comments on Sept. 15 at 6 p.m. at the Malta High School Auditorium.

This is the most consequential decision BLM has been asked to make in decades. If they get it wrong, thousands of Montana ranchers and millions of acres of land will be affected. Please take a few minutes to weigh in to protect Montana's future.

Chuck Denowh is the policy director of United Property Owners of Montana. He lives in Helena.



In an effort to maintain objectivity and fairness, a scoring system was created to assist the locally elected Board in funding decisions with a focus on **COLLABORATION**, **EFFICIENCY** and **PLANNING**. The following is the scoring criteria to be used for Fiscal Year 2023 & 2024 Applications.

Sponsoring Organization Criteria	30 points available
Community Participation Does the Sponsor have active Big Sky Community participation?	<input type="radio"/> No evidence (0 points) <input type="radio"/> Some evidence (3 points) <input type="radio"/> Strong evidence (5 points)
Program Expense Ratio What percentage of expenses are "Programming" related?	<input type="radio"/> Below 50% (0 points) <input type="radio"/> 51-69.9% (3 points) <input type="radio"/> Above 70% (5 points)
Revenue Reliance How financially reliant is the Sponsor on Resort Tax?	<input type="radio"/> 67-100% of Sponsor revenue from RT (0 points) <input type="radio"/> 33-66% of Sponsor revenue from RT (3 points) <input type="radio"/> 0-32% of Sponsor revenue from RT (5 points)
Track Record Does the Sponsor follow through with funding terms?	<input type="checkbox"/> FY22 project(s) on track (1 point) <input type="checkbox"/> Public funding recognition (1 point) <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate payment requests (1 point) <input type="checkbox"/> FY21 Impact Report completed accurately (2 points) <input type="checkbox"/> FY21 project(s) completed as outlined (5 points)
Forecasting Accuracy How accurate was the Sponsor forecasted request last year?	<input type="radio"/> +/- 30% or more variance (0 points) <input type="radio"/> +/- 16-29 variance (3 points) <input type="radio"/> +/- 0-15% variance (5 points)
Project Criteria	70 points available
Partnerships Does the project demonstrate collaboration?	<input type="radio"/> 0 partners (0 points) <input type="radio"/> 1-3 partners (3 point) <input type="radio"/> 4+ partners (5 points)
Matching Funds What portion of the project is funded by matching funds?	<input type="radio"/> Less than 20% (0 points) <input type="radio"/> 20-39% (4 points) <input type="radio"/> 40-59% (6 points) <input type="radio"/> 60-79% (8 points) <input type="radio"/> 80% or greater (10 points)
"Our Big Sky" Alignment Is the project addressing strategies demonstrating need and urgency?	<input type="radio"/> Meets no strategies (0 points) <input type="radio"/> Meets strategy with a green status (5 points) <input type="radio"/> Meets strategy with a yellow status (7 points) <input type="radio"/> Meets strategy with a red status (10 points)
Direct Expense Ratio What portion of the request is for Direct expenses?	<input type="radio"/> 19% (0 points) <input type="radio"/> 20-39% (2 points) <input type="radio"/> 40-59% (3 points) <input type="radio"/> 60-79% (4 points) <input type="radio"/> 80-100% (5 points)
SMART Accountability Does the project demonstrate and articulate SMART deliverables, impacts, outcomes, goals, and milestones?	<input type="checkbox"/> SPECIFIC deliverables (2 points) <input type="checkbox"/> MEASURABLE impacts (2 points) <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVABLE outcomes (2 points) <input type="checkbox"/> RELEVANT goals (2 points) <input type="checkbox"/> TIME BOUND milestones (2 points)
Financial Sustainability Will the project result in operating costs requiring Resort Tax funding?	<input type="radio"/> Yes (0 points) <input type="radio"/> No (5 points)
Longevity of Deliverable(s) What is the life of project deliverable(s)?	<input type="radio"/> Life of 1 year or less (2 points) <input type="radio"/> Life of 1-10 years (3 points) <input type="radio"/> Life of 10+ years (5 points)
Quality of Proposal Was the funding application complete, thorough, and thoughtful?	<input type="checkbox"/> All questions answered directly (3 points) <input type="checkbox"/> Complete & accurate budget that matches application details (3 points) <input type="checkbox"/> Articulate project summary (3 points) <input type="checkbox"/> Application outlined project specifics, not org. level detail (3 points) <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor attended training session or consultation (3 points)
Resort Tax Annuity For how many years will this project need Indirect operational funds from Resort Tax?	<input type="radio"/> 3+ years (0 points) <input type="radio"/> 1-3 years (3 points) <input type="radio"/> 0-1 year (5 points)

All Meetings are open to the public and are held in person @ the Resort Tax Office (11 Lone Peak Dr. #204) and via Zoom.

Public Comment is highly encouraged and can be shared by emailing Info@ResortTax.org prior to meetings and attending Board meetings and making public comment.

Visit ResortTax.org for more information.



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School district site election passes

District to search for off-campus bus storage with voter approval

EBS STAFF

Correction: This story has been updated to reflect that the Big Sky School District board of trustees will be canvassing the election, not Gallatin County as was previously reported.

BIG SKY – The Big Sky School District electorate voted in favor of allowing the district to acquire a bus storage facility in the recent site election ending on Aug. 24.

The issue had to be taken to voters because the district seeks to acquire a facility that is not contiguous to current district property, according to BSSD Superintendent Dustin Shipman. With voter approval, the district can now begin searching for an offsite storage facility for its fleet of nine buses.

Shipman noted that the extreme Big Sky climate is hard on buses. Having a storage facility will provide multiple benefits, he said.

“This [facility] will really prolong the life of our buses as well as cut down on the amount of fuel that we burn in a year and allow us a place to work on and maintain [the buses] inside ourselves,” Shipman told EBS.

Of the 544 votes cast, just over 55 percent were in favor of granting the district permission to acquire an off-site storage facility.

The school district board of trustees will now canvass the election and declare the official results on Sept. 14.

BSRAD Board approves first reading of amended ordinance

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – At a Sept. 8 meeting the Big Sky Resort Area District Board engaged in a first reading of amendment to an ordinance that specifies what goods and services are taxable and nontaxable within the district.

One amendment would make food trucks and private chef services taxable by the district as luxuries in an effort to ensure that tax is collected on those services.

Another amendment adds recreational marijuana as a new item under luxuries as a taxable good ahead of the Jan. 1, 2022, date when recreational marijuana sales are slated to begin in Montana.

The third and final amendment regarding business registration adds more specific language regarding vendor registration for events, which aims to hold event organizers accountable for ensuring that vendors register with the district and collect resort tax.

“[These changes] will help to provide additional clarity for business that were not sure whether they should or should not collect resort tax,” said Daniel Bierschwale, executive director for BSRAD.

Fire restrictions updated in several southwest Montana counties

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

BOZEMAN – Fire restrictions have been updated for properties managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in several counties.

Fire restrictions have been rescinded for FWP properties in Deer Lodge, Granite, Gallatin and Park counties. Stage-1 fire restrictions are still in effect for FWP properties in Madison, Beaverhead, Silver Bow, Jefferson, and Lewis and Clark counties.

Stage-1 restrictions at FWP sites ban campfires except where specifically exempted and allow smoking only in vehicles and areas 3 feet in diameter that are cleared of flammable materials. Gas or propane stoves that can be turned on and off are still allowed.

Fireworks are always prohibited at FWP sites. Fire restrictions are in effect in other areas of Montana. For more information, visit mtfireinfo.org.

Gallatin County burn ban lifted

GALLATIN MEDIA CENTER

BOZEMAN – The Gallatin County Commission has lifted the county-wide burn ban as of Tuesday, Aug. 31.

Citing recent rainfall, cooler temperatures and safer fuel levels, the Commission voted 3-0 on Tuesday to rescind the county’s burn ban ordinance adopted on July 20.

“Everything points to us rescinding these current restrictions,” said Commission Chair Scott MacFarlane, adding, “We can always go back as needed.”

“I’m grateful to the folks across the county who have done their part to keep things from getting away from us here in Gallatin County. And I’m grateful for the work of firefighters and first responders across the state and nation,” said Commissioner Zach Brown.

Patrick Lonergan, Gallatin County’s chief of emergency management and fire, reminds everyone to continue burning responsibly as fire season in Montana has not ended.

“Gallatin County’s wildland fuel conditions are now closer to average for this time of year, but keep in mind this does not mean that a fire can’t escape and become a large fire,” Lonergan said. “It is imperative that everyone follow safe burning practices at all times and never burn when weather conditions aren’t safe. Let’s not forget the Bridger Foothills Fire occurred on September 4.”

Burn permits are still required for non-recreational fires. Many fire districts will continue to keep open burning closed until further into the fall when even safer burning conditions exist in their areas.

Burn permits and the most current open burning status information is available at gallatinburnpermits.com.

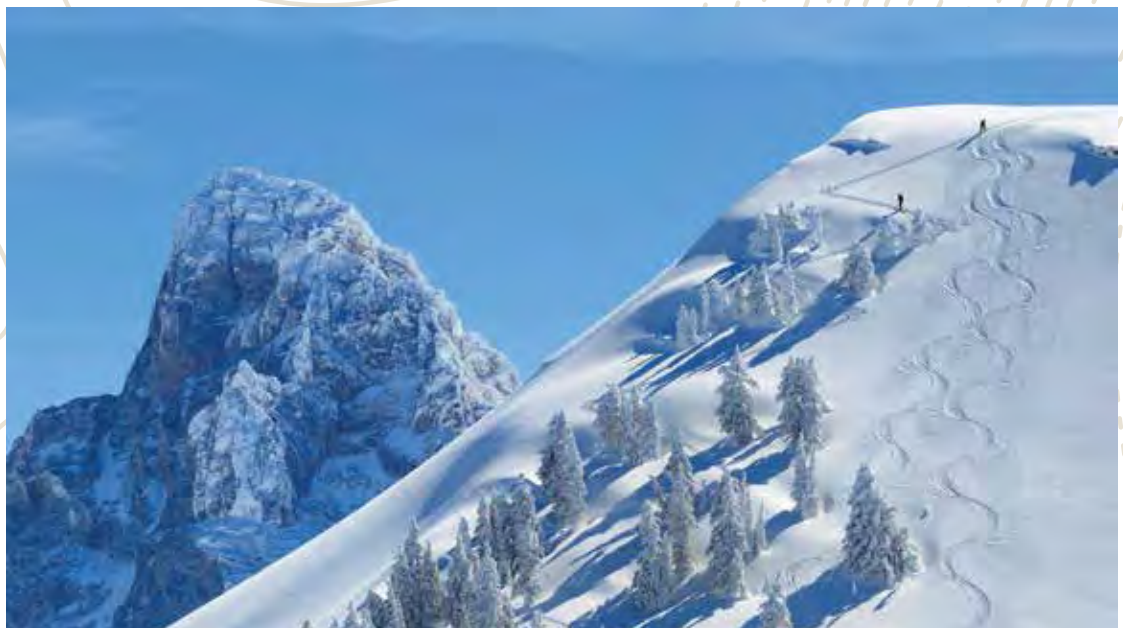
Residents are encouraged to register for the Community Notification System to ensure they receive timely information about an emergency happening in Gallatin County. For free registration, visit alerts.readygallatin.com.

On Sept. 1, fire restrictions were lifted on public lands within the Custer Gallatin National Forest including the Bozeman and Hebgen Lake Ranger Districts. Last week, the City of Bozeman also lifted its burn ban. And surrounding counties in southwestern Montana are in the process of rescinding similar restrictions.



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‘Seam of remoteness and serenity’

LPHS expedition returns for 11th year



TJ Nordahl (far right) roasts a bagel one morning for breakfast while (right to left) Kassidy Boersma, Campbell Johnson and Sophia Cone warm up by the fire. PHOTO BY BELLA BUTLER

BY BELLA BUTLER

BIG SKY – The strength of the alpine sun is diluted today by the onset of fall, but we still sweat as we climb. I’m first in a line of bobbing heads and backpack tops, leading 10 Lone Peak High School seniors and two teachers through a meadow on the north side of the Spanish Peaks.

These students are participating in their last year of expedition, an outing which happens every fall at the start of the school year. The freshmen, sophomores and juniors are sent out on multiday camping trips, a cumulative experience that culminates their senior year: the backpacking trip.

This year, I’ve joined the Class of 2022 in the basin that cradles the Spanish Lakes, the very place I stayed with my own senior class six years ago. I’m older than these students—I don’t recognize the music they listen to or even many of the social media celebrities they gossip about—but no matter the distance, we will always share this expedition adventure. We along with all the other LPHS students who’ve built the foundations of this experiential learning platform since it began in 2010.

On this Wednesday in early September, we spent our first morning in the backcountry and are now on a day hike to Beehive Lake, not to be mistaken with the pond that terminates the Beehive Basin Trail in Big Sky. We’re on the other side of Beehive Peak, which looks foreign from this angle, moving toward a vast, blue alpine lake surrounded by ridgelines and scree bowls.

The sound of tumbling rocks echoes around us, and English teacher Patty Hamblin points to the slope on our left. “Look!”

Cutting across the nearly 40-degree slope are nine bighorn sheep. Conversation ceases and we watch in wonder as the ungulates skillfully move over steep cliffs and balance their 150 pounds of body weight on their hooves along sheer ledges.

“They’re like you guys,” I tell the students, referring to their high school mascot. “Big Horns.”

The first LPHS expedition took place in late April of 2010, the first spring the high school was open. Paul Swenson, a teacher at the school since its beginning who helped design the school’s curriculum before it was even open, said that first year all the high school students traveled to the Flathead area in

northwestern Montana where they stayed on a ranch and learned about spring planting.

“The purposes of expeditions were multifaceted,” Swenson wrote to EBS. “We wanted to combine the outdoor education focus with the interdisciplinary philosophy that the curriculum of the high school had in its early days.”

Today, the school has more students in each class than were in the entire school back then, and expeditions have adapted to meet the growth. Now, in the fall rather than the spring, expedition is used as a bonding experience for peers and teachers as they head into a new school year.

Hamblin, who’s led six backpacking expeditions, told the students around the campfire one night that she was grateful for the chance to get to know them outside of the classroom.

“I feel like even though I’ve known these kids for years, it’s not until you get out there in a place like that where you can really just kind of let your guard down and just truly be who you really are,” she said in a conversation after the trip.

Brad Packer, the other teacher leading the expedition, agreed that the relationships built with students in the backcountry are entirely different than those formed in the classroom.



Two LPHS seniors hike across the Lee Metcalf Wilderness boundary on their trek up to Spanish Lakes. PHOTO BY BELLA BUTLER

“Those relationships will help when you have to work with a student in the classroom to get something done,” he said. “Having that relationship underlying makes the academics better and easier later on.”

This year’s senior class has 16 students, one less than I graduated with in 2017. It’s the last class under 30 at the high school.

“So many people change their attitudes when they’re in or out of school,” said senior Campbell Johnson, who is new to LPHS this year. “It was nice to see people being themselves and their personalities and relationships with other kids that I hadn’t seen.”

Personalities, in fact, were on such display that we decided to give each other unique trail names, like those adopted by thru-hikers. Names ranged from Drench—after senior Carly Wilson accidentally poured her water all over a fragile fire—to Rocky, given to Robert Pruiett, who was constantly throwing rocks at something. When the students got back to class the following week, Hamblin gave them a quiz on their trail names.

On the second of our three-night trip, a summerlong burn ban was lifted, and we spent evenings beneath the stars and in the comforting presence of crackling flames, drinking hot chocolate and tea together and sharing stories. When Hamblin, Packer and I tucked ourselves into our sleeping bags, the students stayed, huddled around the fire, laughter resounding throughout the basin and shadows dancing against the firelit boulders.

“I’m grateful that our school gives us the opportunity to do this,” Wilson said one night around the fire, “because most people can’t say they went backpacking with 10 people from their senior class.” Wilson added she was glad it was a small group and said she got to have conversations with every person.

Many of these conversations happened on the trail. Our hike from the Spanish Creek Trailhead on Aug. 31 was at times slow and arduous, especially the final steep, 3-mile climb into the basin. The dialogue dealt with what you’d typically expect from 17- and 18-year-olds: talk of soccer team drama and reliving summer shenanigans; expressed fear for upcoming big exams.

But every so often I’d catch a glimmer of promise for the people they will be one day, the people they are already becoming; sophisticated and witty humor, tenacious grit and encouragement for one another on a challenging hill, discussions of their favorite (and least favorite) literature that Hamblin introduced to them over the years.



The Lone Peak High School Class of 2022 sits at the edge of one of the Spanish Lakes on their senior backpacking trip in early September. PHOTO BY BELLA BUTLER



The senior class trudges up a steep hill on their way to Beehive Lake. PHOTO BY BELLA BUTLER

It’s often true that time in the backcountry is divergent from true hours and minutes. Cooking meals together, sleeping in a tent side-by-side and spending all night talking by the fire builds connections that match those made over four years of simply sitting next to someone in a math class. I’ve known many of the seniors since they were born, but it felt like such a privilege to meet them once again in this way, to experience awe and wonder together.

Swenson later wrote to me that one of the values of expedition is the way it offers students a chance to find humility in the face of nature. I think of many examples of this from this year’s expedition but draw out the bighorn sheep sighting in particular.

I’ll hold in my memory that moment we all stood still together and watched them. The trivial chat took a backseat to awe and respect. Even the boys, too cool for anything these days, let their jaws drop.

Just over the ridge were our four-walled homes and phone chargers and the gym floor the students would return to later that weekend for games—the gym floor emblazoned with the LPHS Big Horn logo.

As we watched, I recalled Ellen Meloy’s essay “Bighorn Sheep” I’d read the night before in my tent. The last line in particular struck me as Meloy describes her own moment watching the tactful bighorns with reverence:

“I simply fall into their seam of remoteness and serenity.”

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Third Annual Big Sky Biggie rides through Big Sky

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – On Aug. 28, a misty summer morning, lyrics sung by the Notorious B.I.G. “Biggie, Biggie, Biggie, can’t you see? Sometimes your words just hypnotize me” ring out over a crowd of bikers and spectators gathered in the Big Sky Town Center Plaza. The occasion is the Third Annual Big Sky Biggie mountain bike race presented by Lone Peak Physical Therapy featuring 30 and 50 mile courses that take athletes on a winding route through Big Sky on the many mountain biking trails the mountain town has to offer.

The excitement crackled in the air early on Saturday morning as bikers took laps to warm up and spectators huddled together sipping coffee. The energy was distinctly more subdued than the evening before when many Big Sky community members gathered under the same inflatable archway to cheer on kids in the two short-track races.

At 7:30 a.m. a horn sounded and the 50-mile course riders were off grinning madly as the chilly air bit their skin. The 30-mile racers followed shortly after at 8 a.m.

The Big Sky Biggie was created by Natalie Osborne in 2018 as a fundraising event to benefit the Big Sky Community Organization. After a hiatus in 2020 due to COVID-19, the race returned this year with about 250 total athletes competing across both courses.

“It was a huge success,” Osborne said of the 2021 race. “There were no injuries, no major incidents. I think everybody was really pleased—I got a ton of great feedback from racers [and] from volunteers.”

The mission of the event is to not only benefit local organizations in Big Sky but to create awareness of mountain biking and the many trails in the area. The philanthropic side of the race split this year between two primary benefactors: BSCO and the Big Sky Chapter of the Southwest Montana Mountain Bike Association, two organizations that Osborne says, “do the most work for these trails in [the] area.”

“We’re a small event still, I’d say in the infant stage,” she said. “As we grow into adolescent, teenage years, we’ll be able to give more money back to the community, and I’m really looking forward to that.”

The work Osborne wants to support includes maintaining existing trails as well as further expanding and connecting the existing trail systems. The 250-athlete total this year was dictated by a cap set by the Forest Service but Osborne looks forward to increasing the number of athletes that can participate in the future with updated

courses—according to Osborne, efforts are in the works to create a new 30-mile course not on Forest Service land that can expand race participation caps in the future.

She also hopes to reach 50 percent female participation. This year participation was skewed heavily male with 70 percent male athletes and only 30 percent female athletes.

Also new this year to the Biggie was the race’s inclusion in the National Ultra Endurance Race Series, a marathon series born in 2006 to elevate the sport of ultra-endurance mountain biking to the national stage. The Biggie joined 11 other races in NUE’s marathon series, which includes races from all across the U.S.

Winners of the 50-mile course this year got a slice of the \$1,500 Total Cash Purse Prize courtesy of American Bank with a first place prize of \$400, second place of \$250 and third place of \$100 for both the women and men divisions.

Amber Steed earned first place overall in the 50-mile race women’s division with a time of 5:16:18 and Heidi Meierbachtol finished first place overall in the 30-mile race women’s division with a time of 2:53:55.

Tanner Visnick came in first place overall in the men’s 50-mile race with a time of 4:12:53 and Aiden Sorich claimed first place overall in the men’s 30-mile race with a time of 2:32:33.

Visnick finished far ahead of the rest of the 50-mile pack and left early after a solo podium ceremony. He had to rush back to Bozeman for his own wedding, which was happening that same afternoon.

Registration for the 2022 Biggie will go live on Jan. 10, 2022, and the hope is to register even more athletes than this year. According to Osborne, she has been working with BSCO Parks & Trails Director Adam Johnson on obtaining easements to make the new 30-mile course a reality. The new course would not only expand participation but bring in more revenue, allowing the Biggie to give back to the Big Sky community even more.

Osborne outlined her goals for the Biggie, emphasizing safety and continuing to work closely with local landowners to make the courses possible.

“[I] have really found a lot of joy in riding my bike, and one of my personal goals of this event is to bring that joy to other people and just bring all kinds of different riders together of different skill levels together for one day and celebrate these trails and the beauty of Big Sky,” Osborne said “that’s really what it’s about.”



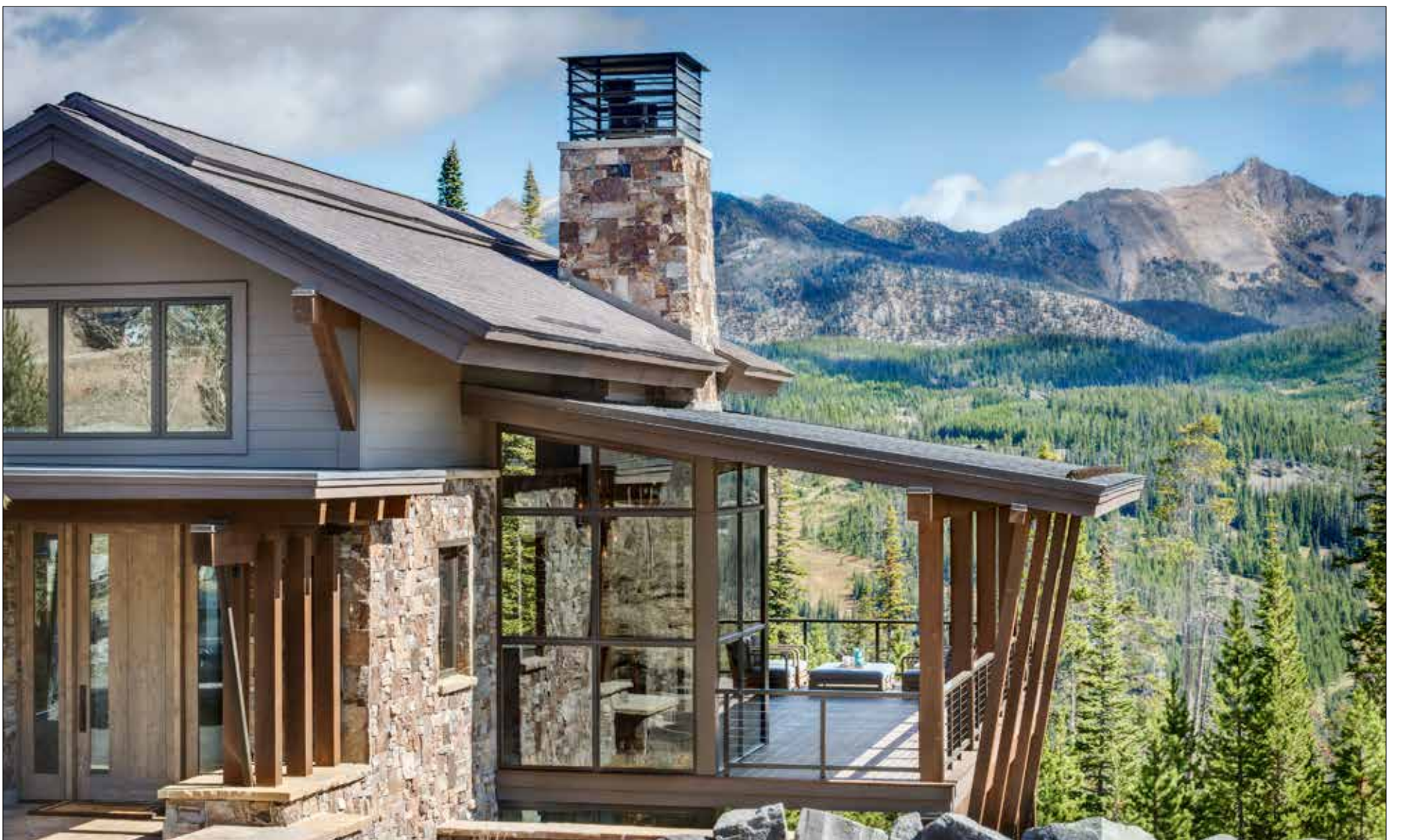
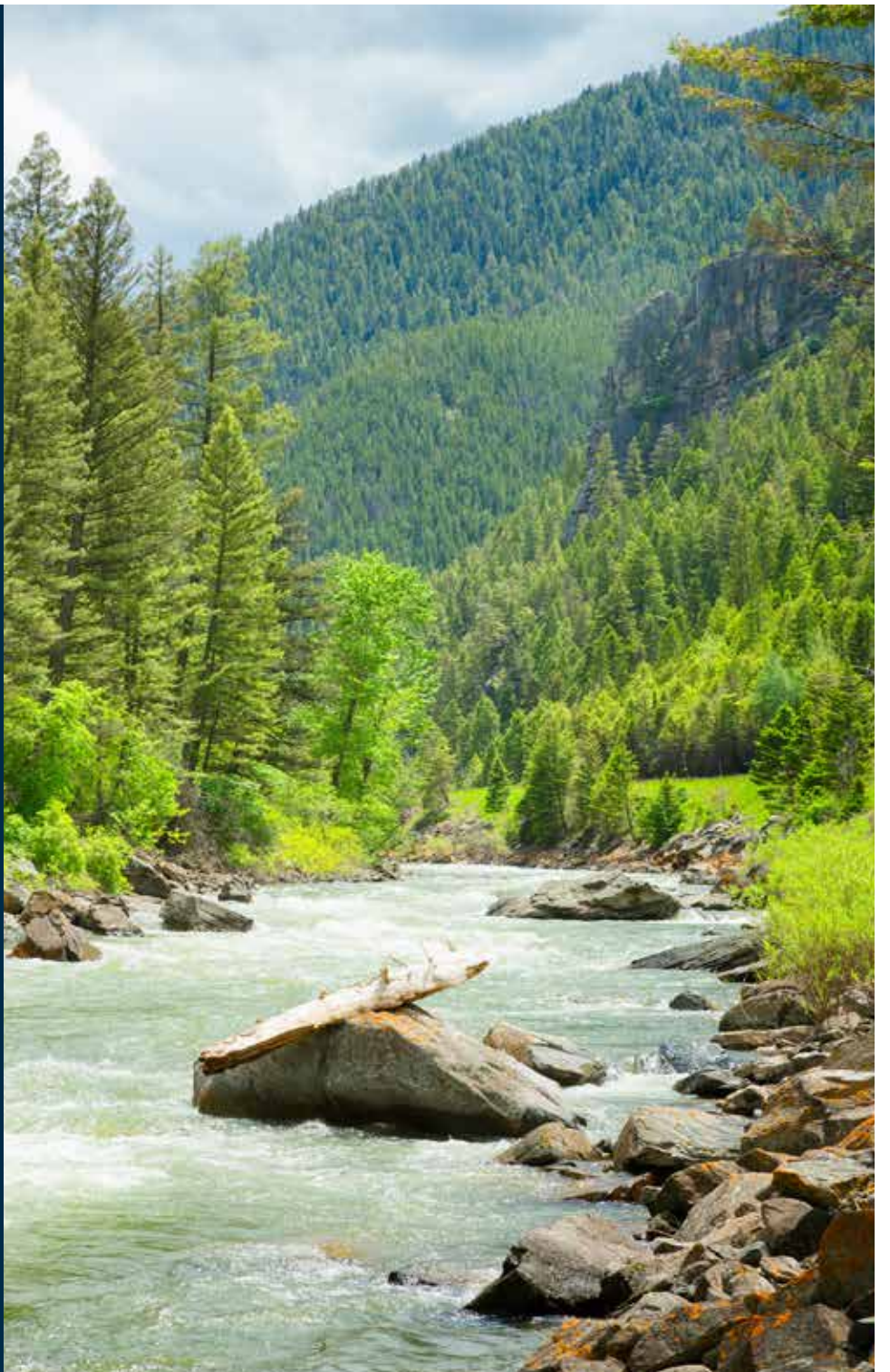
Anticipation at the 30-mile starting lineup was high on the cold misty morning that marked the Third Annual Big Sky Biggie Race. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

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Statewide rule urges schools to consider ‘parental rights’ in mask mandates

BSSD mask policy to remain in place

BY MIRA BRODY

HELENA – A new statewide emergency rule is urging school districts to consider “parental rights” over health mandates, pointing specifically to mask wearing. School officials, however, including those in the Big Sky School District, say the law won’t change their requirements.

The rule, issued by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and announced by Gov. Greg Gianforte on Aug. 31, says schools should take into account parents’ concerns over whether or not health-related mandates—masking in particular—are healthy for their children, citing “health, religious, moral, or other fundamental rights reasons.”

“[School districts] should consider, and be able to demonstrate consideration of, parental concerns when adopting a mask mandate,” the rule states.

Dustin Shipman, superintendent for BSSD in Big Sky says this does not change the district’s mask requirement that was voted on and approved by the school board on Aug. 24.

“We reviewed the emergency rule that was issued by the DPHHS and we read the rule as permissive and other school districts are reading it and interpreting it the same way,” Shipman said. “It specifically provides that school districts should consider parental concern and we spent a long time considering parental concern via public comments that lead up to the school board decision.”

The Bozeman School District, which passed its own mask policy on Aug. 23, reacted similarly, stating that its mask requirements will remain in place and are in line with the new emergency rule. Monforton School District in Four Corners

Shipman says since BSSD’s mask mandate was implemented, he hasn’t seen a notable pushback from parents. In addition to mask wearing, district classrooms have cleaning and disinfecting procedures in place, temperature checks at the doors and physical distancing inside buildings.

The emergency rule cites psychosocial health and developmental need, among other concerns, for children with face coverings. EBS received announcement of the emergency rule in an email at 11:42 a.m. on Aug. 31 from Gianforte spokesperson Brooke Stroyke. Fourteen minutes later, Stroyke sent a second email with the subject line, “Research Report: Mask Mandate in Schools.”

The report listed approximately 60 excerpts and links to sources disputing the effectiveness of mask wearing in children. Among other sources, the email included articles from [New York Magazine’s Intelligencer](#), an opinion piece from [The Wall Street Journal](#), tweets from doctors on Twitter, and an excerpt from a 2020 World Health Organization study suggesting children under the age of 5 shouldn’t wear masks.

“Unfortunately, mandating masks for students is based on inconclusive research that fails to prove masks’ effectiveness in reducing the incidence of COVID-19 in the classroom,” Gianforte said in the Aug. 31 statement. “Simply put, our children shouldn’t be subject to arbitrary mask mandates when schools can’t follow the science because there’s a lack of meaningful, reliable research.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended “indoor masking for all individuals age 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.”

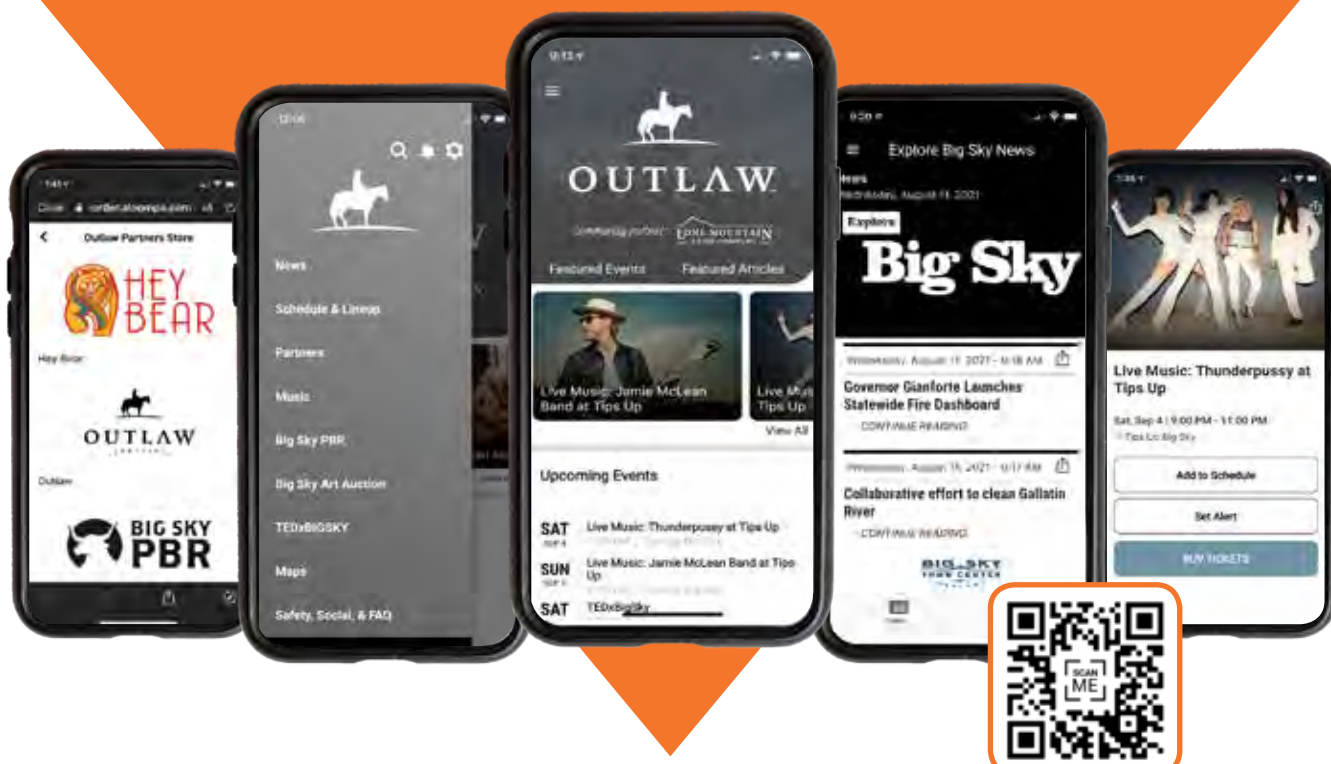
Gallatin City-County Health Officer Lori Christenson said nonpharmaceutical interventions, such as hand washing, wearing masks and staying home when you’re sick, are proven methods of slowing the transmission of viruses, including COVID-19. “We know masks work, we know that they can be effective in reducing transmission, the wellbeing of students and families in the wider community,” she said.

“We want to protect kids and we want to keep kids in school,” Christenson added. “As a public health agency [and] as a public health official, I applaud decisions made by all area schools that have required masks in their schools.”

The temporary emergency rule will remain in place “no longer than 120 days after the date of adoption,” according to the rule.

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Commission seeks suggestions for new U.S. House district maps

Free online tools mean Montanans can draw their own political maps and submit them for consideration

Editor's Note: According to state population data gathered in the 2020 Census and released in April 2021, Montana will regain a second seat in the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time since the 1990 Census. The most recent census also tallied the population of Big Sky as a Census Designated Place at 3,591, a nearly 64 percent increase from 2010. Montana grew 9.6 percent since 2010.

This story originally ran on MontanaFreePress.org.

BY ERIC DIETRICH
MONTANA FREE PRESS

HELENA — The commission tasked with dividing Montana into two U.S. House districts for the first time since the 1980s has a Nov. 14 deadline to submit a final district map to Montana's secretary of state. To help it do that, the commission is seeking public input in the form of written comments and specific mapping proposals.

The five-member Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission formally acknowledged receipt of detailed data from the 2020 U.S. census at a meeting the week of Aug. 16, kicking off a 90-day process for drawing new congressional districts for the first time since Montana lost its second seat in the U.S. House of Representatives after the 1990 count.

Commission Chair Maylinn Smith said in an interview the week of Aug. 23 that the commission has the option of drawing its own maps, but will consider using elements of public-submitted districting plans — or potentially adopt a map proposed by an individual or entity wholesale.

“We could arguably get a perfect map that satisfies everybody's needs,” she said.

Montanans can also provide feedback about proposed maps, which will eventually be posted to the districting commission's website. Smith said maps that divide the state on a north-south and an east-west basis have already been submitted.

The commission has laid out the following tentative timeline for the congressional districting process:

- **SEPT. 15 — Soft deadline for receipt of public-generated proposed maps**
- **SEPT. 16 or 17 — A meeting to review proposed maps submissions**
- **OCT. 5 — A meeting to select specific maps for further discussion**
- **OCT. 19 — A hearing to hear public feedback on selected maps**
- **OCT. 21 — A meeting to select a single map proposal**
- **OCT. 30 — A hearing to hear public feedback on the proposed map and potentially take a final vote.**

Montana's political maps are redrawn every 10 years following decennial censuses. While many states assign district-drawing authority to partisan state legislatures, Montana's 1972 Constitution delegates the task to an independent five-member commission with two Republican appointees, two Democratic appointees and a committee chair. Smith, who serves as a tiebreaker vote, was appointed by the Montana Supreme Court.

The new congressional maps produced by the districting commission will be used starting in next year's election. In a separate process next year, the commission will also redraw the districts used to elect the Montana Legislature starting in 2024.

The districting commission previously adopted formal criteria for the new congressional map. Those criteria require that the new districts split the state's population evenly, be compact and contiguous, and also comply with the Voting Rights Act, the civil rights movement-era law that was passed to guarantee minority groups fair political representation. The commission's criteria also articulate secondary goals such as minimizing the extent to which district lines split counties, cities and Indian reservations, and specify that “No plan may be drawn to unduly favor a political party.”

The commission specifies that map proposals developed by organizations or individual members of the public should be based on the Census Bureau's official geographic boundaries. The proposals should also comply with the commission's adopted criteria and be submitted along with contact information and written information indicating what the plan intends to accomplish.

The commission will accept public map proposals in the form of paper submissions. However, it prefers emailed computer-generated data files such as ESRI shapefiles (a .shp file extension) or so-called block equivalency files, which list the specific census blocks included in proposed districts.

Written comments can be emailed to the commission at districting@mt.gov or submitted via a form on the commission website. The commission is also accepting comments by mail at P.O. Box 201706, Helena, MT 59620, and by fax at 406-444-3036.

Multiple third-party resources are available for Montanans looking to understand the district-drawing process, including some that offer free tools for drawing maps and exporting them to the commission's preferred file formats:

- Districtr provides a free web-based tool for drawing districts using demographic data from the 2020 census. Users can export maps as PDFs or data files usable by GIS software.
- District Builder provides a web-based tool for drawing and exporting maps. Additionally, it presents information on user-generated districts' partisan leanings using data from past presidential elections.
- Dave's Redistricting presents several possible congressional maps for Montana, including a hypothetical gerrymander tilted in favor of Democrats and a map that purports to have the most geographically compact districts possible.

Eric Dietrich is a journalist and data designer with Montana Free Press and the founder of the Long Streets economic reporting project. His reporting focuses broadly on Montana's governance and economic opportunity, with particular focus on the state budget and tax policy. He also contributes data reporting across the MTFP newsroom. Before joining the MTFP staff in 2019, he worked for the Great Falls Tribune, Bozeman Daily Chronicle, and Solutions Journalism Network and also earned an engineering degree from Montana State University. Contact Eric at edietrich@montanafreepress.org, 406-465-3386 ext. 2, and follow him on Twitter.

OUTLAW™

News from our publisher, Outlaw Partners

Labor Day weekend shows rock Tips Up

BY BELLA BUTLER

BIG SKY – Amid the quiet, early September streets of Big Sky, bright lights and the sound of rock n’ roll escaped the windows of the Tips Up bar and music venue on Town Center Avenue. Inside, the glimmer from Thunderpussy vocalist Molly Sides’ sequined unitard danced with the shine of the disco ball dangling above the shoulder-to-shoulder crowd.

Thunderpussy, an unapologetic, soulful and exhilarating all-female rock band, was on stage in Big Sky for the first time since the Peak to Sky music

festival in 2019 for night one of Outlaw Partners, publisher of EBS, and Tips Up’s Rock n’ Roll Labor Day Weekend.

The sold-out crowd was as electric as the band, the front row packed tight with people wearing Thunderpussy shirts and whipping their hair in wild circles.

The retro-style joint was mostly filled with familiar faces. September usually marks the bridge between one tourist season and another; a time for the hard-working community to take a breath and unwind. And this Labor Day weekend, unwind they did.



Following Thunderpussy’s Saturday night performance, the Jamie McLean Band brought fans to their feet on Sunday for a night of dancing and, at McLean’s insistent request, partying.

Both Thunderpussy and McLean have nurtured a burgeoning fanbase in Big Sky.

“I was just listening to them before I came here!” one fan, Karen Davids, shouted at the Sunday show before pulling someone off a bar stool to dance.

“When I looked out in the crowd, I saw a lot of familiar faces and friends and fans,” McLean said. “It feels like a family. [Big Sky] feels like a home away from home for us now.”

McLean, a veteran PBR performer, played to the crowd, changing some of the lyrics to his song “Virginia” to say “Montana.”

Thunderpussy put on an equally personal show, with guitarist Whitney Petty crowd surfing toward the end of the night and Sides venturing off the stage and onto the dance floor.

“Everyone was laughing and smiling,” Sides said. “The show, the energy that night was unreal. We were really so honored to share space with everyone in Big Sky again. Everyone knows how to throw down, but it’s like pure joy underneath those stars.”

McLean added that he was pleasantly surprised by the venue—both the sound quality and the décor.

“We were so fired up about the Labor Day Weekend of rock and roll at Tips Up,” said Tips Up owner Casey Durham. “Thunderpussy brought their usual amazing energy and stage presence, and Jamie McLean did not disappoint. His band is incredibly tight.”

Outlaw Partners VP of Events Ennion Williams said while the first weekend in September is normally quiet in Big Sky, the success of this collaborative event brings excitement for future Labor Day weekends in town.

“We’re excited to see our new venue have this caliber of musicians coming to Big Sky and hope to set a precedent for the future,” Williams said.



PHOTO BY TUCKER HARRIS



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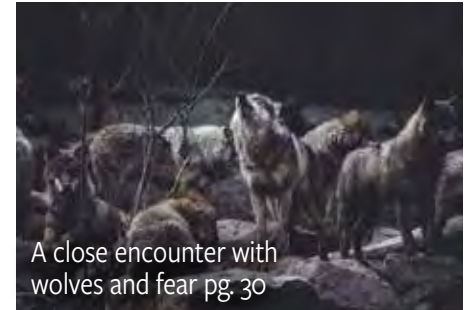
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“REMEMBER THIS: YOU HAVE NO CONTROL. YOU NEVER HAVE. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO CONQUER BUT THE VERY IDEA THAT YOU WOULD BE CAPABLE OF CONQUERING ANYTHING.”

– Nick Triolo, “One. Long. Day.”



EBS New Media Lead Mira Brody passes through the finish line of the Rut 50K while Senior Editor Bella Butler snaps a finish line photo. PHOTO BY ERIN MCCrackEN

In a Rut: A long day with Lone Mountain

BY MIRA BRODY

BIG SKY – “I can’t let my younger brother beat me,” gasps the man behind me on the trail. “Trail” is perhaps a stretch for what it was; Cautious step by step, hundreds of other runners and I traverse a faded line that was barely distinct through the screefield loaded with dinner-plate sized rocks. The man and his brother had been leap-frogging me all morning since our 6 a.m. start, the younger bounding ahead, then waiting to catch his breath and crack a joke or two.

“I can’t believe you drank six beers last night,” he quipped at his older sibling.

I passed the two carefully as we switchbacked down into the hot, dusty Dakota Bowl on the south side of the 11,166-foot-high Lone Mountain at Big Sky Resort. While most sane adults were out barbecuing with their families, camping and fishing for Labor Day Weekend, I had chosen to instead partake in a Sisyphean venture: summiting the entirety of Big Sky’s prominent peak, Andesite Mountain, and many miles in-between. This madness is the 50K—the crown jewel—of The Rut Mountain Runs.

The Rut is a three-day mountain running festival that was founded in 2013 by North Face athletes Mike Foote and Mike Wolfe, collectively known as “The Mikes.” Both are talented endurance runners bonded by their apparent need to watch mortals suffer on a mountain course they dreamt up that is better suited for skiing and mountain goats, and less so for bipedal.

Rut events include the VK, a vertical kilometer stretched over 2.8 miles from the base area to the top of Lone Mountain; the 11K, a family-friendly

trail run up and over Andesite Mountain; the 28K, all of the hard portions of the 50K, condensed into a shorter distance; and the 50K, a 31-mile, 10,500-foot gain, pain train that earned a spot in Outside Magazine’s 2016 “World’s 8 Toughest Races” alongside the famed Barkley Marathons and Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc for its technicality and exposure. There’s also the delightful Runt Run, in which children of all ages run a chaotic 1K loop complete with haybale obstacles and emotional meltdowns.

The Rut has gained popularity in the last decade, selling out available runner slots in mere hours during January registration as gluttons for pain, bundled in winter clothing, attend the locals-only sign-up party at the Mountain Project (Wolfe’s Bozeman gym) and The Runner’s Edge (Foote’s Missoula sporting goods store) with futile hope for a New Year’s resolution they will no doubt regret come September.

The 28K was, for a few years, part of the Sky Runner World Series, drawing decorated mountain running athletes from all over the world. As it approaches its 10th anniversary, all the Rut runs still attract talented runners from all corners of the globe.

Having done the 28K twice before (my first words at the finish line of my first, a friend likes to remind me, were “Don’t ever let me sign up for that again”), I eagerly signed my life away for the 50K back in 2020 before it was canceled due to the pandemic.

This year, armed with two summers of training under my belt, I was ready again to cry and dry heave in the presence of one of my favorite mountains. I was also ready to earn my “antlers,” in the form of the infamous Rut tattoo.

On the morning of Sept. 4, I arrived at Big Sky Resort to a frost-blanketed base area to see my friend off to the 28K before getting my tattoo. I'm sure any personal trainer, medical professional or someone with more than two brain cells can tell you that marring your skin with a needle and ink and compromising your immune system is not the smartest idea before the hardest race of your life, but I wasn't willing to risk missing a time slot after my run tomorrow, and I had some time to kill with Drew Clendenin of Clendenin Customs Tattoo in Big Sky, the artist behind inking the Rut logo on people's bodies. One tent over is the buzz of clippers as the mullet station preps for the day. With fresh ink on my arm, I was ready to face the weekend.

Sunday, Sept. 5 is the day of the 50K. Having just choked down whatever few calories could fit in a stomach already filled with anxiety, 484 runners and I dance from foot to foot to keep warm, headlamps creating an aura of anticipation around us as we wait. Then, at once, Wolfe blows out the eerie cry of an elk bugle through a horn, marking the beginning of the race and the longest, possibly hardest day of our legs' poor lives. The stream of headlamps takes off, snaking its way through the dark forest below the silhouette of Lone Mountain.

As the sun rises, deep red from the merciless Western wildfire smoke, we zigzag toward Moonlight Basin where a deceiving soft, flat, single-track tempts me to preemptively exhaust myself, but I know better. Just before our second aid station at Moonlight Lodge, a completely nude man holding a sign that reads, "Step on it or I drop the sign" greets us. Then, in eyesight of "Tears," an aptly named triple black diamond ski run, we begin our first



Rut runners start the 50K at 6 a.m. under still-starry skies. PHOTO BY BELLA BUTLER



Balancing along the thin spine of rock on Headwaters Ridge during the Rut 50K on Sept. 5. PHOTO BY ALLISON MILODRAGOVICH



Bone Crusher is possibly the most difficult portion of the Rut, gaining over 2,000 feet in elevation over 2.8 miles. PHOTO BY MIRA BRODY

grueling climb out of Headwaters Bowl up to the razor-sharp crest of Headwaters Ridge.

Surprise! If you didn't have a phobia of heights, you do now. On hands, feet and sometimes butt, I scoot down a ridge more sanely accessed by the experts-only Challenger Lift in winter months, and descend back down to the ever-anticipated Swift Current aid station. I fuel up, high five some friends who've come to greet me, and get in the right headspace for the next, most difficult split—Bone Crusher.

"Hey what kind of shoes are those?" asked the man positioned directly below me on the climb. Honestly, I had forgotten there were even shoes on my feet—I had lost all feeling in them descending Headwaters—but since the course had turned into a death staircase, his face was positioned directly in line with my feet, as was mine with the woman in front of me. Bone Crusher is a 2.8-mile-long spine of scree in which you gain 2,015 feet in elevation. This is the primary place on the course where you'll see the most people sitting in despair or hunched over clinging to the ground, praying to whatever God they believe in.

The oxygen level in the air diminishes alongside any remaining nerve endings in my kneecaps, and I reach the summit of Lone Mountain to cheers, ringing cowbells and blaring vuvuzelas.

On the website, the words "EXTREMELY STEEP & TECHNICAL" are in all caps throughout the course descriptions and participants are warned in multiple iterations of the hazards, difficulty level, and risk of complete mental and physical breakdown.

In my experience, these breakdowns of mind and body occurred most on the descent from the Lone Mountain summit into Dakota Bowl. Later, we would learn that a man fell off trail and suffered multiple injuries. He was helped by one of the many Big Sky Ski Patrol and Gallatin County Sheriff Search and Rescue Big Sky crews stationed throughout the mountain, flown off the mountain and transferred to the hospital.

After making it down the peak, I high-fived a man dressed as a walrus at the Shedhorn aid station, mentally preparing myself for the next level of Dante's Inferno: Andesite Mountain. At 8,800 feet above sea level, the course sends you the wrong way up a black diamond freeride bike trail called Joker Lips and to the final aid station where high fives and iterations of "you're almost there" are screamed into your face. Good timing—the pinky toenail that had previously tried to evict itself earlier this summer was acting up again. Should have left while it still had the chance.

I descend steadily through the gentle switchbacks in Elk Park Meadows and suddenly I'm regretting that last sip of Coke at the Andesite aid station. A final hill exhausts my energy and gasping, I pull aside for a woman behind me. She stops, her hand outstretched.

"No, I'm not leaving until you get in front of me," she says. "You've been crushing those downhills all day, you go first."

I oblige, overcome but not surprised by the overwhelming sense of comradery I have become familiar with in the mountain running community. I muster the energy to bring it into the finish line where friends, colleagues, neighbors and strangers cheer me in. I snag a Big Sky Brewing Honey Ale from a grown man dressed as a moose on my way into the corral and leap over the chip reader mat, the official end of the race.

The energy at the base area of the Rut is infectious—runners and supporters alike are fulfilled by the sheer power of the human body and spirit as we cheer for something bigger than ourselves and our own individual achievement.

The overwhelming feeling of just having finished something you've been dreaming about for literal years takes over – the early mornings, miles crammed between meetings, injuries, sunburns and cursing through one more Baldy Peak training lap – and I look back at the mountain that has today haunted, inspired and humbled me.



2021 Rut Mountain Runs Results



FEMALE VERTICAL KILOMETER

PLACE	RUNNER	TIME HOURS : MINUTES : SECONDS
1 ST	Grace Staberg	0:55:17
2 ND	Marilee Woyth	1:01:00
3 RD	Kelly Ahern	1:01:58
4 TH	Keely Baker	1:04:02
5 TH	Leah Handelman	1:04:52

MALE VERTICAL KILOMETER

PLACE	RUNNER	TIME HOURS : MINUTES : SECONDS
1 ST	Adam Peterman	0:46:41
2 ND	Cam Smith	0:47:04
3 RD	Ryan Becker	0:49:46
4 TH	Michelino Sunseri	0:50:55
5 TH	Patrick Caldwell	0:51:25

FEMALE 28K

PLACE	RUNNER	TIME HOURS : MINUTES
1 ST	Grace Staberg	3:58
2 ND	Bailey Kowalczyk	4:03
3 RD	Zoe Snow	4:10
4 TH	Erika Flowers	4:19
5 TH	Marilee Woyth	4:29

MALE 28K

PLACE	RUNNER	TIME HOURS : MINUTES
1 ST	Cam Smith	3:09
2 ND	Dakota Jones	3:15
3 RD	Aaron Robson	3:23
4 TH	Ryan Becker	3:27
5 TH	Patrick Caldwell	3:30

FEMALE 50K

PLACE	RUNNER	TIME HOURS : MINUTES
1 ST	Jennifer Lichter	6:14
2 ND	Rebecca Windell	6:29
3 RD	Kristina Trygstad-Saari	6:32
4 TH	Lindsey Anderson	6:38
5 TH	Alexis Crellin	6:49

MALE 50K

PLACE	RUNNER	TIME HOURS : MINUTES
1 ST	Michelino Sunseri	5:25
2 ND	Seth Ruhling	5:29
3 RD	Jason Donald	5:40
4 TH	Ryan Becker	5:42
5 TH	Jordan Fields	5:48

TRIFECTA (VK, 28K AND 50K RUNNERS) WINNERS

Grace Staberg & Ryan Becker



AL MALINOWSKI
EBS SPORTS COLUMNIST

Many students in Montana have recently made the decision to participate in fall school sports. Inevitably the question will be asked by an interested friend or relative, "Who do you play for?" The answer to that question is more complicated than it seems.

I'm always fascinated to learn what motivates someone to commit to a sports team. Often the initial drive centers around individual achievement: making a first basket or becoming a starter. However, choosing to participate is the first step to becoming part of something far greater than the athlete may expect.

Coach Herb Brooks, who led the United States Olympic hockey team to a gold medal in the 1980 Olympics, believed "When you pull on that jersey, you represent yourself and your teammates, and the name on the front is a hell of a lot more important than the one on the back." Brooks was reminding his players that in joining a team, individuals defer to the best interest of the team and the priority shifts from "me" to "we."

Athletes don't have to abandon the "name on the back" to be successful. In fact, I believe those who acknowledge their responsibility to positively represent their families while also prioritizing their team may provide the most inspirational performances. We all like to win, but winning is the result, not the goal. A high level of effort and a positive attitude is the goal, and according to Babe Ruth, "You just can't beat the person who never gives up."

Who do you play for?

I recently had the opportunity to observe a Big Sky Broadway theater rehearsal. After the actors wrapped up the rehearsal of a scene, "Head Coach" John Zirkle asked the performers if they felt their efforts had been inspiring. I was struck by his terminology and immediately recognized the parallel between theater and sports with respect to the connection of attitude and effort to inspiration.

Every one of us who plays sports have had the urge to quit at some point. Fortunately, most of us conquered that impulse. I am convinced that the responsibility to play for our teammates and positively represent our families and communities provides the motivation an athlete needs to overcome adversity. While I'm no psychologist, I believe knowing we are a critical and participating component of something bigger than ourselves positively contributes to our own individual mental health.

At any age, athletes often overlook their capability to inspire others. Years of witnessing inspirational moments authored by our local athletes has proven to me that those athletes who commit themselves to playing for their teammates, community and family inspire others with their attitude and effort. Those athletes tend to overcome adversity, rather than embrace it as an excuse. That approach may not always guarantee a win, but it will result in success.

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.



BIG SKY SOFTBALL 2021

Big Sky Co-ed Softball League wraps 2021 season

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – Two lines of weary, dust-covered players high-five each other following the championship game of the Big Sky Co-ed Softball League end-of-season tournament on the afternoon of Sunday Aug. 29. The LPC Golden Goats have just triumphed over the Milkies Big Dogs to win the tournament and wrap up the league's summer 2021 season.

After 11 weeks of tough play throughout the season, 13 of the league's 15 teams competed in the post-season double-elimination tournament on Aug. 28 and 29.

The tournament culminated in a dramatic matchup where the Big Dogs bested the Goats in the first game 14-13. Since the Big Dogs came from the loser's side of the bracket, they would have had to beat the Goats twice to bring home the hardware, but they would fall short of the upset in the final game, where the Goats scored 12 runs to the Big Dogs' 6, marking the fifth consecutive tournament win for the Goats.

All the tournament games throughout the weekend were fiercely competitive with engaged fans cheering and booing the umpires as they saw fit. Some crowd members noted that this year could have been the first year a team came from the loser's bracket to win the championship.

League organizers agreed that this year was especially competitive.

"For me, every season is the best season yet," wrote Jodi Daily, vice-chair of the BSCO Softball Advisory Committee in an email to EBS. "It is so much fun to watch the teams grow together and the individual players improve year after year! Competition was tough this year and there were so many upsets!"

Regular season play wrapped up on Aug. 25 with the Hillbilly Huckers winning the league's championship game. In a repeat of last year's matchup, the Huckers faced off against the Goats, besting the LPC team once again, this time 18-17.

The Huckers' manager, Lee Horning, who has been involved with the Big Sky Co-ed Softball League since 2006, reflected on the improvements he has seen in the league.

"Every year there seems to be more and more teams that are at the top so it's getting tougher every year," Horning wrote in an email to EBS. "We did lose one regular season game by one run to Milkies which is another good team."

Horning said it took a total team effort to come back from a large deficit in the fifth inning of their game against the Goats.

"[The Goats] played well the whole game and made great defensive plays and kept us in single digits for a long time. It took a pretty good comeback at the end to pull that one out," Horning told EBS.

Both the regular season championship game and the post-season tournament were marked by an elevated level of play and some intense innings.

Daily offered her thanks to the rest of the Advisory Council that makes this league possible saying, "Queen Jean, Dave Schwalbe, and Whitney McKenzie put a ton of time into making the league operate smoothly. They have worked so hard to evolve the league as our town grows and changes."

The local softball league remains a key community centering point since its official inception in 2000 giving locals a chance to unwind with friends. The continued efforts of the Big Sky Community Organization which operates the league and BSCO Program Manager Mackenzie Johnson make the league possible.

"I think as town gets busier in the summer the softball league gives us a little getaway that is still just ours," Daily said. "The people that work so hard to give tourists these amazing experiences in our town get to come relax and just turn off."



On Saturday Aug. 28, Stacie Mesuda of the Big Sky Ballers went to bat against the Yellowstone Club in the Big Sky Co-ed Softball League end-of-season tournament. PHOTO BY PAUL BUSSI - idealphotography.com



The Hillbilly Huckers won the Big Sky Co-ed Softball League regular season championship game on Aug. 25 by 18-17 over the LPC Golden Goats. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER



The LPC Golden Goats won the Big Sky Co-ed Softball League end-of-season double elimination tournament on Sunday Aug. 29. The Goats played the Milkies Big Dogs twice for the title, falling in the first game 14-13 and winning the second game 12-6. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER



The Big Dogs pitch to the Goats during the final tournament game on Aug. 29. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

Lone Peak High School Fall Sports

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

Lone Peak High School fall sports are off to a whirlwind start with the Football, Volleyball and Soccer teams already playing multiple games with a packed schedule ahead. As construction at the school progresses, the plan is

for the new field to be completed in time for the Soccer and Football teams to host three home games on Sept. 17. After that the Big Horns can look forward to their homecoming games scheduled for Oct. 8. Read on for a recap of all the action and a look at what lies ahead for these scrappy athletes.



Junior Maddie Cone spikes the ball in the Lady Big Horns' second set against the Sheridan Lady Panthers in the Battle in Big Sky volleyball tournament on Aug. 28. The Big Horns ended the tournament with a third-place finish after falling to the White Sulphur Springs Hornets in the semifinals and going on to defeat the Absarokee Lady Huskies and the Lady Panthers again in the consolation bracket. On Sept. 3 the Lady Big Horns fell to the Manhattan Christian Eagles in three sets followed by a three-set win against the West Yellowstone Wolverines on Sept. 4. Now the Lady Big Horns are preparing to face off against the Ennis Lady Mustangs and the Three Forks Lady Wolves on Sept. 10 and 11. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

Volleyball

DATE	GAME/LOCATION	TIME BOYS/GIRLS	DEPART
Fri. Sept. 10	@ Ennis	2:30 / 4:00	12pm
Sat. Sept. 11	vs. Three Forks	5:00 / 6:30	Home
Tues. Sept. 14	@ Whitehall	5:00 / 6:30	2:30pm
Thurs. Sept. 16	vs. Shields Valley	5:00 / 6:30	Home
Sat. Sept. 18	@Sheridan Tournament	TBD	TBD

Boys and Girls Soccer

The boys' and girls' Lone Peak High School soccer teams kicked off their seasons on Aug. 27 and 28 with games against nonconference opponents, Columbia Falls and Polson. The boys ended their game against runner up State Champion Columbia Falls Wildcats in a 1-1 tie with Beckett Johnson contributing the goal for the Bighorns. On the girl's side, Carly Wilson and Campbell Johnson contributed goals against the Wildcats but the Big Horns weren't able to snag the W. On Aug. 28 the ladies faced off against Polson and the boys received a forfeit victory after the Polson boys team was unable to field enough players. The ladies had a tough game against Polson and came up short.

On Sept. 4, both teams fell against Stevensville at the Kick-Off event in Hamilton.

The Big Horns also faced off against Laurel on Sept. 7 with the boys gaining a 2-1 victory. The first goal was scored by Cash Beattie assisted by Beckett Johnson and the second goal was scored by Trygve Wikan. The girls fell to the Lady Locomotives 5-0.

Both soccer teams are looking to improve their records and build off last year's successes. They are in their second season playing Class A soccer as a class C school. The boys team this year is young with the majority of them being sophomores and freshmen. The team is led by senior Tony Brester and junior Max Romney.

"The second season has brought a noticeable improvement in team chemistry and we will continue to work towards a playoff berth again this season in the Eastern division,"

wrote Head Coach Tony Coppola in an email to EBS. "We look forward to a great season that is injury free and challenges the team to be better players, students and human beings. Go Big Horns!"

The girls' team has four senior captains leading the team, Carly Wilson, Sophia Cone, Campbell Johnson and Tristan Clack. The Lady Big Horns compete in the Eastern Montana division, the most competitive girls division in the state.

"In year two, the girls understand the opponent, and they understand what needs to go into the training to be competitive," wrote Coppola of the girls' team. "First touch, passing refinement and play creativity, finishing shots are the goals for this fall season. Beyond the training, team chemistry is extremely important to our success."

DATE	GAME/LOCATION	TIME BOYS/GIRLS	DEPART
Sat. Sept. 11	@ Billings Central	12:00 / 2:00	
Fri. Sept. 17	vs. Laurel	11:00 / 1:00	Home
Sat. Sept. 18	@ Frenchtown	11:00 / 1:00	
Thurs. Sept. 23	@ Park (Livingston)	3:00 / 5:00	

Football

The Big Horns started their season on the road on Aug. 28 versus Simms. Pierce Farr and Juliusz Shipman put up a pair of touchdowns for the Big Horns but the boys ultimately came up short against Simms.

"The boys played a hard-fought game versus Simms," wrote Head Coach James Miranda in an email to EBS. "Our starting quarterback left the game in the 3rd quarter with a lower leg injury and is out for the next few weeks. Outside of a couple of plays, we hung in there and continued to move the ball. It was a well-played game and Simms was happy to sneak in a win."

The Big Horns also matched up against Joliet on Sept. 4 in a tough game.

"We played extremely well against one of the top three teams in Class C, 8-man football," Miranda said.

"The 42-8 score is not indicative of play. Pierce Farr scored on a 33-yard pass from replacement QB, Sophomore Aidan Germain for our only touchdown of the game as time expired. Freshman, Bridger Flores had two interceptions versus Joliet's All-State quarterback. The team continues to show guts and improvement each and every week, even as we battle through injuries. We are in the verge of getting our first W."

DATE	GAME/LOCATION	TIME JUNIOR VARSITY/VARSITY	DEPART
Fri. Sept. 10	@ Sheridan	4:00 / 7:00	12pm
Fri. Sept. 17	vs. Park City	4:00 / 7:00	Home

One Fish, Two Fish

Fish populations help track water quality



Volunteers and biologists wade in the West Fork of the Gallatin River gathering data on fish populations to aid in tracking water quality in the area. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GALLATIN WATERSHED COUNCIL

GALLATIN RIVER TASK FORCE

She walks calf-deep through the creek, following her rod in the hopes it will lead her to a healthy trout hidden in the West Fork's cold riffles. Today, there's no hook at the end of her line and no reel in her hand. Instead, she wields an electrofisher that conducts a weak electric pulse, and she's shocking trout into her partner's net.

This volunteer is assisting a team of biologists hoping to establish baseline fisheries data on Gallatin River tributaries, tracking species composition over time and impacts from climate change, development and shifting angler pressures.

The fish count is being conducted under the leadership of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and agency fisheries biologist Mike Duncan is happy with what he sees.

"This is standard to what we see on streams of similar size," Duncan says. "Nothing surprising, and that's encouraging."

Given 2021's lack of precipitation, high temperatures and low stream flows, conditions could have been a lot worse, but this is why accurate monitoring is so vital. Decisions can't be made on anecdotes alone.

"Having baseline data is critically important," says Connor Parrish, Trout Unlimited project manager with the Gallatin Home Rivers Initiative. "If we aren't out there collecting, how will we know when things are going wrong?"

This is a sentiment long held by the Gallatin River Task Force's Chief Executive and Science Officer Kristin Gardner. "Our project work has always been data-driven," Gardner says. "Fisheries data combined with our water quality and quantity

data will provide us with a better understanding of how to best respond and prioritize our future conservation projects."

In many ways, the species composition of the Gallatin and its tributaries can act as the canary in the coal mine—or brown trout in the West Fork, as it were.

"Over time, we'll be able to look at the changes in fish assemblages, and identify potential causes," Duncan says. "Water use is a big change—more people use more water."



A trout is measured as part of a collaborative fish count conducted under the leadership of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GALLATIN WATERSHED COUNCIL

As Big Sky continues to grow and visitation continues to increase, stream flows in tributaries will be impacted. Lower stream flows lead to higher water temperatures, and certain trout species do better as temps increase, such as browns.

Which isn't to say that brown trout are a bad thing. If, however, their numbers increase in the upper Gallatin while cutthroat and rainbow numbers dwindle, it could signal unfavorable changes to water quality that will need to be addressed.

With only one data point to draw from, this collaborative monitoring effort is just getting underway. The partners will need time to collect more samples and begin analyzing results, but it is a promising sign of increased awareness and collaboration.

"To ensure the Gallatin is healthy and that our fisheries remain vibrant, we're going to need to pool resources, human, financial and otherwise" Gardner says. "The more partners and stakeholders at the table, the more likely we are to succeed."

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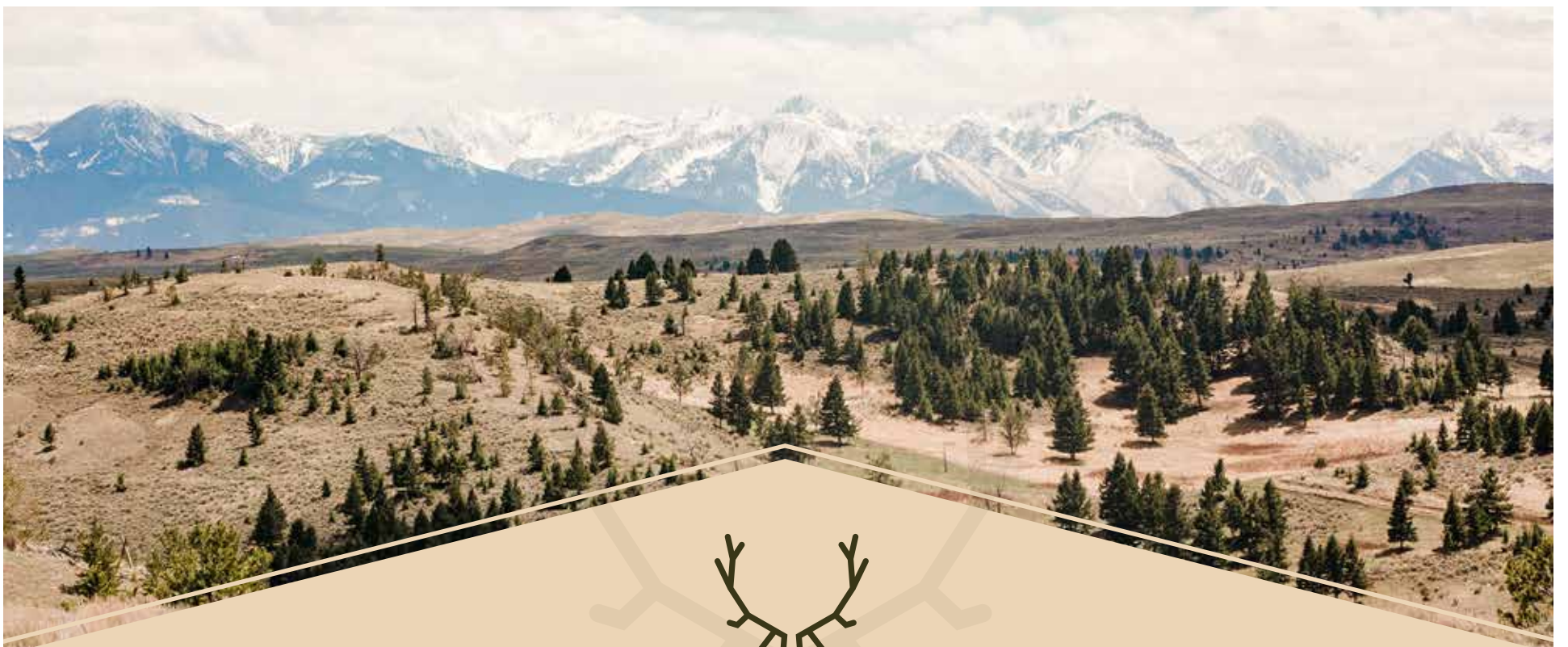
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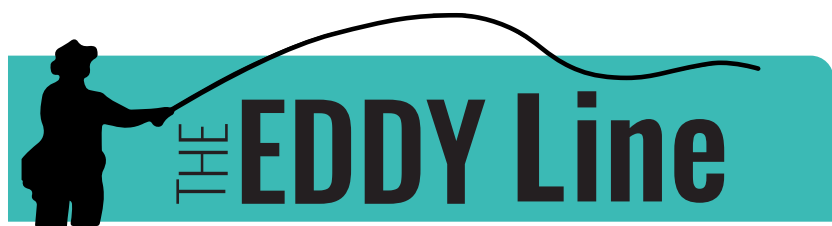
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Not really summer, not really fall



Hardison Piper and his brother William play the Macleans on the Gallatin River, part of the Gallatin River Task Force Fly Fishing Camp in July 2020. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO

BY PATRICK STRAUB
EBS FISHING COLUMNIST

As kids return to school, the nights get longer and the mornings cooler, and the number of visitors slowly wanes, the signs of summer's exit are becoming more clear. As many of us shift from summer camps with the kids or constant motion—serving tourists, or hosting friends and families enjoying summer in Montana—the trout in our local waters are forced to undergo their own transition.

If our angling summer is defined by hatches—salmon flies are the kick-off, PMDs are the second act, caddis the interlude, and spruce moths the grand finale—the next few weeks are undefinable in all aspects. Our rivers, and the feeding habits of their trout, are now in transition. After a lifetime of fishing in Montana, I've come to enjoy this time that is neither here nor there—but there has been a learning curve. Here's some advice I've learned over the years.

Early on, early off. By the calendar's definition, it is still summer, and with our low flows this year, water temperatures climb fast. If you want to find feeding fish, get on the water early. Fishing at dawn is not odd; it should be the norm this time of year. Chances are very good that you'll have the river to yourself. Plan accordingly and work to be off the water by mid-afternoon, which is the perfect time for a beer and a nap before fishing the evening hatch.

Get techy. Yes, you read that correctly. Plan to fish longer leaders and lighter tippets if you want to bring more fish to hand. Educate yourself on the various materials out there: fluorocarbon is essential for subsurface fishing; Rio Suppleflex is the best tippet on the market when delicate presentations are essential; and practice your knots, because 5X and 6X can handle most situations as long as your knot holds.

Fish right down the middle. With the low flows of late summer, fish become sensitive to light and seek solace in deeper, darker water. Shade is also difficult to find as the lower flows mean water is further off the banks. I've enjoyed many successful dry-fly days targeting water most would think too deep for a fish to rise.

Go big and have faith in it. If getting technical with little dry flies or double nymph rigs with split shot measured to the tenth of a gram isn't your idea of fly-fishing fun, tie on a big grasshopper and fish deep, fast

water. This might be the equivalent of betting the house on black, but at least you won't lose money. Trout still need to eat and a hungry trout will at least ponder a large terrestrial floating overhead. Float it over enough of them and a few are bound to eat it.

Seek out cooler water. There are ample places to fish with cooler water. Fish a high mountain lake. Venture to a small mountain stream. Hike into the high country of Yellowstone National Park. Fish one of the Paradise Valley spring creeks. Take a road trip to the Bighorn River.

Embrace simplicity. Fish are either going to feed or they are not. For late summer fishing, my selection is small: zebra midges in 18s and 20s; tan hoppers in 8s; CDC caddis in 16s; and a Purple Haze in 18. My standard leader is a 9-foot 5X for single dries or subsurface nymphs and 9-foot 2X for hoppers. Tippet selection is 5X and 6X Suppleflex and 5X fluorocarbon for nymphing. My waders stay at home and my pack is light.

If you're taking a picture, look at the bigger picture. Trout require plenty of clean, cold water. This summer we saw angling restrictions on most of our local waters. As longer and cooler nights become the norm, fishing will improve daily. If you plan to photograph your catch, please keep the fish as close to the water as possible.

Years ago I would dread this time of the angling year. I spent the bulk of my angling energy insisting the fish hold on to their summer habits—forcing caddis or stoneflies along steep banks or fishing PMD emergers through riffles.

These days I cherish the transition from summer to fall. As if a preview of the quieter season to come, late summer is a breather for me and local trout.

An earlier version of this story ran in a 2016 edition of EBS.

Patrick Straub has fished on five continents. He is the author of six books, including "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Fly Fishing" and has been writing the Eddy Line for nine years. He was one of the largest outfitters in Montana, but these days he now only guides anglers who value quality over quantity.



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Mud Creek Trails

BY SARA MARINO
OUTDOOR COLUMNIST

The Michener Creek Trails quickly gained traction and popularity since being built by Terraflow Trail Systems in 2019 through private funders. The trails came under the Big Sky Community Organization trail system in May of 2021 thanks to the help of the Blackfoot Hills Property Owners Association and at that point the trails reverted to their historical name of Mud Creek.

The Mud Creek Trail loop is 3 miles in length and climbs about 450 feet in the first 1.5 miles, providing an opportunity to get your blood pumping a bit before the fast and flowy descent with berms and terrain features to enhance the ride. The trail should be ridden counter-clockwise and features a beginner-friendly climb and the descent is in the intermediate range.

For those beginners that are nervous about the descent they can return the way they came up on the climbing trail. Hikers are welcome on the climbing trail but should steer clear of hiking on the descending trail for everyone's safety. There is signage at the 1.5-mile mark to indicate where the trail changes from two-way traffic to recommended downhill use only.

The Mud Creek Trails are easy to access. From Big Sky travel about a mile south on U.S. Highway 191 and turn at the Michener Creek Road located between The Whitewater Inn and Canyon Adventures. Or, leave your car at home and bike the paved Lone Mountain Trail that runs from Town Center to the Big Sky Conoco. At that point the trail becomes the Gallatin Canyon Trail which keeps you safely off the road the entire time ending at Ophir Elementary School. BSCO added an informational kiosk and trail signage and plans to add a bear-proof trash receptacle for users' convenience.

If you haven't checked out these trails yet, do yourself a favor and get out there. Trail maintenance from the BSCO team is helping these trails ride great. Be bear aware and have fun!

Sara Marino is the Development Manager for the Big Sky Community Organization. BSCO creates recreational and enrichment opportunities for people through leadership of partnerships, programs and places.



The 3-mile Mud Creek Trail Loop offers a beginner-friendly mountain biking route located about a mile south of Big Sky off of U.S. Highway 191. PHOTO COURTESY OF SARA MARINO



BSCO added signage at the Mud Creek Trailhead after the trail system came under their purview in May of 2021. PHOTO COURTESY OF SARA MARINO



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Next Act: Let The Bugling (Of Bull Elk) Begin in Yellowstone

BY STEVEN FULLER
MOUNTAIN JOURNAL
PHOTOS BY STEVEN FULLER

Early autumn in Yellowstone arrives when it is the middle of summer across much of the continental US.

Daily, days are growing noticeably shorter and at 8,000 feet above sea level on the Yellowstone Plateau here it means living organisms are also responding to cooler nights and mornings. Grizzly and black bears are in hyperphagia, the time when their bodies are compelling them to take in as many calories as possible. Birdlife that arrives to breed and raise their offspring in April and May are getting read to take flight for southern climes.

A week ago, as I walked down from my home to go to work there was the sparkle of frost on the boardwalk, the first frost in more than six weeks.

Every day the meadows are showing more color and most flowers have transformed into seeds. The smoke of the continuing North American continental western fires filter the light of the sun making for morning golden light. When the smoke is most thick the moon is a blood red disc. But the first cold rains of the season promise to clear the air of soot and dust though as I write visibility due to smoke is less than four miles.

The bison rut is well past mid-peak, but will continue for some weeks. A primary marker of the transition from summer to autumn is the shedding of the velvet that has nourished the summer long growth of this year's bull elk antlers. Every year the local bulls shed their velvet the second week in August, perhaps the surest sign of the change of seasons.

I'd like to share some photos and captions speaking to what I've witnessed. The elk rut, when bulls emit a sound colloquially called "bugling," and spar with their rivals, each trying to gather together females for breeding, has already begun. Early autumn in Yellowstone arrives when it is the middle of summer across much of the continental US.



Throughout the spring and summer the blood-rich tissue—"velvet"—nourishes the rapid sprouting and expansion of bull elk antlers grown annually to replace the old pair shed earlier in the year.



Antler growth as captured a few weeks earlier. Backlighting early in the morning, the velvet is surrounded by an aureola of light.



In mid August, the velvet on this bull looks dark, dry and dead. He is about to shed it. As expected, it happens right on schedule, same as it has ever been, at least here locally in the vicinity of Canyon Village and slopes leading to Hayden Valley. The tines—the tips of the antlers—are no longer rounded. The pointed tips under the velvet indicate that the calcification of the antlers is complete. Underneath the dried velvet the antlers are hard, soon be ready for jousts of coming elk rut.



Closer up, the velvet hangs in thick strips on his right antler while remaining mostly in tacts on the left.



The velvet sheath is steadily rubbed off and tines sharpened.



This bull spends 20 minutes vigorously rubbing and horning the branches of the tree scattering broken clusters of pine needles and twigs at this feet. The end of his right ear is missing, a consequence of some previous unknown incident in his life.



The next morning, much of the velvet is gone from both antlers though tatters still swing and cling as he grazes his home terrain but not far away are rivals in the making.



Nearby, in fact, in a neighboring meadow, a second bull at the same seasonal stage as the first, struggles with the annoying dread-lock tangle of dead velvet that hangs around his face. His velvet is mostly gone exposing the bone white of his newly-commissioned antlers. He twists and turns his head to no avail as the cluster swings back and forth round his head.



Amid it all, the aesthetics of the change in seasons is glorious, between atmospheric created by mist rising off warm river water into cooling air, leaves starting to take on flaring color and even the effects of grainy light caused by woodsmoke blowing in from Oregon and California. Here, smoke is the genesis of sunrise firelight and accompanying crepuscular rays which was unremarked by two geese cruising upriver along the Yellowstone.



The next day, the velvet of the first bull is mostly gone. The bone white of his antlers is stained with pine resin, dried blood, and dirt. In the heat of the rut bulls violently harrow the soil and throw clods of earth and clumps of grass into the air. On frosty mornings meadows resound with the clatter of antlers on antlers and the cacophony of call and response bugles all around in the distance which is the celebratory song of the elk rut.



Late just the other night, through an open window and by the reflected light of a waxing gibbous moon I heard the first tentative elk bugle of the season around Canyon.



Meanwhile, as the elk people ready for their rut, the mating season of the bison people continues. Here a mature bull enjoys a dust wallow roll—a frequent pleasure during their mating season. The bison rut is well past its peak but still there will be rigorous days of collective excitement and sometimes violent episodes between bulls for a while yet. Until recently, late in this year's calving season, a few little tardy orange calves were being born, the late fruit of last year's rut.

THE NEW WEST

Recalling one mining company defeat, another eyes gold near Yellowstone



BY TODD WILKINSON
EBS ENVIRONMENTAL COLUMNIST

It ought to be abundantly clear by now that, if, say, you are an executive with a Canadian hardrock mining company, it's just not wise to mess with the American public's beloved attachment to Yellowstone National Park.

That lesson, however, doesn't seem to be heeded by leaders of the Crevice Mining

Group who are back again aspiring to dig for gold near Jardine, Montana, just beyond Yellowstone's northern boundary. They haven't given up hope of moving forward; their latest tactic is using an old frontier-era right-of-way law to gain access to mining claims.

Of course, if Crevice prevails industrial activity accompanying the development would pose a major threat not only to an important wildlife migration corridor; it's an activity that many believe is incompatible with the well-being of America's first national park. Just because Crevice executives potentially could push to begin mineral exploration on a five-acre tract, doesn't mean it's a good idea.

If they need a refresher on what awaits them, they ought to revisit what happened with the New World Mine proposed for another corner of Yellowstone near Cooke City. A quarter-century ago, New World was halted following intervention from President Bill Clinton, investor pressure applied to Canadian giant Noranda, and a national outcry spearheaded by the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, then led by Mike Clark.

Not long ago, Clark and I chatted about New World and he put the fight into perspective. In nearly every corner of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, he said, there are haunting examples of near misses—reminders of where disastrous natural resource extraction proposals never came to fruition, but easily could have if political winds had blown in a different direction. Only the environmental advocates who fought against them realize how close they were to being lost.

New World was one of those. Noranda and its partners aspired to dig for gold, silver and copper, moving not only massive amounts of earth but storing the waste in a toxic tailings impoundment several stories deep and as big as a football field in a drainage prone to flooding from snowmelt and earthquakes.

That it would have happened just beyond the northeast corner of Yellowstone near the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, essentially bringing modern industrial impacts to a wild, wildlife-rich corner of the ecosystem, made it a controversial battle for the ages. It pitted a David, in the form of conservationists, against a corporate Goliath in Noranda that claimed \$500 million of gold was ready for the taking.

Notably, the company had plenty of financial resources, political connections on Capitol Hill and no small amount of cockiness in believing it could even think about jeopardizing the well-being of Yellowstone.

Had New World moved forward, with digging slated for an old mining zone with unstable slopes, water running through, seismic activity, and headwater streams coursing into or near Yellowstone Park, concern would have forever loomed about what could go wrong. Fears focused on waters feeding the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone on one side of Cooke City and the headwaters to Yellowstone Park's storied Lamar River on the other. The Lamar is also an important tributary to the Yellowstone River.

"Victories such as the one at New World occurred because conservation groups built a grassroots campaign that could not be ignored," Clark says. "I call the community that emerged 'The Yellowstone Nation' because I think there now is a permanent force of people who can be called upon when needed to protect the park and ecosystem. In effect, we built a sheath of protection that encompasses the lands we call Greater Yellowstone.

"But these political abilities have to be maintained through constant scrutiny and advocacy," Clark adds. "The forces working to destroy the integrity of Greater Yellowstone keep shifting and taking new forms. The challenges and the threats do not go away. We have moved from industrial threats caused by mining and logging into more complex threats that are harder to block or to counter; the pressures caused by 'loving Yellowstone Ecosystem to death' from too many demands by our growing population and the building industrial recreation economy."

For those who downplay the menace of permanent impacts, one need only visit Butte where the mother of all mining superfund sites is located, or visit the Pegasus Gold Mine in the Little Rocky Mountains of Montana where an environmental mess was left behind following the Canadian mining company, Pegasus, declaring bankruptcy and leaving the burden of clean up for a leaching cyanide heap to Montana citizens.

According to Earthworks, a mining reform policy center, more than 12,000 miles of streams in the Rockies are impacted by abandoned mines, some too contaminated to support fish and too toxic for humans to drink.

Many of the worst industrial mining disasters have involved Canadian mining companies, whose leaders often said they shouldn't be judged on the bad conduct of others as a reason for being given a chance to prove themselves.

The wildlife migrations and the ecological integrity of Yellowstone are indeed worth more than gold. If Crevice persists, company leaders need to realize they could be in for the worst public relations fight of their lives.

Todd Wilkinson is the founder of Bozeman-based Mountain Journal and is a correspondent for National Geographic. He authored the book "Grizzlies of Pilgrim Creek," featuring photography by Thomas D. Mangelsen, about famous Jackson Hole grizzly bear 399. Wilkinson's cover story on renowned actress Glenn Close appears in the summer 2021 edition of Mountain Outlaw magazine.



In August 1996, a momentous agreement stopped the New World Mine from being built on the doorstep to Yellowstone. Taking part in the signing were Mike Clark, former President Bill Clinton, Yellowstone Superintendent Mike Finley, Katie McGinty, director of the White House Office on Environmental Quality and Canadian mining CEO Ian Bayer. PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE CLARK/MSU LIBRARY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

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A close encounter with wolves and fear



BY MOLLY ABSOLON
WRITERS ON THE RANGE

This summer, three of us were hiking in Alaska's western Brooks Range when we encountered a pack of eight wolves. We were far from any help when they moved toward us, paused, and then disappeared behind a low ridge.

When they re-emerged seconds later, they'd lined up along the crest of the pass we were hiking toward. They looked as if they were poised to attack.

Then ... nothing happened. Once the wolves figured out what we were, they turned around and vanished. But for those few anxious moments, I tingled with adrenaline, fearing the worst even as I thought how thrilling it all was.

I knew, and I hope most people know, that wolf attacks on humans are extraordinarily rare. In fact, even minor attacks by predatory animals are rare, yet it doesn't take much to get our imaginations to run wild with fear of fangs and blood. It's the realization that we aren't always at the top of the food chain — that we could end up as some other animal's dinner.

Years ago, on a camping trip, I participated in a predator-prey game that gave me a taste of that vulnerability. I played a mouse, and everyone else in the game was out to eat me. I spent most of the time slinking between hiding places, worried that any movement might get me spotted. Ecologists call this unease the "landscape of fear," when everything is suffused with hyper-awareness and a sense of vigilance.

But the evidence doesn't support that kind of fear of wild animals. Yellowstone National Park has, on average, some 4 million visitors annually. According to park data, just one person is injured by a bear each year on average. Since 1892, bears have killed only 18 people in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

That doesn't make the attacks that do happen any less terrifying or tragic, though. This summer, a woman in Montana was attacked and killed in her tent by a grizzly bear; in April, a grizzly killed a man near West Yellowstone, Montana; and in Alaska this June, a sleeping couple was mauled in Alaska's Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. This is the stuff of nightmares.

During our hunter-gatherer days, wild animals truly posed a danger, and we were right to fear them. But these days, attacks by predators — gruesome and terrifying as they are — cause only a handful of deaths around the planet. Yet there are lots of other animals we should worry about, but usually don't.

According to a 2019 report by researcher Michael Conover, 47,000 people seek medical attention each year after being attacked or bitten by wildlife, and roughly eight of them die. Most of the culprits are snakes, birds, rodents and raccoons: 27,000 rodent bites — meaning mice, rats and squirrels — versus less than one bite annually by wolves.

Elk attacks resulted in three injuries that required medical treatment, while grizzlies were responsible for 0.8. Alligator attacks were more common, with an average of 9 bites per year and one fatality. Meanwhile, some 30,000 Americans die in car crashes every year.

Still, most of us don't think about dying when we get into the car, while a lot of us worry when we hike in grizzly country. It's built in. And encounters with wildlife are increasing as we compete with them, in their own habitat, for limited space and food.

The recent increase in mountain lion attacks is likely due to the blurring of the urban-wildland "interface." In Colorado, the Parks and Wildlife agency has documented 25 mountain lion attacks since 1990, with four since 2019.

But in our national parks, rangers report a different problem: Tourists get into trouble when they treat wild animals like pets. Tom Smith, biology professor at Brigham Young University, told National Geographic that most bear attacks are avoidable if people just remember that bears react instinctively.

"Bears don't have a unique response for humans," Smith said. "If we unwittingly trigger that bear-on-bear response, then it's full-on, and you'd better be ready."

I don't ever want to be attacked by a wild animal, but I appreciate the intensity and humility I feel in their presence. It's humbling to know that these wild, beautiful animals don't care who we are or what we do. We have entered their turf, after all, and it's up to us to watch our step.

Molly Absolon is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, a nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. She loves to explore the West from her base in Idaho.



Although wolf attacks on humans are extremely rare and even minor attacks from other predators are uncommon, author Molly Absolon reflects on the fear many feel when recreating out in bear country and the skewed sense of danger this creates. PHOTO BY THOMAS BONOMETTI VIA UNSPLASH

MSU nursing school receives \$101M gift

MSU NEWS SERVICE

BOZEMAN — Friends of the Montana State University College of Nursing gathered at MSU Monday Sept. 6 under blue skies to celebrate a transformative gift of \$101 million from Mark and Robyn Jones, founders of Goosehead Insurance Inc.

The Joneses, who have a home in Whitefish, have said their intention is to help address one of the most defining challenges of our time — access to health care, particularly for residents of rural and frontier communities, where there is low population and high geographic remoteness.

“Today is a day of new beginnings at Montana State University,” said MSU President Waded Cruzado. “... Every day of our existence we have taken to heart our mission: we are here to educate the sons and daughters of the working families of Montana. For the last 128 years — challenges and obstacles notwithstanding — Montana State University has helped people find a path to a better, more prosperous life, to deepen their involvement in our communities and our democracy, and to lead happier and healthier lives.

“In the tradition of the land-grant university, we have been committed to addressing the most pressing needs of society,” Cruzado continued. “In our time, lack of access to affordable health care challenges our nation, especially pioneer states like Montana. Heeding the call, and thanks to the outstanding generosity of our two donors today, we mark a new chapter that will transform our College of Nursing.”

The gift—the largest ever given to a college of nursing, as well as the largest private gift in the history of the state of Montana—will:

Provide funding for new facilities at each of the MSU College of Nursing’s five campuses in Bozeman, Billings, Great Falls, Kalispell and Missoula. Equipped with modern classrooms and state-of-the-art simulation labs, nursing students will hone their critical thinking and practice their skills in these new facilities.

Establish five endowed faculty professorships — the first in the history of the MSU College of Nursing. These endowed professorships will position MSU to attract top faculty talent during a nationwide nursing faculty shortage.

Develop an endowed scholarship fund that will allow the MSU College of Nursing to keep the cost of nursing education affordable for all students.

Create Montana’s only certified nurse midwifery program preparing doctoral level nurses who will significantly increase the number of specialized maternal health care providers capable and willing to provide services to rural and remote communities in Montana.

Sarah Shannon, dean of the MSU College of Nursing, said the college is “dedicated to its core” to serving Montana, yet it had reached its limit on the number of nurses the college can prepare, due primarily to space constraints. Those constraints will be lifted thanks to the Joneses’ generosity, she said. She noted that the gift will allow the college to meet the state’s projected shortfall in baccalaureate-prepared registered nurses by 2030, and it will also allow the college to double the number of family nurse practitioners and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners that graduate from MSU by 2030.

In her remarks at Monday’s event, Cruzado shared details of the Joneses’ lives and careers: Mark and Robyn Jones were both born and raised in Lethbridge, Alberta. They were sweethearts as teenagers and married after graduating from high school. Mark decided to enroll in the University of Alberta, where he received a bachelor’s degree in accounting. He later continued his education at Harvard Business School, where he earned an MBA. He began working at Bain & Company, a global consultancy based in Boston with offices in 31 countries, and eventually he became a senior partner and director.

In the meantime, Robyn focused on raising the couple’s six children and also began buying and then reselling houses for a profit. “As part of this adventure, she said she learned there was a tremendous opportunity in the insurance market for a new way of working with clients,” Cruzado said.

Robyn earned an insurance license and started Goosehead Insurance in 2003. In 2004, Mark left a 14-year career at Bain to join the company.

“They worked very hard and kept the experience of their customers as their true north,” Cruzado said. “They put people first.”

In 2018, just 15 years after its founding, Goosehead Insurance went public. It now has more than 1,800 offices in the U.S., with a market capitalization of \$5 billion. In remarks she shared at the ceremony, Robyn talked about the importance of education in her and her husband’s lives.

“When we graduated from high school and immediately married, we had no intention of going to college, either of us,” she said. “As the realities of adulthood set in — groceries, rent and the birth of our first daughter — we realized that an education would open doors and provide possibilities that we were unaware of.”

Robyn also noted that — although she and Mark have a primary home in Texas — both grew up spending time in Montana and are now proud to have a home in



On Monday Sept. 6 Friends of the Montana State University College of Nursing gathered at MSU to celebrate the gift of \$101 million made by Mark and Robyn Jones, founders of Goosehead Insurance Inc. PHOTO COURTESY OF MSU NEWS SERVICE

Whitefish. She said they were inspired to invest in the MSU College of Nursing after losing a friend to cancer and learning of the need for more health care professionals in Montana.

“An investment in the nursing program could address the critical challenges the state faces, particularly in the areas of mental health, the aging population, substance abuse and prenatal care,” she said. “We became convinced that our investment in expanding the capacity and capabilities of MSU’s nursing school could have a real impact on the people that live in the state that we consider home.”

Robyn called it a privilege to make the investment in Montana State University.

“We are very passionate about education. It changed our lives. We are very passionate about investing our dollars where they can have the biggest impact on improving the quality of life of our neighbors, and we are honored to do so.”

Of their decision to invest in a Montana university, Mark said he and Robyn have had the opportunity to get to know a lot of Montanans, people who are an “extraordinary group.

“The people that we’ve met are honest, they’re sincere, they’re down-to-earth, they’re hard-working, they have high integrity,” he said. “They’re the kind of people that make you want to invest in them.”

John Hill, president and CEO of Bozeman Health and vice chair of the Montana Hospital Association, said hospitals across Montana recognize the “tremendous and urgent” need for more nurses across the state and the nation. He said hospitals in all five communities in which the College of Nursing’s campuses are located are committed to partnering with the MSU College of Nursing to bring the “extraordinary gift to life.

“We are so grateful to you,” he told the Joneses. “Your generosity will be felt in communities throughout Montana for generations to come.”

MSU nursing student Megan Johnson, a junior on the Bozeman campus who attended the event Monday, said students across the state will feel the impact of the Joneses’ gift.

“When I first heard [\$101 million] I was just speechless,” she said. “The number of opportunities [the gift] will provide to nursing students now and in the future—it’s just awesome.”

Cruzado put it another way.

“On behalf of the faculty, the students, the staff and alumni of Montana State University, of the countless babies that our Bobcat nurses will welcome to the world, the innumerable patients that will be healed and consoled, and the many families that will benefit from your generosity, thank you from the bottom of my bobcat heart,” Cruzado said.

Founded in 1937, MSU’s College of Nursing offers bachelor’s, accelerated bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral-level nursing education to produce nurses, nurse leaders, nurse educators and nurse practitioners for Montana. Using a distributed model with campuses in communities across the state, Montana State is the largest producer of registered nurses in Montana and is the sole provider of doctoral nurse practitioner education in the state.

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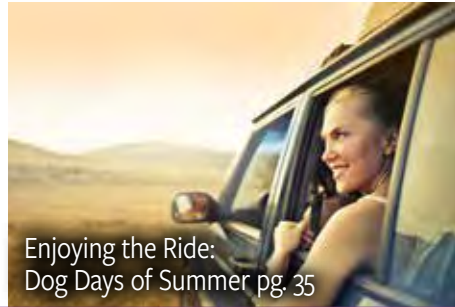


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SECTION 3:

BUSINESS, A&E, FINANCE,
DINING AND FUN



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Consider the Seed Potato pg. 46

Making it in Big Sky: Big Sky Community Library

BY MIRA BRODY

BIG SKY – The Big Sky Community Library bid farewell to its beloved founder Kathy House in June after 34 years of service. Danielle Kabisch, the library’s new director, was not only eager to fill her shoes, but had learned under House since 2008, calling her an “incredible mentor.”

Kabisch moved to Big Sky from Minnesota with her growing family in 2004, craving the mountain lifestyle where she had grown up vacationing. She knows the library extends beyond books providing an essential service to residents of all ages, from educational programs to serving as a meeting place for kids to learn and meet friends— Kabisch says it’s where her daughter has met many of her long-lasting friends over the years.

The Big Sky community is growing, and with it the need for vital community services such as the library, and with Kabisch at the helm there is no doubt the Big Sky Community Library will serve the area for years to come.

The following responses have been edited for brevity and style.



Danielle Kabisch is the Big Sky Community Library’s new director. Kabisch is confident on her role after close mentorship from former director, Kathy House. PHOTO COURTESY OF DANIELLE KABISCH

EBS: *Why is the library an integral resource for those living in Big Sky?*

D.K.: I believe that libraries are cornerstones of the communities they serve. We help our community be more successful, more educated and better citizens. We start with ensuring free and equitable access to books, ideas, resources and information. This is imperative for education, employment and enjoyment. At the Big Sky Community Library, we provide programs that are based on the five tenets of early literacy: playing, singing, talking, reading and writing. We offer programs and additional resources for young adults and adults: Books, magazines, computers, newspapers, databases, language classes, movies, audio, e-books and more.

EBS: *Have you seen this change at all as the community grows?*

D.K.: Users of the library are seasonal workers [and] visitors, community residents, which include retirees, students, staff and families. All of these

users need access to our resources. As our community grows, we see more patrons and usage.

EBS: *Now that school has begun, what are some programs or resources you provide students?*

D.K.: We offer a weekly themed Storytime for ages 0-5, with occasional special programs every Monday and 10:30 a.m. During the school year we collaborate with the Discovery School in order to provide time for students to access our materials. Because the library is located at the school, we are able to open our doors to the BSSD staff and students. We provide access to computers, reference materials, school research media and, of course, books.

EBS: *Who all makes these services possible?*

D.K.: Thanks to the Big Sky Resort Tax funding, the library can remain operational! We also could not operate as successfully without the incredible support from our Friends Of The Library members and Board, the Big Sky School District and the community. If anyone out there would like to become a member or donate to the library you can visit our website at bigskylibrary.com and click the Donate button. Or stop by and see us!

EBS: *What is your favorite memory and/or favorite part of the library?*

D.K.: My favorite memory is taking my own daughter to the library’s preschool story hour. Every week I would take her to this library where a special theme was presented, incorporating different books, crafts and snacks. The library is where my daughter and I met some of our best friends that we still hold close to this day.

EBS: *Is there anything else you want to tell Big Sky about the Community Library?*

D.K.: The library hosts author visits [over] the course of the year. Our latest “One Book Big Sky” book is “The Last Green Valley” by Mark Sullivan. We have several books available in the library. Community members can come down to the library and pick a book up before he visits us to discuss his writings. The visit from Mark Sullivan is scheduled for Sept. 28 at 6:30 p.m. in the library.

EBS: *What is the best business advice you’ve ever received?*

D.K.: Understand your values and what you stand for. Following these principles increases my confidence and makes it easier to make decisions in life and at work.

“ I believe that libraries are cornerstones of the communities they serve. We help our community be more successful, more educated and better citizens ”
– Danielle Kabisch, Director, Big Sky Community Library

Explore Big Sky: *Tell us how you ended up in Big Sky?*

Danielle Kabisch: My family moved to Big Sky in 2004 from Minneapolis, Minnesota. My husband and I were looking for a change of pace and wanted to live in the mountains. I grew up vacationing often in Big Sky and thought this would be the perfect place to raise our growing family.

EBS: *What is your role at the library and how did you first become involved?*

D.K.: I’m currently the Director of the Big Sky Community Library. I started working with Kathy House (my incredible mentor and former director) in 2008 as her assistant librarian. I truly enjoyed working with Kathy and learning about how a community library operates. As a result of this experience, I went back to school and earned my graduate certification in Library Media Science. I was then fortunate enough to land a job as the Lone Peak High School librarian and continued to work alongside Kathy. This year, Kathy retired and I transitioned into her position as the director.

EBS: *Can you give us some background on the Community Library and how it came to be?*

D.K.: Thirty years ago, Kathy House started the library at Ophir School in what was essentially a closet with one bin of picture books and a couple shelves with books for older children. After a lot of hard work, help from our volunteers the Friends of the Library, our community and most importantly funding from Resort Tax, we have a thriving Community Library with many resources available.

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Enjoying the Ride: Dog Days of Summer



BY SCOTT BROWN
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

It's hard to believe that another summer has almost passed us by. Unfortunately, in southwest Montana, the realization that we are in the midst of the "Dog Days of Summer" is signaled by smoke in the sky from the numerous forest fires still burning in the Pacific Northwest, cooling temps and the abrupt end to our watersport activities. On the bright side, hunting

season is just beginning and fishing season is still in full swing! On top of that, skiing and snowmobiling seasons are just around the corner.

With that in mind, I thought it would be an opportune time to share the basics of a proven long-term equity market investment strategy known as the "Dogs of the Dow." Because the Dow Jones Industrial Average is one of the oldest and most widely followed indexes in the world and generally considered a barometer for the broader equity markets, it is not uncommon for market strategists to base investing techniques on some components of the DJIA.

The Dogs of the Dow is a well-known investment strategy first published in 1991. The methodology attempts to beat or at least keep pace with the performance of the DJIA. Determining the Dogs of the Dow for each new year is easy: Simply rank the DJIA 30 stocks by dividend yield and take the top 10 yielding stocks. The strategy has investors buy equal amounts of all 10 stocks at the beginning of the year and then hold them through the end of the calendar year. Then the following year, if the yields have changed, you sell the stocks that have dropped out and buy the new qualifying stocks, thereby rebalancing your positions to the 10 new highest yielding DJIA stocks. It is important to recognize that all 10 will not likely change from year to year.

It's noteworthy that this strategy beat the DJIA index during the 10-year stretch that followed the 2008 financial crisis known as The Great Recession. Dogs of the Dow relies on the premise that blue-chip companies do not alter their dividend to reflect trading conditions and, therefore, the dividend is a measure of the average worth of the company. In contrast, the stock price does fluctuate throughout the business cycle.

This should mean that companies with a high dividend relative to stock price are near the bottom of their business cycle, so their stock price likely would increase faster than companies with low dividend yields. In this scenario, an investor reinvesting in high-dividend-yielding companies annually could outperform the overall market.

There are many ways to purchase these securities. You can hand-pick individual stocks and build your own portfolio, invest directly in the Dow through exchange traded funds or instead of investing in the entire Dow, you can follow the Dogs of the Dow strategy, whose stocks offer better yields than the Dow as a whole. Often times, the Dogs have been able to outperform the Dow over the course of the year. So I guess even when your in the dog house you can still find ways to Enjoy the Ride!

The 2021 Dogs of the Dow are listed below.

The 2021 Dogs of the Dow			
	Ticker	Company	Dividend Yield
1	AMGN	Amgen Inc.	3.06%
2	CSCO	Cisco Systems	3.22%
3	CVX	Chevron Corp.	6.11%
4	DOW	Dow Inc.	5.05%
5	IBM	IBM	5.18%
6	KO	The Coca-Cola Co.	2.99%
7	MMM	3M Co.	3.36%
8	MRK	Merck & Co.	3.18%
9	VZ	Verizon	4.27%
10	WBA	Walgreens Boots	4.69%



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Making smarter decisions about renewable energy requires knowledge. NorthWestern Energy's solar projects throughout the state of Montana provide clean energy to the power grid – and they're shaping the future of renewable energy, too. We're working with local universities to better understand where solar energy belongs alongside a balanced energy mix. And that research is helping us build a brighter future for the next generation of Montanans.



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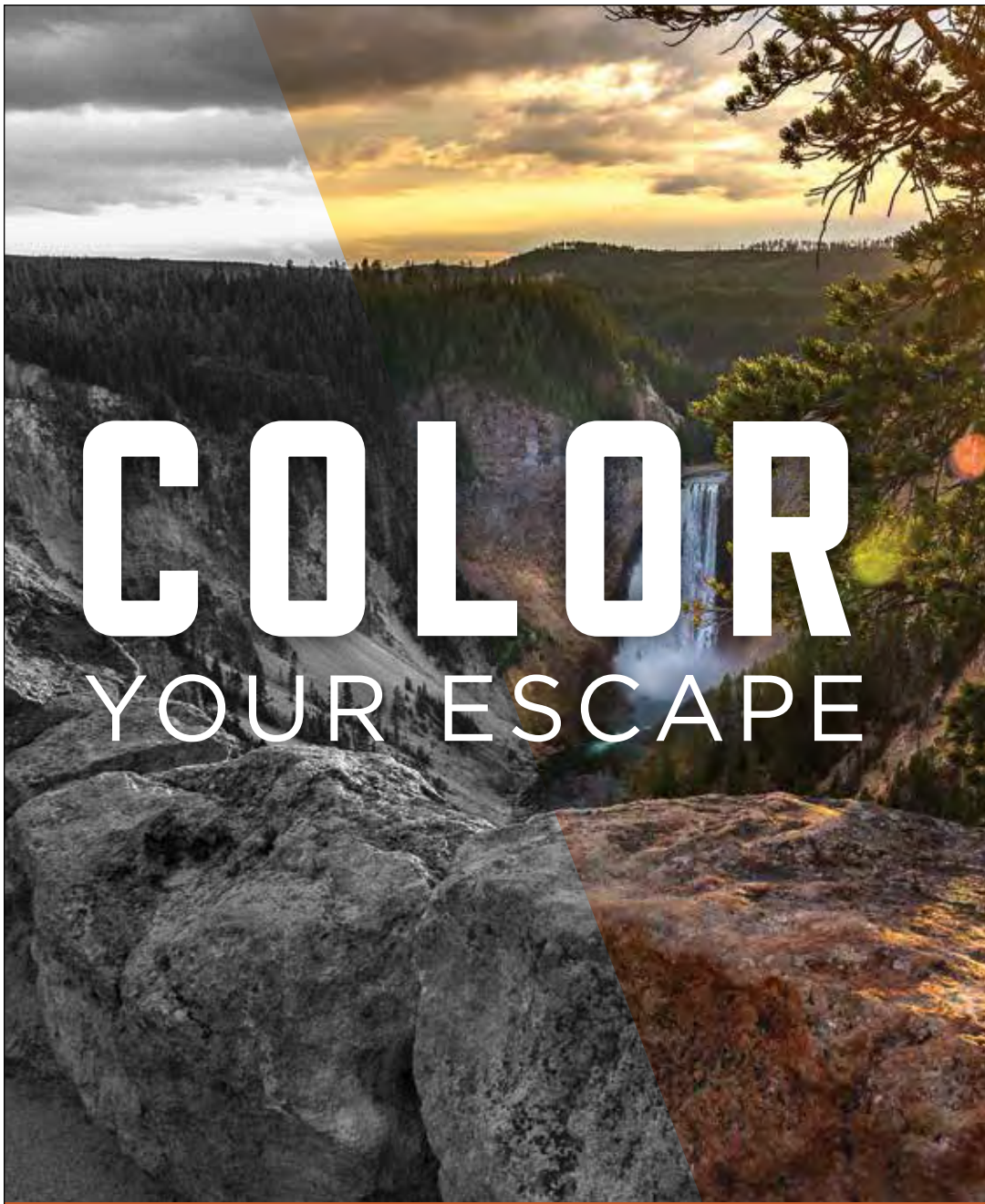
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BIG SKY EVENTS CALENDAR

Friday, Sept. 10 – Thursday, Sept. 23

If your event falls between Sept. 24 and Oct. 7, please submit it by Sept. 15 by emailing media@outlaw.partners

Friday, Sept. 10

Friday Afternoon Club: King Ropes
Blue Buddha Sushi & Lounge, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 11

Bozeman Marathon: YMCA 5K
Downtown Bozeman, 8:30 a.m.

Bozeman Out of the Darkness Community Walk
Lindley Park, 9 a.m.

BSCO Town to Trails 10K race
Hummocks & Uplands Trails, 10 a.m.

Sunday, Sept. 12

Bozeman Marathon: Half and full marathon
Downtown Bozeman, 7 a.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 15

Big Sky Fall Farmers Market
Wilson Plaza, 5 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 16

Big Sky Thursday Night Ride
Grizzly Outfitters, 5 p.m.

Evening at the Museum
Museum of the Rockies, 6 p.m.

Big Sky Serenity Seekers Al-Anon meeting
All Saints Chapel at 4 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 17

Evening at the Museum
Museum of the Rockies, 6 p.m.

Friday Afternoon Club: Kent Johnson
Blue Buddha Sushi & Lounge, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 22

Library Community Forum: “Freedom: Yours, Mine, and Ours”
Bozeman Public Library, 12 p.m.

Big Sky Fall Farmers Market
Wilson Plaza, 5 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 23

Big Sky Serenity Seekers Al-Anon meeting
All Saints Chapel at 4 p.m.

Big Sky Thursday Night Ride
Grizzly Outfitters, 5 p.m.

Event Spotlight: Thursday Night Ride

Looking to take the bike out with some new friends? Grizzly Outfitters in Big Sky Town Center hosts a weekly Thursday Night Ride for all ages and skill levels. Meet at the Grizzly Outfitters shop on Thursday at 5 p.m. for a quick lowdown of the night's trail, then stick around for food, beverages and live music at Music in the Mountains at Len Hill Park right across the street. It's a great way to get in the saddle, enjoy our shortening evenings and meet some new people in town.



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Thursday or Friday, September 16 – 17
6 – 10:30 p.m.

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Mr. Pressfield is an American author of historical fiction, non-fiction, and screenplays. Among his many accomplishments, Steven has written *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, *Gates of Fire*, *The War of Art*, and his new book, *A Man at Arms*.

\$2,500 for two tickets

\$15,000 for a table of eight

The events are hosted by Denise Sheehy - Chair, Aimee Dendrinis, Linda Hodges, Carol Glenn Lalani, Anna Makarechian, Paul Makarechian, Jim McCray, Dr. Philip Saccoccia Jr., and Kath Williams, Ph.D.

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For more information or to purchase tickets or a table,
contact Kathryn Hohmann at
kathryn.hohmann@montana.edu or 406.994.4973.

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48042 Gallatin Road, Big Sky, MT
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AMUSE-BOUCHE

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.

What’s in your pocket?



BY SCOTT MECHURA
EBS FOOD COLUMNIST

The other morning, I headed into the kitchen of one of our restaurants to assist with the production of the day, as is my summer routine. I set my briefcase and knife bag down and begin to retrieve all the things that I typically fill my pockets with for a day’s work. As I did so, I was reminded of a conversation I had with the Kalispell Prostart team and their instructor in the Buck’s T-4 Lodge kitchen as to what my typical day was like. The conversation progressed into a discussion about everything I carry on my person in a workday.

It never occurred to me just how much “stuff” I carried around in a given day. These days it isn’t nearly as much, but at the height of my kitchen activity, here’s what I carry on a typical day. I suspect any seasoned chef’s pockets may look similar.

Sharpie. Chefs and cooks label everything, or at least they should. From cardboard to blue tape, this one is absolutely essential. I can’t possibly imagine a chef that doesn’t carry a Sharpie pen.

Pen. I realize we live in a digital world, but I don’t know many jobs in which you still don’t need to write at least something every day.

Highlighter. From marking tickets on the line to items on a prep list or banquet event order, it is a quick way to identify specific items. And any color will suffice.

A dry erase marker. I quickly discovered this might be the most underrated item of them all. From walls to tables, you can write on just about any surface with one. Whether drawing plating or buffet layouts on stainless steel tables, or marking the rim of a sample plate for plating, a dry erase is worth its weight in gold.

Small utility knife. Something that can open and break down boxes and plastic, but also have at least a couple extra tools to pry or tighten screws.

Lip balm. Montana’s dry weather should make this one obvious.

Phone. Again, this one may seem obvious, but we all know a phone is so much more than a phone. There are many apps, tools and websites that are indispensable to a chef, some of which I use on a daily basis.

Mini notebook. I simply cannot conceive not having some means with which to record thoughts or daily notes for the day.

Additional pen and Sharpie. If I am wearing a chef coat with pockets, I have another one of each in my breast or sleeve pocket because on any given day, one of your staff will ask you for yours. Sometimes I think a cook should carry four or five Sharpies like a server carries pens.

Thermometer. A must for sanitation and food safety. A quick read thermometer is required to check internal temperatures of ready-to-eat foods, food surfaces, as well as cooler and freezer temperatures.

Phone charger or mini battery pack. Given the length of day a chef endures, even a brand new phone lacks the battery life of an entire chef’s workday.

Eye glass cloth. Since I wear glasses, this is a must for everything from cooking splatter to wind and dust at an outdoor catering event.

This may seem like a lot of items in one’s pockets, but every one of these items got put there because I once needed them and wished I had them.

What’s in your pocket?

Scott Mechura has spent a life in the hospitality industry. He is an executive chef, former certified beer judge and currently the multi-concept culinary director for a Bozeman based restaurant group.

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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

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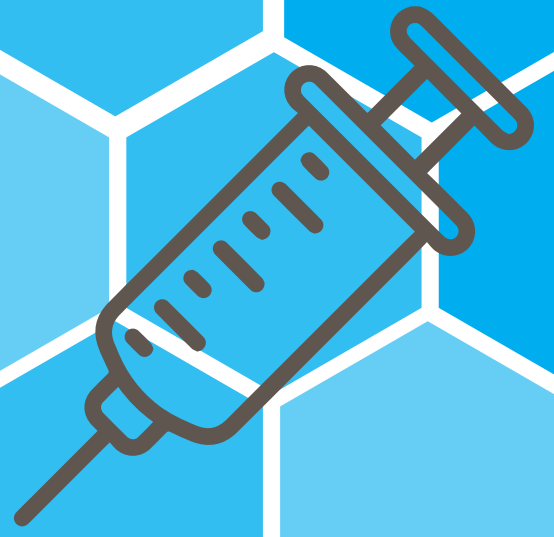
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October 2 | 8 a.m. to noon

BIG SKY MEDICAL CENTER DRIVE-THRU

September 8 and 15 | 3 to 7 p.m.

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American Life in Poetry

BY KWAME DAWES

It's been some months since our last election, but it is always good to be reminded, in this poem by Kamilah Aisha Moon, of how precious and hard-won the right to vote and the act of voting are.

1st VOTE

BY KAMILAH AISHA MOON

It was hers.
 She had this choice
 behind curtained bliss,
 Dad's chest full on the other side
 as her tapered hand
 pulled the lever.

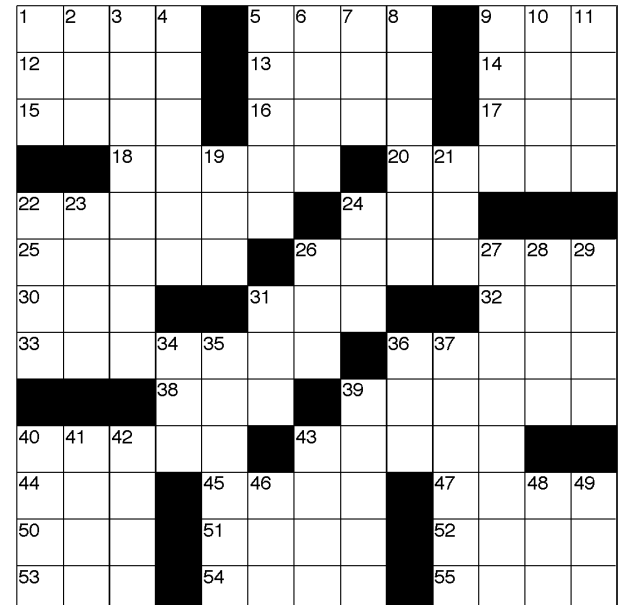
No matter how wide
 the final margin,
 a lone ballot
 never counted so much.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

- ACROSS**
- 1 Unable to hear
 - 5 Oriental nursemaid
 - 9 Bird
 - 12 Besides
 - 13 Anatomical duct
 - 14 S.A. tuber
 - 15 S. Afr. fox
 - 16 King of Israel
 - 17 Malay gibbon
 - 18 Queen of Italy
 - 20 Shed feathers
 - 22 Cry
 - 24 Haw. garland
 - 25 Card game
 - 26 Pilchard
 - 30 Evil (Sp.)
 - 31 Flap
 - 32 E. Indian timber tree
 - 33 Bacteria-free
 - 36 Largest mollusk
 - 38 Exclamation
 - 39 Israelite tribe
 - 40 Environment
 - 43 Museum (Fr.)
- DOWN**
- 1 Goddess (Lat.)
 - 2 Loop trains
 - 3 Call
 - 4 Antenna
 - 5 Before (Fr.)
 - 6 Ceylonese langur
 - 7 Father of Jehoshaphat
 - 8 Ear bone
 - 9 Balsam
 - 10 Adjective-

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

T	B	S		C	A	A	M		G	O	B	I
A	F	C		A	B	B	A		E	L	A	M
B	A	H		P	L	A	N	T	S	L	I	P
				O	G	E	E		A	S	A	T
S	C	O	U	R		T	Y	P	O			
K	E	N	T		L	I	M	E		S	T	D
A	B	E		R	O	T	I	R		M	R	U
T	U	R		E	B	U	R		N	A	I	R
				L	E	E	S		M	U	L	G
				L	E	A	D		G	A	E	L
H	E	A	V	Y	S	P	A	R		E	A	N
A	N	C	E		P	A	B	A		E	A	U
B	O	H	R		A	D	I	T		L	A	N



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Corner Quote



“With patience and calm, persistence and stoicism, good handwriting and careful labeling, they would meet persecution, indignity, and hardship head-on.”

- Michael Chabon, “The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay”

BIG SKY BEATS

“Jeremy” by Pearl Jam
 BY MIRA BRODY

On Sept. 2, 1993, rock band Pearl Jam showed the world just what they think of award shows while winning four Grammys, including Video of the Year, for the hit track “Jeremy.” During the award ceremony, frontman Eddie Vedder brought onstage Trevor Wilson, who played Jeremy in the video.

“I don’t know how you can say it’s the best,” Vedder said in his acceptance speech. “It’s just a little piece of art, and you can’t put art into a competition.”

“Jeremy” was featured on the band’s debut album “Ten,” and paid homage to Jeremy Wade Delle, a 16-year-old Texas high school student who shot himself in front of his English class in 1991. The song hit No. 5 on Billboard’s Mainstream Rock Tracks.



BACK 40

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”

Consider the Seed Potato

BY DOUG HARE

Where do home fries and hashbrowns, chips and French fries, gnocchi and mashed potatoes originate? You’ve probably never seen a packet of potato seeds for sale because potatoes don’t grow true to seed, like apples, they propagate vegetatively or asexually.

Every year, farmers have to plant small sprouting potatoes, or seed potatoes, in order to reproduce the specific varieties they want, of which there are over a thousand.

The Idaho Certified Seed Law prevents commercial potato growers from planting their own saved spuds, which have a higher probability of carrying disease. Instead, they’re required to purchase seed potatoes from certified seed potato growers to assure the health of their crop and the healthy proliferation of their specific varieties.

Seed potato management areas have special pest management measures and inspection and isolation requirements to assure plants are less exposed to diseases like blight and Potato Virus Y, or PVY. Commercial potato production is not allowed within seed potato management areas due to contamination risks.

Seed potatoes are tubers that are specifically grown to be free from disease, providing consistent and healthy yields when halved and replanted all across the country in warmer climates. The areas where seed potatoes can be grown are carefully selected from locations with cold, harsh winters that kill pests and mold spores, and warm summers with long sunshine hours and ample rainfall for optimal growth.

Chances are that the last loaded baked potato you ate had its origins in southern Idaho, a region that produces more seed potatoes than any other in the United States.

Nestled at the southern edge of the Yellowstone Caldera, the soil around Ashton, Idaho, is rich with volcanic ash and the altitude and snowpack help, providing a long winter deep freeze that cleanses the soil of mold spores and other pathogens.

Outside of Ashton in greater Fremont County lies the world’s largest seed potato farming area. Seed potatoes were not tried as a crop until 1920, but farmers quickly realized that their soil and climate conditions were ideal, similar to the Peruvian Andes where potatoes were first domesticated some 9,000 years ago. You might not get that impression driving through the quaint town of Ashton, but that’s because most of the action happens underground, off the beaten path with the scenic vistas, mountainous backdrops and the Henry’s Fork of the Snake River drawing the eye more than the endless, rolling, finely combed dirt fields fading into the distance.

On the first day of May, third-generation seed potato farmer Tom Howell is in downtown Ashton, where massive grain elevators tower over Main Street and an occasional freight train pulls directly into town for a grain refill. Many of the shops don’t look like they ever open for business.

Howell seems to make small talk with everyone who passes by on the sidewalk. It’s a small town with a population that hovers around 1,000. “Everybody knows each other ‘round here,” says Howell, as he pulls out his keys and opens one of the closed-up shops. Still, due to its geographic location near so many national parks and recreation areas, Ashton reports nearly 2 million visitors a year: sightseers, outdoorsmen and passers-through alike.

Letting me in, what looked like a thrift shop turns out to be a museum of sorts: Native American relics, souvenirs from the now-defunct Bear Gulch Ski Area, early 1900s newspaper articles about the American Dog Derby, WWII artifacts, and, of course, exhibits about the history of seed potato farming in southeastern Idaho are jam-packed into a space oozing with nostalgia. For a hardscrabble town founded in 1906, Ashton has acquired its fair share of history.

According to some dusty magazines on the counter, agriculture has always been the lifeblood of Ashton. Shortly after the first settlers arrived in the 1890s, several canals were developed to divert water from streams running off the Yellowstone Plateau and Teton Range. But soon, settlers discovered that some farmland, mostly to the east, is high enough and close enough to the Teton Range that crops can grow without irrigation due to increased rainfall making its way from a weather corridor extending to the Pacific coast.

After a brief tour, Howell tells me he has already sent the seed potatoes from his 1,500-acre farm to market, but he’s taking me up to Baum Farms to see the process of exporting certified disease-free seed potatoes—one of the busiest times of the year for farmers in the area. The regular growing season usually begins in mid-May, and harvesting starts mid- to late-September depending on soil temperatures.

On the ride out of town, Howell opens up, pointing out a new irrigation system and the names of all the farms we pass along the way. “Oh, we grow all kinds of potato varieties, but the farmers around here prefer to put Russet Burbanks on their own plates.” Although he worked in the ski industry in his younger years, Howell eventually



Inside a storage cellar, seed potatoes are stacked high and kept in closely monitored conditions for heat and humidity in order to prevent mold spores and other pathogens from damaging the crop. PHOTO BY HEATHER KAE PHOTOGRAPHY



The volcanic ash, long winters, elevated rainfall and long summer days all combine to make the soil conditions in Fremont County, Idaho, ideal for producing superior seed potatoes. PHOTO BY HEATHER KAE PHOTOGRAPHY

returned to his roots as a third generation seed potato farmer and has been supporting his family since 1971, despite some years when the harvest barely paid the bills.

“For me, I enjoy the variety of tasks of seed potato farming. There is always something different to be doing,” Howell said as we pulled up to Baum Farms where a series of conveyors belts are moving an endless stream of seed potatoes through machines designed to remove rocks and other debris. “It’s really a family operation with my son and I doing most of the work until we hire migrant workers to help out during the busiest times of year.”

The inside of the cavernous potato cellar is a sight to behold, especially when filled with mountains of seed potatoes. The climate control system and ventilation apparatus are much more high-tech than the humble exterior of the cellar would suggest, but absolutely essential in keeping the crop from degrading during storage periods lasting up to a year.

The movement of seed potatoes from the cellar is nothing less than mesmerizing to watch. They travel through a series of conveyor belts, heavy machinery and a row of workers methodically picking out damaged and diseased specimens, past the watchful eyes of a state-certified inspector, and finally onto a truck filled to the brim with now-certified Idaho seed potatoes.

Driving home to Montana, after the hypnotic spell of thousands of dancing seed potatoes had worn off, I began to think about the how the seed potato farmers in Fremont County leave their old farming equipment in their fields on display as a salute to a bygone era—a museum exhibit in plain air.

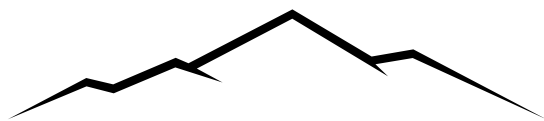
While the technology of farming seed potatoes has visibly improved over the last century, so much about farming the humble seed potato remains the same. It offers a connection to the land, the dignity of a hard

day’s work, continuity between generations of family members working the fields together and, at the end of the day, a delicious sustenance to help us persevere through the hard times. Pass the ketchup.

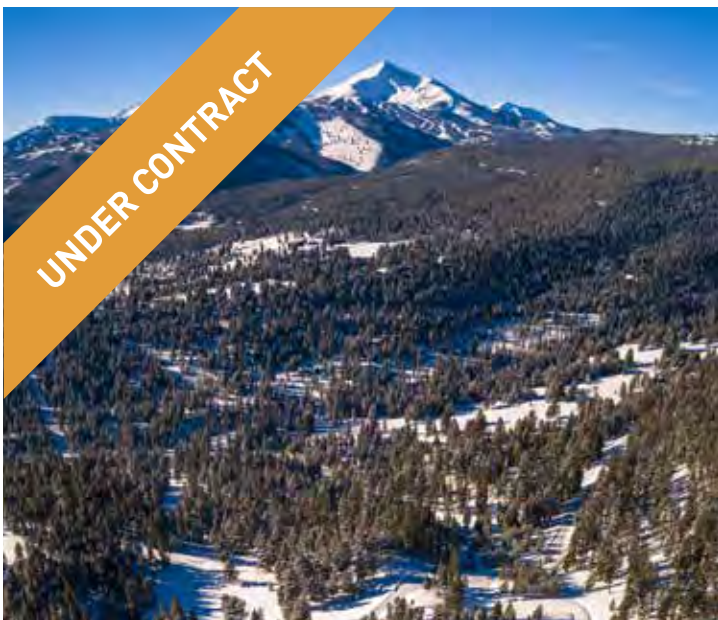
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A team of seasonal workers inspects the crop for deformed, damaged and diseased specimens before they can be labeled as certified Idaho seed potatoes and shipped off to be planted at commercial potato farms around the country. PHOTO BY DOUG HARE



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