

Big Sky

Nov. 19 - Dec. 2, 2021
Volume 12 // Issue #24

OPENING DAY!
Swift Current 6 debuts

*Big Sky School District
addresses custodial shortage*

**Housing Trust
awarded \$6.49M**

*Montana takes the stage
in new film*

**Outlaw Partners wins eighth
PBR Event of the Year**



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ON THE COVER:

Swift Current 6's chairs dangle from the lift line for the first time. The new lift, which replaces the old Swift Current detachable quad, will debut on Big Sky Resort's opening day. Swift Current 6 will be the fastest six-passenger lift in the country. PHOTO BY PATRICK CONROY/BIG SKY RESORT

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17 Swift Current 6 debuts at Big Sky Resort

The long-awaited Swift Current 6 chairlift will give Big Sky Resort visitors their first rides up the mountain on the resort's opening day. Among the fastest lifts in the continent, the Doppelmayr lift is equipped with heated seats and weatherproof bubbles.

8 Big Sky School District addresses custodial shortage

After 16 months of advertising open custodial positions with no applicants, the Big Sky School District decided to get creative with how they handled the worker shortage. The school board voted on Oct. 12 to offer teachers a \$1,700 stipend to clean their own spaces.

10 Housing Trust awarded \$6.49M

Amid a widely consequential housing crisis, the Montana Board of Housing awarded the Big Sky Community Housing Trust's RiverView Apartments \$6.49 million in Low Income Housing Tax Credits this month. RiverView, a collaborative project between the housing trust and local developer Lone Mountain Land Company, will house local workers across 100 units.

29 Montana takes the stage in new film

The new film "Montana Story" depicts a somber drama set against the vast panoramas of Paradise Valley. Young Cal (Owen Teague) returns to the 200-acre ranch where he was raised to deal with the end-of-life issues plaguing his abusive father along with his older sister Erin (Haley Lu Richardson).

15 Outlaw Partners wins eighth PBR Event of the Year

For the eighth consecutive year, the Big Sky PBR, co-produced by Outlaw Partners and Freestone Productions, won PBR Event of the Year. The honor is decided by the 35 top-ranked bull riders in the world at the PBR World Finals event which took place Nov. 3 - 7 at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas.

Opening Shot



Big Sky Resort has been hard at work making snow for opening day on Nov. 25. The snowmaking covers 33 acres including Jaywalk, Mr. K, Marmot Meadows, the Swifty terrain park and The Cache terrain park—a "gamechanger for our early season ski experience," said Troy Nedved, general manager of Big Sky Resort. PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG SKY RESORT

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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For the December 3, 2021 issue: November 24, 2021

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What are you looking forward to most this winter season?



Justin Allison | *Grizzly Outfitters*

"I am looking forward to—once snow is finally falling and we have something to play around in—splitting time between hiking the Headwaters and a bunch of time in the backcountry."



Bjorn Bjornstal | *Grizzly Outfitters*

"I'm looking forward to Swifty getting updated this year. I'll get a lot more laps on there because a lot of that is untouched most of the time. I'm pretty jazzed to ski that more."



Nate Barker | *East Slope Outdoors*

"My favorite thing and what I'm most looking forward to is skiing the Dictators. If there is no snow, I just want to carve up Ambush."



Cody Fudally | *East Slope Outdoors*

"I broke my spine two times and dislocated my shoulder during the seizures, so I can't ski or board anymore, but I do fly fish and ice fish. I'm looking forward to the National Ice Fishing Championships on Hebgen Lake."

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BETTER TOGETHER

A biweekly District bulletin

In Fiscal Year 2021 (July 2020-June 2021) 48 projects from 25 sponsoring organizations were awarded funding for programs critical to the Big Sky Community. Throughout the year we regularly feature Resort Tax funded initiatives. Additional Project Spotlights can be found @ ResortTax.org

Did You Know...?

All Businesses, collectors and non collectors, operating in Big Sky are *legally required* to register with the District annually in December.

Project Spotlights

Project:
Big Sky/Canyon Patrol Division
Sponsor:
Gallatin County Sheriff's Office



The Gallatin County Sheriff's Office utilizes its partnership with the Big Sky Resort Area District to ensure well trained deputies are based in Big Sky to provide a high quality, professional level of service to the residents and visitors of the area. Responsibilities of the Sheriff to the Big Sky community include law enforcement, search and rescue, civil services, and coroner services. Six sworn deputies are stationed in Big Sky and are jointly funded 1/3rd each from the Big Sky Resort Area District, Gallatin County, and Madison County. Deputies assigned to the Big Sky/Canyon Patrol Division are specifically dedicated to the Big Sky area. This creates a sense of community while following the community policing model, and allows the Deputies to understand trends and behaviors of the area. Learn more @ Gallatin.mt.gov



Project:
Big Sky Post Office Operations
Sponsor:
The Post Office, LLC



Since 2001, The Post Office, LLC (a contracted station) has provided postal services to the Big Sky Community. During those 20 years, we have seen the growth of Big Sky exceed the capacity of the current facility, and are committed to collaborating with the USPS and the Big Sky Resort Area District (BSRAD) to identify a long-term solution to improving postal services for the community. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Big Sky Post Office proved to be a critical infrastructure component for the Big Sky community. The funds provided by BSRAD allowed the Big Sky Post Office to continue operating. The Big Sky Post Office strives to provide reliable and efficient postal services to the residents and guests.



Project:
Watershed Restoration & Enhancement
Sponsor:
Gallatin River Task Force



The Gallatin River Task Force is a local nonprofit headquartered in Big Sky that brings diverse stakeholders together to ensure the health of the Gallatin and our drinking water aquifers. Over time, pressure on the Gallatin River and its resources has gone up significantly. From fly fishing to whitewater rafting, activity on the river and along its banks has led to degraded vegetation and decreased water quality. The Upper Deer Creek Restoration Project was completed resulting in 1 accessible fishing platform, 1 kayak slab launch, 1 raft launch, 1,750 ft. accessible gravel trail, 2 gravel parking areas, 380 riparian trees and shrubs planted, and 4,323 ft. of visitor-created roads restored. The completion of the project has improved recreation connectivity and ecosystem function by protecting fish and wildlife habitat and water quality. Additionally, 70 volunteers collected 2,260 pounds of trash along 40+ miles of river. Learn more @ GallatinRiverTaskForce.org



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.
 - Attending Board meetings and making public comment in person or through Zoom.
 - *Comments on the Facebook WILL NOT be accepted as public comment.*

Visit ResortTax.org for more information.

Upcoming Board Meetings



January 12th, 2022
@ 9:00 am

February 9th, 2022
@ 9:00 am



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Montana ballot access law ruled unconstitutional

EBS STAFF

HELENA – The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that a section of a Montana election law is unconstitutional.

In 2018, The Montana Green Party challenged the rules that require minor parties to gather signatures equal to at least 5 percent of the total votes cast for the winner in the most recent governor election in at least 34 of 100 state House districts.

On Nov. 15, a three-judge panel ruled that basing signature requirements upon the number of people in each House district who voted for the winning governor leads to districts with similar populations being valued unevenly.

“Because the distribution requirement is tied to the votes cast in each House district for the winner of the gubernatorial race, the required number depends on the political orientation of a district, and varies substantially from one district to another,” the panel wrote.

Water and sewer board considers adjusting criteria for affordable housing

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – The Big Sky County Water and Sewer board at a Nov. 16 meeting put the ball in motion to establish specific service criteria for employee housing.

Under the employee housing category in its wastewater use ordinance, a quarter single family equivalents were previously allocated to “dormitory types” per bed. The board passed the first reading of an amendment to the ordinance that would change the SFEs allocated to employee housing apartments, ADUs and condos to 1.2 per 1,000 square feet.

The board will vote on the second reading of this amendment, potentially passing it if there are no changes, at its December board meeting.

Bozeman Doc Series to relaunch with ‘Rescue’

EBS STAFF

BOZEMAN – After a long year off, the Bozeman Doc Series will return for a seventh season on Thursday, Dec. 2, at 7 p.m. at the Emerson Center for the Arts & Culture. The first premiere will be the critically acclaimed new documentary “The Rescue,” from the Oscar-winning directors of “Free Solo,” Jimmy Chin and Elizabeth Chai-Vasarhelyi.

“The Rescue” follows the against-all-odds rescue that captured attention around the world when the Royal Thai Navy SEALs and U.S. Special Forces rescued

LPHS athletes receive All Conference honors

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – After Montana fall high school sports seasons wrap, the coaches of every team in the district meet to rank and vote for the top players. This year, district coaches honored nine athletes from the Lone Peak High School volleyball and soccer teams.

Below are the athletes and their respective honors:

Tony Brester – All State / 1st Team All Conf. Soccer
 Max Romney – All State / 1st Team All Conf. Soccer
 Maddie Cone – All State / 1st Team All Conf. Volleyball

Cash Beattie – 2nd Team All Conf. Soccer
 Kyan Smit – 2nd Team All Conf. Soccer
 Campbell Johnson – 2nd Team All Conf. Soccer
 Jessie Bough – 2nd Team All Conf. Volleyball

Beckett Johnson – Honorable Mention Soccer
 Colter Marino – Honorable Mention Soccer

Wilson Hotel hosts Third Annual Friendsgiving

EBS STAFF

BIG SKY – In a small community like Big Sky, family sometimes takes on a broader meaning. Celebrate the holiday early feasting with your friends at the community’s Third Annual Friendsgiving.

Hosted by the Wilson Hotel in the Big Sky Town Center, the dinner is presented in partnership with Sweet Buns Catering. Friendsgiving will take place on Nov. 24 from 4-7 p.m. or until the food runs out.

The dinner is free to anyone in the Big Sky community. All food will be provided by local businesses.

12 boys and their soccer coach from deep inside a flooded cave in northern Thailand in 2018.

“A stunning documentary of bone-deep moral resonance and cinematic mastery that deserves to be experienced on the big screen,” stated Variety in a review of the film.

“The Rescue” world-premiered at the 2021 Telluride Film Festival to widespread critical acclaim and was recently awarded the Grand Prize at the Banff Mountain Film Festival.



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‘All hands on deck’ at local school district

As US reels from worker shortage, BSSD works to create solution for lack of custodial staff

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – Sweeping the floor of the lunchroom in Lone Peak High School, Wayne McMinn greets two passing students who thank him for his work.

The 70-year-old part-time custodian returns to sweeping but has to catch his breath before discussing what brought him to work for the Big Sky School District four years ago. McMinn explains that he retired from laying carpet for 50 years but still needs to work, so he drives buses and cleans the high school.

BSSD has been advertising open custodial positions constantly, and in the last 16 months has received a few phone calls but no formal applicants, according to Superintendent Dustin Shipman.

The district currently has three custodial employees: McMinn and Brad Lartigue who clean the school part-time and Kary Pemberton who was hired ahead of the 2021-2022 school year as facilities director to oversee custodial staff. Combined, McMinn and Lartigue work enough hours to equal about one full-time employee.

In the past, the two-building school has had as many as eight custodial employees who worked combined hours equivalent to four full-time employees. Shipman said the ideal would be four full-time custodial employees not counting the facilities director.

The problem the school is facing is not unique.

In the wake of the pandemic, which is still flaring up in Gallatin County, economists say a “web of overlapping factors” have contributed to a national worker shortage, according to an Oct. 19 New York Times article, in turn creating a “workers economy” which sees rising wages and employees empowered to be picky about what positions they take.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in October the national labor force participation rate for ages 25-54 rose nearly 2 percent from April 2020 to 81.7 percent, which is about 1 percent short of pre-pandemic numbers.

“We don’t have any help but that’s the same thing we have all over the country,” McMinn told EBS.



Brad Lartigue makes his way down the hallway vacuuming the carpet and checking on the bathrooms. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

Known as “Wayne” or “Mr. Wayne” to the students, McMinn spends a few hours each day cleaning the school between driving bus routes. He also drives the activities bus, taking student athletes to games across Montana, and just this year stepped into the role of transportation manager for the district.

“Everybody is doing what they can,” McMinn said. “The teachers have been great. They have been stepping up doing whatever they can when they can. Of course, the administration, they’re trying their best to alleviate the problem. It’s just something that’s beyond their control. You can’t make people come to work; you can’t make people take a job.”

While McMinn cleans the high school, over in the elementary building, Lartigue, 60, does what he can to keep the building clean on his own.

A custodial employee for nine years, Lartigue is a swim instructor, chaplain for Big Sky Resort and the Big Sky Fire Department, and an Ironman triathlete. He also drives a school bus part-time.

In his free time, he trains for Ironman races and remains deeply involved in the Big Sky community through his nonprofit ministry, Big Sky Resort Ministries. Most recently, Lartigue has been a catalyst in moving the new BASE community center from dream to reality and is helping realize the Phase 2 BASE Aquatic Center as well.

While Lartigue vacuums the hallway of the elementary school, his first task of the evening, he passes by a bulletin board filled with thank-you notes written by students and addressed to custodial staff. He pauses to read a few and smiles.

Lartigue says he enjoys driving a bus and took up the part-time custodial work to receive health insurance benefits.

“Busing for me is a lot of fun,” he said. “I get to parent the kids and be a part of the village that raises them.”

On the other hand, the custodial work is physical in a more taxing way than his endurance training, and has been a strain for Lartigue as he battles issues with sciatica.

Since no candidates have come forward to fill the empty custodial positions, the school has gotten creative.

At an Oct. 12 school board meeting, trustees voted to implement a \$1,700 stipend for teachers to clean their own spaces to relieve some of the pressure on custodial staff. The instructors had the option to accept the stipend and all certified teachers opted in.

“Everybody on staff is putting [all] hands on deck to say ‘Okay, I’ll be responsible for this area of the school and my classroom,’” Lartigue said.

Shipman said he got the idea from fellow Gallatin County school, Amsterdam School, which implemented the stipend after running into the same struggle to find custodial workers.

“The one thing I would like to recognize is that the teachers who chose to participate and clean spaces in the school are really doing it as a way of pitching in and helping out,” Shipman said. “We thank them for participating ... for the betterment of the school district, which means the betterment of our student experience.”

Brad Packer, an LPHS math instructor for three years and a teacher for 26, outlined his cleaning responsibilities: vacuuming his classroom daily, taking out the trash, and disinfecting tables and desks.

“A lot of us were doing that room cleaning anyway because it’s the right thing to do,” he said.

While the stipend is intended to ease pressure in the short term, Shipman said the goal is to allow teachers to focus on their students. Although unemployment is dropping in Montana and



Students in Ophir Elementary School filled a bulletin board with cards to thank the custodial staff for their hard work. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

across the country, part of the difficulty in hiring custodial staff is the competition with other community employers.

Whereas a restaurant or property manager operates on a revenue model allowing them to raise prices in order to increase wages and make jobs more desirable, the school receives a fixed-dollar figure from the government per student and lacks the flexibility to raise wages to remain competitive, Shipman said.

The district currently pays its custodians \$17.50 per hour plus additional benefits. The cleaning stipend being paid to teachers is costing the school the equivalent of two full-time custodial staff members.

Shipman pointed out that while the school can’t raise wages to compete with the market in this scope of work, they provide other benefits such as health insurance and state retirement pay.

But even with higher wages and good benefits, workers are still hard to come by.

Both McMinn and Lartigue agree that the district needs more custodial help, but neither could see a clear solution to the problem. McMinn summed up their current situation and the daily effort they both exert to keep the buildings clean.

“All we do at work is just what we can do.”



Wayne McMinn stepped into the role of transportation manager this year and drives a bus route as well as the activities bus. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

State awards nearly \$7M to local workforce housing

BY BELLA BUTLER

HELENA – The Montana Board of Housing on Nov. 15 awarded \$6.49 million to a workforce housing project in Big Sky known as the RiverView Apartments.

In the throes of a widely consequential housing crisis, leadership for the Big Sky Community Housing Trust, which will develop part of the RiverView project, says the Low Income Housing Tax Credit award is a key step in advancing sustainable solutions.

The housing trust currently reports that the average monthly rental price in Big Sky is \$1,200 per bedroom. Affordability aside, long-term rental vacancy rate is 0 percent in Big Sky, according to the housing trust.

After the board of housing advanced the RiverView project from a pool of 12 applicants to the top eight in May, RiverView did not rank among the top four projects to receive LIHTC funding in October.

However, the state received a release from the IRS after the October allocation indicating Montana would receive more tax credits to distribute than the housing board had initially estimated. At its November meeting, the board chose to distribute \$220,000 to a previously awarded project in Lewiston that needed additional funding, and the remaining \$6.49 million to RiverView.

“It just allows this total project to move forward, which will add up to 400 beds for local workers,” said Laura Seyfang, executive director of the housing trust.

According to Nicole Keith, multifamily program manager for Montana Housing, a fifth project would have received reduced funding regardless of the IRS release, but the news from the IRS allowed the board to fulfill RiverView’s request in full. Of the nearly \$29.4 million allocated across six projects by the state, RiverView was awarded the largest sum.

The RiverView project was announced in January as a collaborative project between the housing trust and local developer Lone Mountain Land Company. The housing trust will develop 25 of the project’s units, and LMLC will develop the remaining 75.

All units will be exclusively rented to local workers, and rent will be capped, according to the housing trust’s website.

RiverView’s LIHTC application received 10 letters of support from community members and regional leaders, endorsements Seyfang said she made a big push for after coming up empty handed in October.

Sen. Pat Flowers and Rep. Jane Gillette, who represent Big Sky in the Montana Legislature, advocated for the project as well.

“I think people have this illusion that Big Sky doesn’t have some of the problems that the rest of Montana does, but we do,” Gillette told EBS in a Nov. 17 interview. Gillette spoke at the Nov. 15 board of housing meeting and said she shared insight on Big Sky’s limited land availability compared to nearby towns like Bozeman and Belgrade that have sprawl potential.

Gillette also described the white crosses that line U.S. Highway 191 through the Gallatin Canyon, an indication of the peril 80 percent of Big Sky’s workforce faces when commuting from Gallatin Valley on a daily basis.


With the LIHTC award and \$1.9 million in resort tax funding, the housing trust still remains between \$2-3 million short of its budget, Seyfang said. To close the gap, the housing trust will take out a loan and seek support from the community.

Due to an agreement with the Big Sky County Water and Sewer Board, RiverView is scheduled to open its doors to occupants in August of 2023, a timeline coinciding with the completion of the forthcoming water resource recovery facility expansion.



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Big Sky school honors local veterans with moving assembly

BY GABRIELLE GASSER

BIG SKY – As a veteran marine, Matt Bakken has fought in the global war on terror. But when the former Lone Peak High School teacher and football coach stepped onto the stage in the Bough-Dolan Athletic Complex, he admitted he was more nervous about public speaking than he was heading into combat.

At the request of the LPHS Student Council, Bakken headlined the school's 2021 Veterans Day Assembly as the Guest of Honor. On the snowy afternoon of Nov. 11, Veterans Day, students and staff gathered in the bleachers and veterans from the Big Sky community sat in a place of honor by the stage.

Big Sky School District Superintendent Dustin Shipman opened the event followed by the singing of the national anthem and an address by master of ceremonies LPHS junior Owen Gitchell. Other program highlights included a recitation of the preamble to the United States Constitution by the Ophir Elementary third-grade class, a flag-folding ceremony, Bakken's speech and a roll call for five of the six branches of the U.S. military represented by the veterans in attendance.

After working through his jitters, Bakken gave a powerful and emotional speech in which he shared stories of losing a comrade, providing security for the first-ever free election in Iraq and meeting a fellow veteran who fought in the battle of Iwo Jima.

He also presented three ways that U.S. citizens can show appreciation to veterans: offer them thanks, get involved with veteran causes and exercise the freedoms that veterans fought for.

"Don't take for granted the freedom to choose your career, to go to school, to vote in every



LPHS senior John Chadwell lights a candle as part of the POW/MIA Ceremony. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER



After his speech Bakken shook hands with every student on the stage. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

election and to speak your mind without fear," Bakken said in his speech.

When he got the call from Shipman asking him to be the speaker for the assembly, Bakken said he was honored that his former students had thought of him.

"I think it's important so that we don't forget the veterans and the sacrifices that they've made throughout the course of our history," Bakken said, reflecting after the assembly on the importance of Veterans Day. "It's great to see that the students have a lot of ownership, they get to have a say in who they want to have as speaker and that they pretty much run the assembly. I think having ownership allows them to have a little more pride in their country as well as the veterans that served our community."

Student Council President Luke Kirchmayr helped plan the assembly and gave a short speech on the significance of Veterans Day as part of the assembly's program.

"I think it's important because nowadays it's really easy for people to forget ... the people who served and [who have] sacrificed for our country," Kirchmayr said to EBS after the assembly. "I think [the assembly is] a great way that we can bring that to light, especially with local veterans, for our community. We can highlight the sacrifices that they've made to ensure our freedom."

To end his speech, Bakken encouraged all in attendance to honor the millions of people who have served in the U.S. military.

"Our veterans stand ready to fight and die for our freedom," he said. "May we all strive to be worth the sacrifice."



Matt Bakken delivers his speech and members of the LPHS Student Council sit on the stage behind him. PHOTO BY GABRIELLE GASSER

Outdoor recreation added \$2.2 billion to Montana economy in 2020

Boating, fishing and RVing posted significant gains last year, nationally and statewide

BY AMANDA EGGERT
MONTANA FREE PRESS

While Montana's outdoor recreation economy wasn't spared the pandemic-spurred losses that swept the globe in 2020, it remained a cornerstone of the state's economy, according to a report released on Nov. 9 by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Outdoor recreation accounted for 4.3 percent of Montana's GDP last year — a higher percentage than any other state. The next closest was Hawaii, with 3.8 percent.

The report also found that Montana is toward the head of the pack for employment in the outdoor rec sector in 2020, with employment topping 26,000 jobs, or 5.4 percent of the state's total employment. Hawaii took first place in that category, with employment in outdoor recreation-adjacent sectors accounting for 7 percent of total employment. Montana and Alaska tied for second.

The report found that 2020 brought significant job losses in recreation-adjacent employment compared to 2019. Every state posted losses on that front, ranging from a low of 9.3 percent in Indiana to a high of 27.2 percent in Hawaii. In Montana, the number of outdoor recreation jobs decreased by 17.5 percent, which put the state in the middle of the pack.

While the report notes that pandemic upheavals to the economy factored into the bureau's findings, it includes a disclaimer about what can and cannot be parsed from its analysis.

"The full economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be quantified in the outdoor recreation estimates because the impacts are generally embedded in source data and cannot be separately identified," the report says.

A story about the report in *Outside Business Journal* posits that losses in outdoor recreation GDP between 2019 and 2020 can be partly explained by supply chain issues, and surmises that employment losses are likely due to closures and suspensions of recreational activities during the pandemic's early days.

Though the report found significant declines in consumer spending and employment, groups including the Outdoor Industry Association were quick to point out some silver linings behind the pandemic's impacts, including "a significant uptick in outdoor recreation participation" and recognition that some OIA member companies "had exceptionally strong sales over the past year."

"Further," OIA's statement continues, "lawmakers have introduced new legislation to expand access to the outdoors and invest in climate resiliency, positioning the outdoor industry to continue to grow, create new jobs, and contribute to the national economy."

The BEA report divides recreation into three categories: conventional outdoor activities like bicycling, fishing, hiking and hunting; core activities including gardening and outdoor concerts; and supporting activities, such as construction, travel and tourism, local trips and government expenditures.

The activity that saw the most growth nationally between 2019 and 2020 was boating and fishing, which also accounted for the largest total of value added at nearly \$31 billion. Spending for those activities increased by more than \$5 billion from the prior year. Second was RVing, which accounted for \$19.1 billion of value added, a measure of the value of goods and services produced minus the value of goods and services expended in production. Of the three conventional activities broken out in the report — boating and fishing, RVing and snow activities — boating and fishing was also a leader at the state level, contributing \$288 million of value added, as compared to \$139 million for RVing and \$49 million for snow activities.

The surge in water- and RV-based recreation probably won't come as a surprise to anyone who set out on a Montana river or stream last summer,

or struggled to find a tent pad during a spike in camping-based recreation. Despite park closures ranging from 6 weeks to nearly 10 weeks, Yellowstone National Park posted strong visitation numbers in 2020, with September and October being the busiest on record. Glacier National Park also hosted heaps of travelers in 2020, particularly in the fall: October visitation topped 125,000 in 2020, compared to 78,000 the year prior. And visitation at Montana's state parks jumped nearly 30 percent between 2019 and 2020. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks estimates a record 3.4 million people visited a state park last year.

In an emailed statement, Gov. Greg Gianforte spokesperson Brooke Stroyke described Montana's outdoor recreation industry as "a massive economic driver for our state."

"The governor is committed to protecting, promoting, and growing this important industry," Stroyke said.

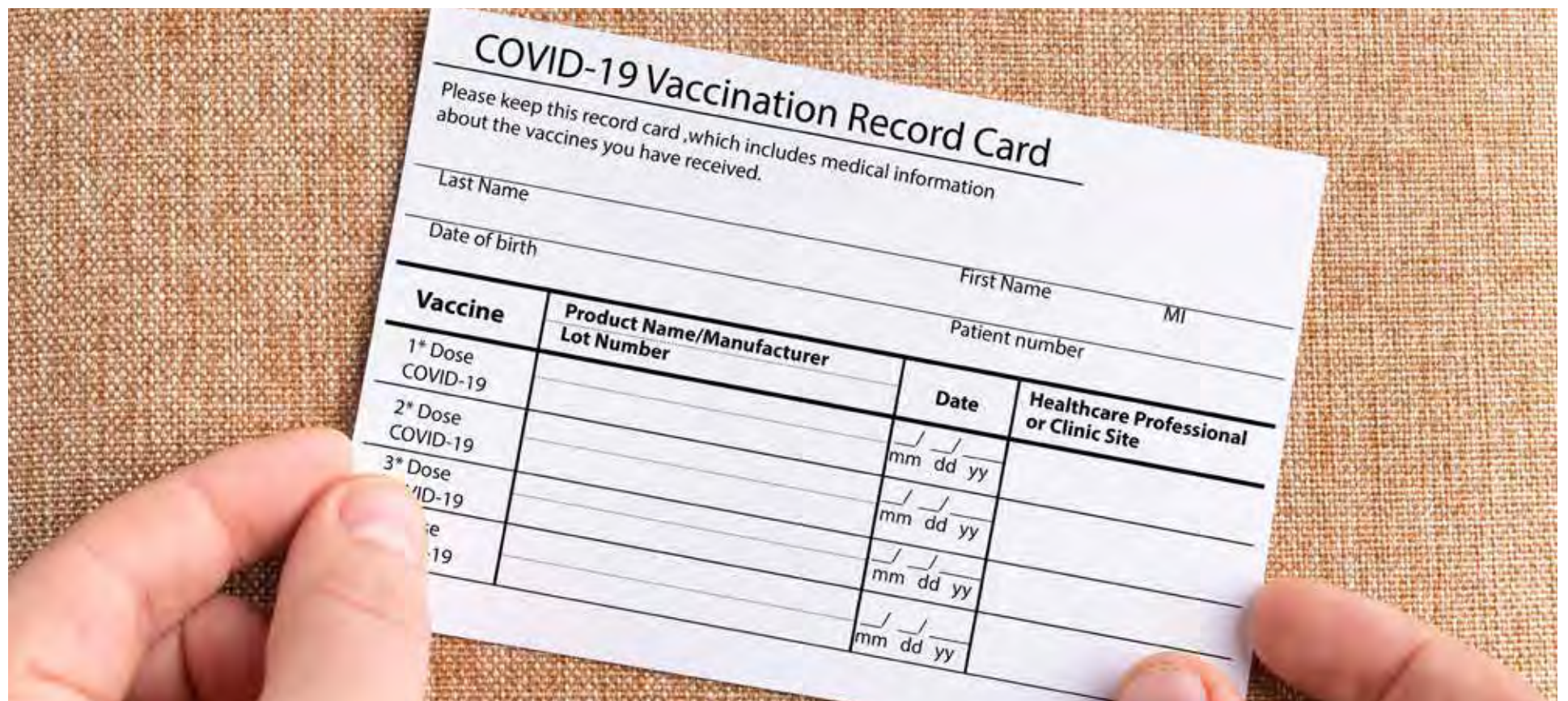
In terms of broad economic sectors evaluated, retail trade led the pack with \$102 billion nationally in 2020. It also led the state, accounting for more than \$517 million of value added. Next up was arts, entertainment and recreation with \$433 million, followed by accommodation and food services at \$339 million.

Billings native Amanda Eggert covers environmental issues for MTFP. Amanda is a graduate of the University of Montana School of Journalism who has written for Outside magazine and Outlaw Partners. At Outlaw Partners she led coverage for the biweekly newspaper Explore Big Sky. Contact Amanda at aeggert@montanafreepress.org.



The activity that saw the most growth nationally between 2019 and 2020 was boating and fishing, which also accounted for the largest total of value added at nearly \$31 billion. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO

Montana files third challenge to federal vaccine mandates



As the deadline for President Joe Biden's federal vaccine requirements looms nearer several states including Montana are challenging the White House. PHOTO BY VIOREL/stock.adobe.com

BY MARA SILVERS
MONTANA FREE PRESS

Montana on Nov. 15 filed its third lawsuit against the Biden administration's federal vaccine requirements, joining several other Republican-led states in challenging the White House's efforts to increase protection against COVID-19. Even as the virus continues to spread in Montana, Attorney General Austin Knudsen has called Biden's strategy an "unconstitutional power grab and intrusion into Montanans' lives."

Here's a breakdown of what the Biden administration is seeking to do, how Montanans could be impacted, and where the lawsuits currently stand.

VACCINES OR REGULAR TESTING FOR LARGE BUSINESSES

Through an emergency change to federal safety standards enforced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Biden's Department of Labor is seeking to require employee vaccination or regular testing of employees of companies with 100 or more workers.

The rule sets a Jan. 4 deadline for employers to begin enacting the new policy, including maintaining a roster of employee vaccination status and requiring unvaccinated employees to wear masks. Employers, including approximately 400 in Montana, could face fines of up to \$14,000 per infraction.

Several states and businesses, including Montana, sued to block the proposed rule in early November. That same week, a federal appeals court temporarily stayed the OSHA rule, saying petitioners in one suit had demonstrated "grave statutory and constitutional issues" with the government's mandate. The court expanded on its decision in a longer ruling on Friday, Nov. 12.

As of Nov. 16, Biden's Justice Department has not appealed the decision, but has pledged to "vigorously defend" the emergency rule.

REQUIRED VACCINES FOR MEDICAID AND MEDICARE FACILITIES

On Nov. 5, the Biden administration implemented a new employee vaccine requirement for health care facilities that receive funding from Medicaid and Medicare in an effort to address "the risk of unvaccinated health care staff to patient safety," Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure said in a written statement.

The CMS rule states that employees of hospitals, psychiatric treatment facilities, ambulatory surgical centers and many other types of facilities must receive at least the first shot of a vaccination by Dec. 6. Weekly testing in

lieu of vaccination is not an option. Employees are not subject to the vaccine requirement if they work 100 percent remotely.

Within days, a cohort of states filed a lawsuit to block the CMS rule in the eastern district of Missouri. On Nov. 15, 11 other states, including Montana, filed a separate challenge in the western district of Louisiana.

In a press release announcing the latter lawsuit, Knudsen said the rule would force Montana's health care workforce to buckle if employees choose to leave their jobs instead of getting vaccinated.

"If unvaccinated workers quit or are fired, that will compel those hospitals to close certain divisions, cancel certain services, or shutter altogether," the lawsuit states.

The Biden administration has not yet filed a reply in court.

VACCINATIONS FOR NEW AND RENEWED FEDERAL CONTRACTORS

The White House has also imposed vaccine requirements on federal contractors. While those contractors have some leeway when it comes to enforcing the new rules with their employees, the administration's Safer Federal Workforce guidelines have recommended that employers encourage compliance, "including through a limited period of counseling and education, followed by additional disciplinary measures if necessary."

An employee's termination for not complying with vaccination would occur "only after continued noncompliance," the guidelines state.

In announcing Montana's legal challenge to that rule, Knudsen blasted the administration for "gross overreach" into the lives of Montana residents.

"Workers in our state don't lose their rights just because their company happens to do some work for the federal government," Knudsen said.

The Oct. 29 lawsuit that Montana joined is currently proceeding in the eastern district of Missouri.

Some legal observers have suggested that, compared to the administration's requirement for large employers, the mandate for federal contractors may be more difficult for plaintiffs to successfully challenge in court.

Mara covers Montana's social welfare, criminal justice and legal systems. She also tracks policy and social issues that affect LGBTQ+ people. Prior to joining Montana Free Press, Mara worked at Slate and WNYC, where she focused on radio and podcasts. She got her start in audio journalism as an intern at Montana Public Radio. Contact Mara at msilvers@montanafreepress.org, 406-465-3386 ext. 3, and follow her on Twitter.

OUTLAW™

News from our publisher, Outlaw Partners

Big Sky PBR named PBR Event of the Year

Big Sky event collects eighth consecutive title at World Finals in Vegas

BY MIRA BRODY

LAS VEGAS – For the eighth year running, the Big Sky PBR brought home hardware from the PBR's Heroes & Legends dinner and awards ceremony on Nov. 2. The event kicked off the PBR World Finals, and concluded what PBR is calling the “greatest single season in league history.”

“Just to be in a room full of Western sports legends and to have Big Sky recognized on the same platform as them is really humbling,” said Eric Ladd, chairman of Outlaw Partners, co-producer of Big Sky PBR. “It truly was a Heroes and Legends dinner and to be considered in a room full of people who have devoted themselves to the Western sports lifestyle is really a testament to all the work that [the Outlaw Partners] team has put into this event.”

Big Sky PBR is co-produced by Outlaw Partners and Freestone Productions and hosted each year in the Big Sky Events Arena in Big Sky Town Center. Built from the sagebrush up, the event has brought crowds to their feet under the backdrop of Lone Mountain, this summer celebrating its 10th year with Big Sky's Biggest Week—10 days of bull riding, live music, heated mutton bustin' competition and a crowd-surfing Flint Rasmussen.

“The annual PBR stop in Big Sky is a special event in a special place and a favorite among all PBR constituents,” said Sean Gleason, CEO of PBR. “It isn't a mystery that PBR Big Sky won event of the year in 2021 continuing a long tradition of being voted as Event of the Year.”

The Event of the Year distinction is decided by the 35 top-ranked bull riders in the world at the World Finals event, which spanned Wednesday, Nov. 3

through Sunday, Nov. 7 at the T-Mobile Arena. Former professional bull rider and current bull owner Cord McCoy calls this year's event finals “one of the best ever.”

On Sunday, World Champion rider Jose Vitor Leme, and five-year-old bull Woopaa of Barker Bulls/Hookin' W Ranch, proved a powerhouse of a match-up. Vitor Leme came out on top with a 98.75-point ride, shattering the previous high-score record of 96.5 points. This is the second year Leme, from Ribas do Rio Pardo, Brazil, has claimed the World Champion title. During the ride, Leme was in recovery from painful groin and abdominal injuries to boot.

Four bulls owned by Outlaw, McCoy and other Big Sky partners made it to the World Finals this year: Viper, Midnight Rock, Cliffhanger and Outlaw—Cliffhanger snagged the highest-scoring ride of the bulls during Sunday's event.

“You can feel it,” said McCoy. “As much as you don't think the fans have a lot to do with it, I think it encourages not only the bull riders, but it encourages the bulls. You can feel the intensity at the event. You can blow as many fireworks or turn the music up as loud as you want, but when you feel the crowd, it really makes a difference.”


The Event of the Year acknowledgment will inspire Outlaw to continue to grow the community event in future years, says Ladd. Big Sky PBR will return July 22-24, 2022, preceded by another series of Big Sky's Biggest Week events. Ticket information will be released soon.



EBS Publisher Outlaw Partners won PBR Event of the Year for the eighth consecutive year. The crew received the award at the Heroes & Legends dinner and awards ceremony on Nov. 2 in Las Vegas, Nevada. L-R: Outlaw CEO Megan Paulson; Outlaw Publisher Eric Ladd; Freestone Productions' Andy Watson; Outlaw Media and Events Director Ersin Ozer; and Freestone Productions' Jacey Watson. OUTLAW PARTNERS PHOTO




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SECTION 2:
ENVIRONMENT &
OUTDOORS AND
HEALTH



The Golden Rule of Skiing pg. 19



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Loneliness, connection and social support pg. 26

Big Sky Resort to unveil new Swift Current lift on opening day

Fastest six-rider chairlift in North America ‘big evolution’ in the ski industry

BY BELLA BUTLER

BIG SKY – Amid Big Sky Resort’s era of capital innovation, new technology will shape visitors’ experience at the start of this winter season in the form of the fastest six-passenger chairlift in North America.

The highly anticipated Swift Current 6 chairlift is scheduled to carry skiers and riders up the mountain on opening day, Thanksgiving Day, for their first runs of the 2021-2022 season.

The lift, which replaces the old Swift Current, a detachable quad chair that served as one of the resort’s main base-area lifts since 1996, is perhaps the pinnacle of Big Sky Resort’s new projects.

“What Stephen [Kircher] is envisioning for this place and what’s already happened, it’s just a big evolution in the ski lift world,” said Eric Schwartz, lift maintenance director at Big Sky Resort. “...A lot of other ski areas and large ski conglomerates generally are always looking to get the cheapest possible ski lift they can. And here, we’ve decided for guests’ experience that we wanted to get the nicest ski lift available.”

And get it they did.

With a maximum speed of 6 meters per second, or 1,200 feet per minute, Swift Current 6 will join the fastest lifts in the country, marking a revolution for the ski lift industry as a whole.

Comparatively, the adjacent chairlift in the base area, Ramcharger 8, which was unveiled at the start of the 2018 winter season, travels at 5 mps, and the old Swifty operated at 4 mps.

“It’s going to feel noticeably different,” Schwartz said, adding that the ride on Swift Current 6 will be approximately four minutes faster than on the old lift.

“I always rode Swifty, but kind of just to get from point A to point B because it was such a long, cold ride,” Schwartz said. “Now, it’ll be a quick, warm ride, and I might be lapping Swifty more.”

As visitation increases at Big Sky Resort each year, the new Swift Current 6 lift will help alleviate bottlenecks in the base area, consistently moving 3,000 skiers uphill an hour, according to Stacie Mesuda, the resort’s public relations manager.

Ramcharger 8 is the continent’s first eight-pack chair and along with Swift Current 6, the two primary base lifts will move 6,600 people uphill from the base an hour.

Another new feature of Swift Current 6 is its 90-degree, contoured unload area. The new offload will spit riders out north in the direction of Jay Walk, eliminating scramble time at the top of the lift.

“I think it’s going to be a whole new world up there,” Schwartz said.

In addition to its speed, Swift Current 6 boasts a number of other amenities that are coming to define the

new age of large-resort skiing: wide, heated seats, an automatically unlocking bar, head and footrests, and a weatherproof bubble.

Schwartz, who can rattle off the mechanical wonders of the Doppelmayr lift off the top of his head, is also excited about the direct drive motor, a low-vibration, low-noise gearless motor that will increase the lift’s efficiency, a feature that complement’s the resort’s Forever Project, a mission to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

The back of each chair is adorned with wildlife photos by local photographers Charles Post, Patty Bauchman and Dale Evans. Mesuda said educational messaging about the Forever Project will overlay the photos.

Big Sky Resort also added 5 additional miles of snowmaking this year, stretching from the top of Swift Current 6 to the base area to broaden skiable acreage in the early season.

Swift Current 6 is scheduled to debut on Thanksgiving, Big Sky Resort’s opening day, and riders can celebrate with a special Swifty 6 brew made by MAP Brewing Company. Local DJs Jen Steele and Chance Lenay will kick off opening day with music starting at 8 a.m., and Big Sky Resort will be giving away Swift Current 6 swag.

SWIFT CURRENT 6 FACT SHEET

Swift Current 6 will :

- travel at a max speed of **6 meters/second**
 - transport **3,000 people/hour**
- deliver riders directly onto Jay Walk with a **90-degree, contour unload**

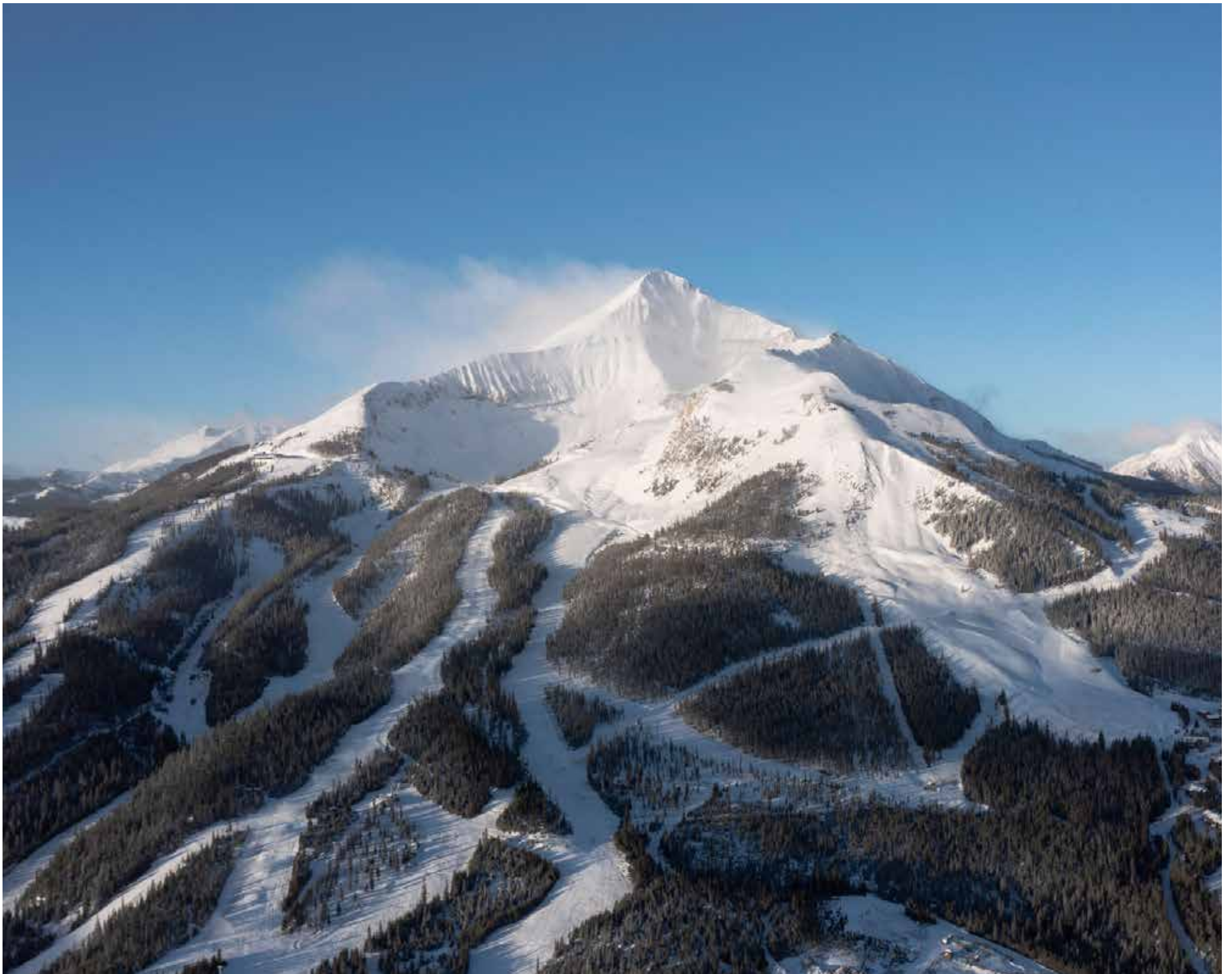
AMENITIES WILL INCLUDE:

Head and footrests

Weather proof bubbles

Heated seats





Snow blankets Lone Peak and Fan Mountain on Nov. 17, just eight days away from opening day at Big Sky Resort. PHOTO COURTESY OF BIG SKY RESORT

Big Sky Resort announces COVID-19 safety measures, operating updates for new season

BIG SKY RESORT

The resort is buzzing with activity as we prepare to welcome guests back for the 2021–2022 winter season on Thanksgiving Day. Like last year, our plans are adaptable, but we are taking steps toward a more normal operating plan for this coming winter, with reasonable health and safety protocols in place to ensure a safe and successful season. With major improvements across the entire resort, we're excited to show you what we've been working on.

On the mountain, you can expect chairlifts and the Lone Peak Tram to resume loading to full capacity, with no requirement to mask up outdoors. Restaurants and indoor spaces will also open to full capacity to serve our guests. While we are not currently requiring facial coverings indoors, we are requiring employees who are unvaccinated to mask up and strongly encourage everyone to mask up unless seated and eating or drinking.

Navigating our second season of operations with the threat of COVID-19 present, you can expect our teams to fully comply, and where possible, exceed the federal, state and local standards outlined for health and safety. Our workforce will be required to obtain a full vaccination or submit a weekly negative COVID test to work at our facilities in order to keep our guests, team members and the broader community safe.

While we're all eager to start the season and showcase our new projects; none of it is possible without the hard work from so many teammates this summer for which I'm forever grateful. As we approach the halfway point to our Big Sky 2025 vision, the resort experience is going to be better than ever and these improvements will have a lasting impact for years to come.

- Swift Current 6 construction is on schedule. The new, six-person, high-speed lift is in the certification process and will be ready to go for Opening Day.
- As a part of the Swift Current 6 project, major grading work around the base area will significantly improve skier flow.
- Five miles of new snowmaking along Mr. K will be a gamechanger for our early season ski experience.
- The Swifty terrain park will benefit from the new snowmaking system with all-new jump lines and features.
- The most extensive glade maintenance and tree cleanup ever has been completed this summer, significantly improving the ski experience in nearly all areas of the mountain.
- A brand-new workforce housing facility has been completed right here within walking distance to Mountain Village, with employees moving in now to begin the winter season.
- Finally, we're debuting the biggest set of hotel renovations in Big Sky history at the Summit Hotel and Huntley Lodge. Both hotels feature new, modern guest rooms and amenities, truly elevating the lodging offerings in Mountain Village.

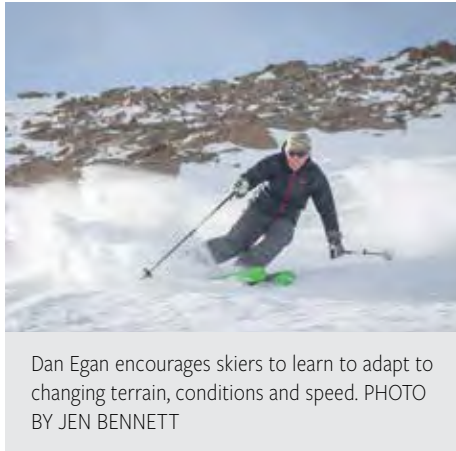
We're grateful to our guests, team members, and community for sharing another exciting season on Lone Mountain with us. We have many more projects in the pipeline, and I'm looking forward to sharing more about those soon.

–Troy Nedved
General Manager, Big Sky Resort

Ski Tips: The golden rule of skiing

BY DAN EGAN
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

With the new season upon us, it's a good time to review the golden rule of skiing which is "Ski the mountain, don't let the mountain ski you." To become a master of the mountain, learn to adapt to changing terrain, conditions and speed. Always remember that you are the boss. Changes in terrain, conditions and speed will expose flaws in a skier's technique. Skiing is a constant realignment of balance. Teach yourself to constantly deal with changing terrain and to trust your current ability to progress.



Dan Egan encourages skiers to learn to adapt to changing terrain, conditions and speed. PHOTO BY JEN BENNETT

Free skiing the mountain is no different. Find a pace that feels comfortable to you and begin and end your ski run at the same speed. Always make your first and last turns the best. The first turn will set up your confidence and rhythm for that set of turns. Making your last turn the best is an insurance policy against injury and laziness. Using this as a rule, you'll find it easier to ski at a constant speed with more control.

Once you can ski at a constant speed, start to ski changing terrain. Ski directly into a trail without stopping on top. If you need to stop, pick a spot 15 to 20 yards into the trail. This will provide an excellent opportunity for learning to adapt speed and technique to changing terrain. Discover the magic of entering a trail without stopping, turning and absorbing a knoll. Ski into and through an intersection in complete control and heads will turn as you fly away on a wide-open slope.

Make skiing fun by challenging yourself. For example, get off the lift ready to ski, boots buckled, pole straps on and head right off the lift and down to your favorite trail. See how many turns you can make in a certain section or try making 50 turns with the same radius and speed. Use the terrain and mix up slalom and giant slalom turns. Remind yourself that it's your mountain, you rule the school and anything goes if you so deem it!

Try this "Wedge to Race" drill to ignite your early season. The goal is to illustrate the similarities between a snowplow turn and a race turn. Find a gentle slope and start in a snowplow turn and progress to a race turn.

As you attempt this drill, remember to feel your downhill ski carve through every turn. Start skiing and turning in a wedge. Use knee angulation and make a few turns to warm up. Keep your upper body still and exert pressure at the front of your boot. As you progress to the third and fourth turn, make your wedge smaller each time by unweighting your uphill ski and bringing your skis closer together.

Continue making turns with your skis parallel. Now you have completed the transition from a wedge turn to a race turn. Practice doing this with grace and fluidity. You can now see how easy it is to make a good race carved turn and how each step is related.

This drill shows how knee angulation, edge pressure and independent leg action are used in all types of turns. With each turn you'll gain the confidence and the skills to ski the mountain with ease, grace and control. The more fluid you become, the easier it is to go from wedge to race. On the path to fluidity, you are getting closer to the Zone of Excellence.

Once you have a flow going, start to ski top to bottom nonstop. Doing this a few times daily gets my adrenaline pumping. Skiing over changing terrain and adapting while in motion is the best way to train your mind and body. Nothing can replace the experience of recovering your balance without stopping or making two sweeping turns around a corner and skiing the fall line through bumps non-stop. Mountains will become less intimidating, and skiers will begin to understand the fall lines and conditions that cover the trail. Small trouble spots will pass by without a second thought and, more importantly, confidence improves with ability.

Skiers who adapt to changing terrain, conditions and speed and remember the golden rule of skiing which is "Ski the mountain, don't let the mountain ski you," will enjoy more of what the mountain has to offer and ski terrain they never thought possible.

Extreme Skiing Pioneer, Dan Egan coaches and teaches at Big Sky Resort during the winter. His steep camps run Feb. 25-27, March 4-6 and March 11-13. His newest book, "Thirty Years in a White Haze" was released in March 2021 and is available at www.White-Haze.com.

Fight over U.S. wolf protections goes before federal judge

BY MATTHEW BROWN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BILLINGS – A U.S. government attorney urged a federal judge on Nov. 12 to uphold a decision from the waning days of the Trump administration that lifted protections for gray wolves across most of the country, as Republican-led states have sought to drive down wolf numbers through aggressive hunting and trapping.

Wildlife advocates argued that the state-sponsored hunts could quickly reverse the gray wolf's recovery over the past several decades in large areas of the West and Midwest. They want U.S. District Judge Jeffrey White in Oakland, California, to put wolves back under the legal shield of the Endangered Species Act, which is meant to protect animals from extinction.

Federal officials contend that wolves are resilient enough to bounce back even if their numbers drop sharply due to intensive hunting. They say protections are no longer warranted.

At stake is the future of a species whose recovery from near-extinction has been heralded as a historic conservation success. That recovery also has brought bitter blowback from hunters and farmers angered over wolf attacks on big game herds and livestock.

Friday's hearing focused on a much more arcane, legal issue: Were wolves properly classified under the endangered act prior to losing their protected status last year? A U.S. Justice Department attorney said they were not, because of changes to the act by Congress in 1978. That means the wolves at issue do not make up a valid "species" that is distinct from a smaller number of wolves not included in November's decision to lift protections by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Congress was very clear in the statute: If there is not that species, the service does not have the ability to regulate it," said Michael Eitel with the Justice Department's natural resources division.

Judge White questioned if the government's approach amounted to a "back door" way to remove protections. Eitel said in response that the wildlife service was "not trying to skirt its obligations" to wolf recovery, but attorneys for the wildlife groups insisted it was.

"They cannot take this shortcut," said Kristen Boyles with Earthjustice, representing Defenders of Wildlife and other groups. "One of the casualties of the Fish and Wildlife Service argument is that we are not here today talking about the key issues of what protections wolves need, where those protections are needed."

White did not issue an immediate ruling.

The lawsuit does not cover wolves in all or portions of six states in the northern U.S. Rocky Mountains, where the animals lost protections a decade ago. Federal officials in September said they would consider if those protections should be restored in western states in response to loosened hunting rules in Idaho and Montana. That could take a year or longer.

In Wisconsin, where hunters surpassed a state harvest quota last winter and killed 218 wolves in just four days, this season's hunt was recently put on hold by a state judge, two weeks before it was set to begin.

Conservatives on a state wildlife board had set Wisconsin's kill limit at 300 wolves, prompting a lawsuit from wildlife advocacy groups and a federal lawsuit from a half-dozen Chippewa tribes, which consider the wolf sacred. A state agency controlled by Democratic Gov. Tony Evers later took the unprecedented step of unilaterally reducing the kill limit to 130 wolves, openly defying the board.

Wolves once ranged most of the U.S. but were wiped out in most places by the 1930s under government-sponsored poisoning and trapping campaigns. A remnant population in the western Great Lakes region has since expanded to some 4,400 wolves in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

More than 2,000 wolves occupy six states in the Northern Rockies and Pacific Northwest after the animals from Canada were reintroduced in Idaho and Yellowstone National Park starting in 1995. Protections for wolves in the Rockies were lifted over the last decade and hunting of them is allowed.

However, wolves remain absent across most of their historical range. Wildlife advocates argue that continued protections are needed so they can continue to expand in California, Colorado, Oregon and other states.

Wyoming also allows wolf hunting, and officials are considering wolf hunting seasons in Michigan and Minnesota.

The Biden administration's defense of the removal of protections under Trump has angered environmentalists who hoped the election of the Democrat would shift U.S. policy on wolves.

Democratic and Republican administrations alike, going back to former President George W. Bush, have sought to remove or scale back federal wolf protections first enacted in 1974.

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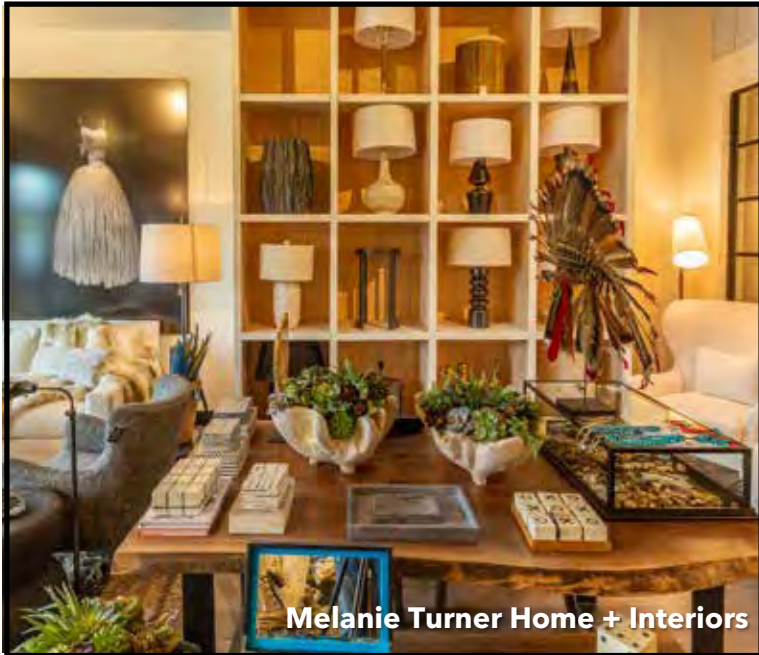
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A community of river guides copes with loss



BY REBECCA LAWTON

The Grand Canyon boating community — devoted to each other and to the Colorado River — was shocked to learn this fall that we'd lost two of our own.

Former river guides and rangers Mark O'Neill, 67, of Chimacum, Washington, and Kim Crumbo, 74, of Odgen, Utah, didn't return home from a Sept. 13-17 canoe-packing trip in Yellowstone National Park.

Then on Sept. 20, Mark's body and the boat were found on the shore of Shoshone Lake. He'd succumbed to hypothermia. Kim remains missing.

We who guided in the canyon with both men, sharing our intimate knowledge of the place with thousands of visitors, have spent many hours trying to make sense of the loss.

"Damn it," a fellow canyon guide, Jeffe Aronson, wrote me. "We live and love in a world of ghosts."

One way we're coping with grief is to share stories. Both men began guiding in the 1970s, going on to rack up some of the most extensive experience anyone can acquire. In the 1980s, both worked in the canyon as National Park Service river rangers.

Mark had already been a waterman all his life as surfer, lifeguard, skipper — basically "all things water," says his sister, Toni Kelly, a former Green and Colorado River guide and ranger.

Kim Crumbo ("Crumbo" to most) served two tours in Vietnam as a Navy SEAL. By spring 1971, he was home running rivers in Utah, a place, he once told me, he had wondered if he'd live to see again.

When I asked how he'd survived two tours, the second with a platoon known for the highest casualty rates in SEAL history, he shrugged. "I had to become the scariest guy out there."

"He's tough," my fellow Park Service river ranger, RuthAnn Stoner, said of Crumbo. "The toughest person I've ever met."

RuthAnn and river ranger Kim Johnson remember Crumbo's persistence on a Grand Canyon patrol where they found an injured peregrine falcon around River Mile 140. At the time, peregrine falcons were listed as endangered, with less than 30 breeding sites in

the canyon. The birds were just emerging from decline throughout Arizona and the West.

Crumbo offered to do as he'd done before — row his boat 26 miles downstream to Havasu Creek, hike out to Havasupai Village and call for a helicopter evacuation. But River Unit Supervisor Curt Sauer was already on inner-canyon patrol with a Park Service helicopter pilot, and when they saw a mirror signal they landed. After a heated back-and-forth, with Crumbo insisting that the falcon — starving, its wing broken — had to be "evacuated now," Crumbo prevailed. The falcon got its ride out, wearing a bandanna hood to keep it calm.

Later, Curt helped release the rehabilitated bird back into the wild, calling it a triumph that "wouldn't have happened without Crumbo."

"Crumbo just never gave up," as RuthAnn Stoner tells it. "That same season he was jumping out of helicopters to rescue people off the rocks below Crystal Rapids after one of the big rigs flipped." Rescues like that were all in a day's work for both brothers.

Mark's outstanding swiftwater rescue skills earned him awards for "courageous and professional" recovery efforts on flooding rivers and in remote forests. After leaving Grand Canyon, he continued his Park Service career in Olympic National Park, where he served 20 years until retiring in 2016.

Crumbo, too, dedicated 20 years to conservation work with the Park Service, then gave another 20 years to wilderness advocacy through the Rewilding Institute, Wildlands Network and other organizations, retiring in 2019. He also became known for his well-argued essays about climate resilience, the latest titled, "Hope in the Age of Humans."

While many of us have found it unfathomable that a lake could make ghosts of such men, consider the lake — 12 square miles of icy, unpredictable mountain water. At the time Mark and Kim were out on it, an early snowstorm blew in on 45-mph winds, causing Shoshone Lake to surge with waves at least 2 feet high. Any boater, regardless of experience, would have survived a capsizing in Shoshone's 48-degree Fahrenheit water for only 20 to 30 minutes.

These "two good men," as Curt Sauer describes them, gave their best to their families, the canyon and humanity. "Any stories we tell about them," he says, "are love stories, pure and simple."

Becca Lawton is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. A former river guide and ranger, she is writing a memoir about becoming one of the first women guides in Grand Canyon.

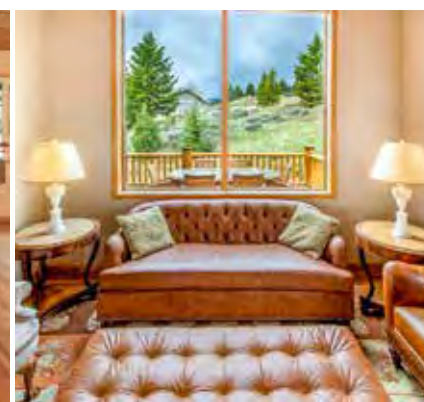
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THE NEW WEST

Packed audience hears experts discuss threats to famed Jackson Hole Grizzly 399, other bears



BY TODD WILKINSON
EBS ENVIRONMENTAL COLUMNIST

More than 1,000 viewers tuned in on Nov. 8 to watch a panel discussion about threats to world famous Jackson Hole Grizzly 399 and her cubs, the challenges facing grizzlies in general, and how controversial new laws in Montana are undermining the miraculous conservation success stories of grizzlies and wolves.

About half of the audience listened in live via Zoom and the rest on Facebook. Since that time, tens of thousands have watched a recording of the special Grizzly Bear Town Hall cohosted by Explore Big Sky's Editor-in-Chief Joseph T. O'Connor and Mountain Journal founder Todd Wilkinson.

The discussion generated several notable newsmaking insights all its own:

Globally iconic conservationist Dr. Jane Goodall, best known for her work studying chimpanzees and who says she is a huge fan of Grizzly 399, made a surprise appearance and noted how individual bears like 399 have transformed the way humans think about the animals.

Dr. Christopher Servheen, who recently retired after 35 years of overseeing grizzly bear recovery for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said he now has reservations about whether the three states of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho are actually up to the task of responsibly managing grizzlies if bears are delisted from federal protection.

Listen to what Servheen says in the panel discussion. He also noted that the greatest threat facing wildlife is misguided development now proliferating on private land in the region and rapidly rising numbers of people—recreationists—inundating grizzly habitat on public lands.

Dr. Jodi Hilty, president and senior scientist with the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, explained how the communities of Canmore and Banff,

Alberta, located in the Bow River Valley at the front doorstep of Banff National Park, have adopted policies that have reduced human-bear conflicts.

Canmore mandates bear-proof containers, outlaws sloppy garbage behavior among citizens, issues harsh fines to back up the regulations and, in addition, there's a social atmosphere of admonition for those who break the rules. The communities also have imposed requirements that dogs be on leashes because domestic canines not only displace wildlife but heighten the possibility of a negative encounter with bears, wolves and cougars, she said.

Afterward, in a flurry of emails exchanged between panel participants and citizens, many see the Canadian model as a potential alternative to loose-garbage storage regulations that abound throughout the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem both at the county and municipal levels.

Renowned American nature photographer Thomas D. Mangelsen, who has made his home in Jackson Hole for nearly five decades, claimed that a recent attempt to capture and radio collar Grizzly 399 and her cubs was botched by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other collaborating agencies. Two cubs of 399 were indeed captured and radio collared. Mangelsen said the intervention put the bear family in potentially greater peril, but Servheen said knowing where the bears are located enables agencies to better protect them, especially from getting in trouble by deepening their taste for human and unnatural foods. The week of Nov 8, 399 and her cubs strolled into the town of Jackson, ambling through neighborhoods where trash was not secured, and the bears were gently escorted back toward surrounding wildlands.

In all, the discussion was lively, passionate and informative, and we hope to keep these important discussions alive.

To watch the full recorded conversation, entitled "Town Hall Series: Living in Bear Country," visit the Explore Big Sky YouTube page.

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 Mangelsen, about grizzly bear 399.



The dangerous navigations of Grizzly Mother 399 and cubs serves as a backdrop for larger questions surrounding the future of grizzlies. Visit mangelsen.com to see more photos of 399. PHOTO BY THOMAS D. MANGELSEN.



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LET'S TALK MENTAL HEALTH

Loneliness, connection and social support

BY SHANNON STEELE

EBS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COLUMNIST

"You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it." – Grace Lee Boggs

The COVID-19 pandemic has done a job on all of us. We have been and are still faced with very personal fears and losses and shared common anxieties and concerns. Many in Big Sky still feel intense isolation and continue to struggle with mental health and behavioral impacts, including unhealthy levels of drinking and substance abuse.

Given the unique nature of resort towns and the Mountain West, the impact may be heightened and is largely unknown due to the community's transient nature. The good news is that our community is mobilizing support.

In key ways, the last 20 months in Big Sky have exposed unique challenges created by the isolation of vast open spaces and disrupted social and family networks. Many of us are separated from our core support systems and our social circles here are transitory and shallow. It's satisfying when we are relaxed, working and socializing together, but the pressures of the pandemic drove us all inward and inside, struggling with our own sense of self, safety and risk that is still present.

Decades of research show that social ties and social support are positively related to mental health, physical health and longevity. Both act as a buffer for the harmful physical and mental health impacts of stress. We are hardwired to crave oxytocin, the bonding hormone released when holding hands, hugging, during intimacy and even petting an animal. Connection is a basic human need for psychological growth and development.

Studies of previous disease outbreaks showed that impacted populations experienced a sense of isolation arising from the loss of a usual routine and contact with others, along with elevated levels of stress, fear, low mood, irritability, frustration and boredom. Coupled with the unique nature of our community, the mental health risks to all of us here are high.

And then another unique thing happened, disrupting our sense of safety and control. While much of the country was settling into levels of lock-down, in May 2020, Montana opened to tourism. Many came here precisely for safety reasons, permitted by remote work and school. Big Sky and Yellowstone were busier than ever while lacking the personnel resources to function "normally."

A Big Sky employee I spoke to reported feeling overwhelmed by customers seemingly oblivious to the ongoing pandemic, having to act as mask police, and stressing out about their own safety. Being a type of essential worker in that circumstance created all kinds of heightened anxiety.

Things are different now as we prepare for the influx of winter vacationers and seasonal residents. But it still doesn't feel normal. Many of us are experiencing social anxiety that we haven't known before. Are we still at risk?

In fact, U.S. Census Bureau data shows that 30 percent of Americans now show symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder. This is a huge jump from before the pandemic. We are moving forward but we are not done.

Fortunately, in Big Sky, work to expand mental and behavioral health awareness, access, and availability was well underway before COVID-19 came along. Launched last year, Big Sky's Behavioral Health Coalition was formed in response to research showing that community members were unaware of available resources and that resources—from social support to treatment—were, in fact, limited.

A few new resources are now in place, with more in the works, and the coalition is actively engaging community members to mobilize a Community Support Network. These are community members that have deep insight into the needs, strengths, culture, barriers and challenges of different groups within Big Sky (i.e. workforce, youth, ages 60-plus, Latino populations, etc.).

The network acts as a resource navigator to provide multiple entry points for community members to seek support and ensure needs are being met. This means assisting individuals in accessing healthcare services, community wellness programs or social support services, pointing them in the right direction and providing them with enough information to ensure successful access. If you are interested in learning more or want to become a wellness navigator, email shannon.steele@yellowstoneclub.com.

Shannon Steele is the behavioral health program officer at the Yellowstone Club Community Foundation, and values a collaborative and community-centered approach to mental/behavioral health and wellness. She has a background in mind-body wellness and community health, and is also a certified yoga instructor and active volunteer. Community, wellness and the outdoors have always been pillars in Shannon's life.

Meet a few of Big Sky's Wellness Navigators



Jeremy Harder

Formally the Fourth Grade Head Learner at Big Sky School District since 2000, he recently took over the role of Middle School/High School Lead Facilitator of Creativity and Innovation. When not in the classroom, he coaches various athletic teams, directs a summer camp and hopes to continue to advocate for Big Sky's youth and the larger community through this platform.



Gladys Guerrero-Wangsgard

Gladys was born and raised in Jalisco, Mexico. She had been in Big Sky for two years and is co-owner of Beehive Cleaning and Maintenance services with her husband Travis Wangsgard. Her background is in politics and public management since 2011. Holding a degree in communication sciences, she believes in equal human rights and is committed with the 2030 Agenda. Her interest as a community navigator is to advocate for the people that need it, particularly to the Latinx population in Big Sky.



Shaun McManus

Shaun first moved to Big Sky in 2010 after graduating from Carroll College and stayed for two years bartending at nights and snowboarding during the day. He moved back from Bozeman two years ago as his career was focused in Big Sky and he loved the ski town life. Shaun currently serves on the board for Big Sky Hockey and Skating Association and runs the 3-on-3 hockey league on Tuesday nights. He has been sober for over five years and has had his battles with addiction and depression. "We all have our own demons and darkness," Shaun says. "I know how hard things can be, but I also know how beautiful life can be so I'm happy to be a resource to those struggling."



Andy Nagel

Andy's first winter season in Big Sky was in 2008/2009, and he spent nearly a decade in a variety of adventure tourism destinations before returning in November 2019. He is passionate about enhancing people's lives through wilderness experiences and spends most of his time working and recreating at Big Sky Resort. Andy is a volunteer for search and rescue and recently joined the behavioral health coalition's Wellness Navigator program. "At one point, feeling rock bottom brought me very close to committing suicide which is why mental health and wellness is very important to me ...The sense of urgency we need to move and think at to help others navigate their way to light at the end of the tunnel needs to start now!"

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‘Montana Story’

Filmed in Paradise Valley, the Montana stage lends tone to new production

BY BRIAN D’AMBROSIO
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

BOZEMAN – Directors Scott McGehee and David Siegel conceptualized and crafted a screenplay about a Montana family in deep conflict without ever having stepped foot inside the state. Their long-overdue introduction took place in September 2020, when they were scouting locations for the adaptation of “Montana Story.”

Fourteen months later, the California natives and current New York residents look back on their entire production experience with a mixture of excitement and appreciation, comparing themselves to a pair of sponges who soaked up the greatness that was all around them in Montana.

McGehee and Siegel said the humility of Montana is on full display in the forceful intensity of “Montana Story” — from the drama, emotion and rapidly shifting variables bound up in its geography, to the lockstep professionalism of the local crews, to the pure, non-conforming, rebellious spirit of its always-a-topic-of-conversation weather.

“We wrote the script when the lockdown in New York was intense and hopping on a plane and going to Montana (in mid-September 2020 to scout) was an adventure at that point,” Siegel said. “We hadn’t done anything like that for months. Montana exceeded our expectations as far as beauty, and the local crew was fantastic, and there was nothing disappointing about Montana, and we loved being out there.”

Exploring the divide that can unhinge even the most reliable relationships, “Montana Story,” shot on 35mm, depicts the struggles of a son called Cal (Owen Teague), who returns to the 200-acre ranch of his upbringing to tend to the end-of-life issues besieging his abusive, unprincipled father.

As the old man lays incapacitated from a brutal stroke, brain damaged and a few breaths close to death, Cal struggles to pay off the man’s debts while the family estate dissolves into misfortune and bankruptcy. A subplot involves the mercy killing of a 25-year-old horse called Mr. T and the drive Cal must take with his begrudging older sister, Erin (Haley Lu Richardson), to pick up a horse trailer in Browning. Tension between brother and sister carries weighty implications, and all the stickier elements of their childhood, from death, loyalty and the specter of familial betrayal, haunt the film.

Pandemic’s influence

The film was written at the height of COVID-19 uncertainty and crafted and revised at a period in the U.S. teeming with tension and violence, influences that the directors say permeated into the decidedly somber view of the film.

“When the lockdown occurred, we were feeling a lot of different things,” David said. “There was the election, the lockdown, the virus—a lot of pain caused across the country and it stewed those feelings for the story for ‘Montana Story.’ We were writing and self-isolating, doing it over the phone and Zoom and along with executive producer Mike Spreter, the three of us kicking around ideas for the story, writing the script in separate places ...

“We [Scott and I] both grew up in California, and were familiar with large expanses of land, et cetera, and we knew we

both wanted to make a film in Montana, where we could use a small cast, and where the virus load was low. At that point (of writing the screenplay,) Montana was one of the least-affected areas, and by September that had changed.”

Montana’s lawless stage

The landscape of Montana crystallizes the somber shades of the plot. The principal shooting location of the film takes place on a ranch south of Livingston in Paradise Valley. Secondary locations include downtown Livingston, Ringling (which fills in as Browning) and the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport. When the rig that they just purchased breaks down on their return home from Browning, the vast panoramas only deepen the perception of Cal and Erin’s sense of spiritual homelessness.

Poignancy resides at the surface, but it is darkness and despair that provide the most formidable impression. Among other lasting visual imprints, shots of Erin on horseback with the snow-capped mountains in the distance are scrumptious; closing drone shots of unencumbered horses allegorical. Even the most pedestrian moments throughout, such as Cal lighting up a smoke on the front porch steps of the ranch house, still manage to evoke a hushed, contemplative tableau that’s suggestive and assured, all in equal measure.

Two things about the approximately 28 days of filming in Montana stick with David—the nutty, at times powerfully cold weather, and the local crew’s commitment to slog through it all, undeterred.

“The local crew took the idea of layers to a whole new level,” said Siegel. “We arrived the third week of October and stayed to the end of November, basically. We were told that it was the worst snowstorm in Montana in October ever. We had to scramble the schedule and the weather that we got in the movie, and we are really happy for it. ... Though we knew that we couldn’t have had it turned into dead winter while we were here, or else we were not going to be able to shoot.”

Thanks to a wide range of weather patterns, the directors had the opportunity to accept and embrace a type of creative lawlessness. When the production began filming, the weather was invitingly sunny, with skies of confident blue overstuffed with puffy, benign-looking clouds.

“Everywhere you looked, it was one beautiful sunlit vista after the next,”



Shot on 35 mm film, “Montana Story” is a somber tale about family strife set in Montana’s wide open spaces. PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTANA STORY



Actors Owen Teague (left) and Haley Lu Richardson (right) act on the set of "Montana Story," a new film shot in Paradise Valley south of Livingston. PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTANA STORY

Siegel said. "But then shooting was hit hard by snow."

Local crews, however, handled the melodramatic shift of tangled temperatures with characteristic aplomb.

"We heard of other people who had had good experiences with Montana crews," McGehee said, "and it proved to be true for us as well. We had a lovely local crew, flexible, competent, and that had an attitude with an impossible ability to withstand cold temperatures with no problem. We were bundled, freezing, while the grip and electric crew showed up with a pair of jeans and their Carhartts, and that seemed to be enough. We knew we had a very tight window to do the film before the bad weather was going to come."

Though it pressured the production, the significant snowfall of October 2020—punctuated by more than two feet of snow amassed uninterruptedly for 48 hours at some elevations—ultimately lent one more layer of transient, ambient texture to "Montana Story."

"There were three major snowstorms, two of which were blistering," McGehee said. "In a way, that made for good images for the movie. There is snow in the film and non-snow in the film. In the end, we had wide open vistas that we got to shoot in, and we will never forget some of these images."

Local ties

Montanans may enjoy the film's connection to familiar details. Cal, for example, who in the film has left the state and works as an engineer in Cheyenne, Wyoming, comes back to Montana in the company of a mandolin. As it turned out, the mandolin that you see on the screen is owned by actor Owen Teague, and the instrument made its way into the script and score after it was learned to have been manufactured by a luthier with Montana ties.

The film crew also spent three days shooting in Ringling, a town of approximately 35 residents, about 50 miles north of Livingston, even setting up base camp at the Ringling Bar.

Because of COVID-19 concerns, the directors were forced to limit the cast of the film to just eight characters in the movie total. Three Montana folks, though, found their way into the final production as day players.

"John Ludin, who runs the Ellen Theatre in Bozeman, he has a small part in the movie," McGehee said. "He auditioned and we liked it. We didn't know the connection to the Ellen Theatre until we got to know him a bit. He plays an unscrupulous family lawyer. Rob Story doesn't have a speaking part, but kind of a major part as the father who is in a coma throughout the movie, lying in bed. It is quite challenging to be as still and quiet for the long periods he had to do that for. Kate Britton played the real estate agent who is brought around to see about selling the ranch."

The directors noted their appreciation of the "attractive" Montana film tax credit, "a big factor" that enabled the production of such "a small movie."

Montana's MEDIA Act, passed during the 2019 legislative session, gives film and media companies a 20 percent tax credit on production spendings. Since its passing, the law has carved out a growing film economy in the Treasure State, attracting productions the likes of Paramount's "Yellowstone."

"We did not have tons of money," Siegel said, "and [the film tax credit] makes the movie affordable. As much as we were committed to Montana on a creative level, I'm not certain that we would have allowed ourselves to follow up on it, or that we would have been able to commit to it, without the tax credit."

While the directors' interest in Montana at first was abstract, perhaps even a bit too romantically inclined, it didn't take much time on the ground for the relationship to get deeply personal, and something about the experience impacted them harder than they had anticipated.

"We had imagined a Montana based on our ideas of lore and what we had grown up with in the West," McGehee said. "Though neither of us had been to it, we planned to transpose these feelings into a colder version of that lore. We were trying to get a feel of the issues around the land, of who lives in Montana, and those things in relation to one another. We knew of its association with images of natural beauty. It exceeded our expectations."

"Montana Story" screens at the Ellen Theatre Sunday, Nov. 21 at 6 p.m.

Brian D'Ambrosio is a writer and licensed private investigator living in Helena, Montana. He may be reached at dambrosiobrian@hotmail.com

BIG SKY EVENTS CALENDAR

Friday, Nov. 19 – Thursday, Dec. 2

If your event falls between Dec. 3 and Dec. 16, please submit it by Nov. 24 by emailing media@outlaw.partners

Friday, Nov. 19

2021 Big Sky Coat Drive

The Wilson Hotel, all day

Get help with your power bills!

Big Sky Community Food Bank, 11 a.m.

Live Music: Bridget O'Brien

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 20

The Santa Experience

Peets Hill/Burke Park, 10 a.m.

Brahms Symphony No. 2

Wilson Auditorium, Bozeman, 7:30 p.m.

Live Music: Hellbound Glory

Stacey's Bar and Steakhouse, 9 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 21

The Santa Experience

Peets Hill/Burke Park, 10 a.m.

Live Music: Desperate Electric

Bozeman Hot Springs, 7 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 22

Thanksgiving in a Bag

Big Sky Community Food Bank, 2 p.m.

Trivia Night

Pinky G's Pizzeria, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 25 (Thanksgiving Day)

Big Sky Resort Opening Day

Big Sky Resort, 9 a.m.

15th Annual Huffing for Stuffing

Museum of the Rockies, 8 a.m.

12th Annual Turkey Trot

Big Sky Town Center, 9 a.m.

Friday, Nov. 26

Live Music: The Damn Duo

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 27

Gallatin Valley Farmers Market Holiday Edition

Gallatin County Fairgrounds, 9 a.m.

Season Kickoff Party: Ticket Sauce

Tips Up, 9 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 28

Live music: Ticket Sauce

Bozeman Hot Springs, 7 p.m.

30th Annual Production of "The Nutcracker"

The Wilson Auditorium, 2 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 29

Second annual One Warm Coat Drive drop off

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Montana Properties, Nov. 29-Dec. 15

Thursday, Dec. 2

Bozeman Doc Series: Come see the world

The Emerson Center, 7 p.m.

Live Music: Garrett Kuntz

Bozeman Hot Springs, 7 p.m.

Featured Event: Big Sky Ski Education Foundation's 12th Annual Turkey Trot

Join the Big Sky Ski Education Foundation for its 12th Annual Turkey Trot 5K to get a workout in before stuffing your belly with a Thanksgiving feast. Presented by Authentic Inc. and Ressler Cadillac, all proceeds will help BSSEF better serve its athletes,



PHOTO BY DAVE PECUNIES

families and community. Race entry includes a t-shirt and an event participation medal. Registration and check-in will begin on Nov. 24 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the BSSEF office or on Nov. 25 at 7:30 a.m. at the Fire Pit Park. The Race will begin at 9 a.m.

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WMPAC announces the 2022 winter season

WARREN MILLER PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

The Warren Miller Performing Arts Center opens its doors for its ninth winter season this year encouraging all Big Sky locals to come see a show. Discounted ticket packages for the upcoming lineup of shows are on sale Nov. 15 until Dec. 1, when single tickets go on sale.

WMPAC's ninth winter season features a combination of favorite returning performers and new talent. The massively popular outdoor concert "In a Landscape: Classical Music in the Wild" will return with renowned pianist Hunter Noack. "That was one of the coolest outdoor events I've ever been part of," said Big Sky local Carly Miron. "It just doesn't get any better than that." Over the weekend of Jan. 22-23, Noack will tow a Steinway grand piano to the middle of the Big Sky Resort golf course to play classical piano pieces while audience members, equipped with headphones, explore the landscape by snowshoe, cross-country ski, and more.

Another returning interactive experience is Beyond the Fourth Wall, a reimagination and extension of the escape room-style game from last winter. "Last year we sold out so quickly that we doubled its run, and then realized there was enough demand for us to extend it the entire season," said Executive Director of WMPAC John Zirkle. Pods of up to 12 people will have the theater to themselves for the night, with teams this year competing against one another to get to the center of a maze.

Audiences can also see traditional stage performances, too. WMPAC's season opens on Dec. 15 with a performance of holiday and Christmas songs by Maddie Poppe, winner of season 16 of American Idol. She's followed on



Dec. 27-28 by Black Magic, which, despite its name, is not a magic show. Instead, it's a celebration of Black movement and history, featuring some of the best street dancers in the country today, including Quentin Robinson, founder of Missoula-based non-profit Movements 4 Movements, and Jon Boogz, whose dance artistry and activism was recently featured in the Netflix documentary "Move."

The theater will also host Zimbabwean a cappella singing group Nobuntu, the Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged, which is a comedic mash-up of all 37 plays of Shakespeare crammed into 97 minutes, the return of Lightwire Theater, and the legendary sketch comedy group Second City, plus a night of standup from Roy Wood Jr. and Helen Hong. To close the season, James Sewell Ballet returns with a project called "Earth Tomes," featuring live singers performing with the dancers.

In keeping with the policies of other performing arts centers around the country, WMPAC will have COVID procedures and safety measures in place consistent with local school district policies and CDC guidelines. Guests will be asked at the door to show either a negative COVID test result within 72 hours of the show or proof of vaccination. In preparation for the season, ticket holders are encouraged to download and use the MyBindle app to facilitate the entry process. "We are thrilled to be opening the theater to full capacity this winter, and we want to ensure that everybody feels safe in the theater when they come see a show," Zirkle said.

The entire Winter Season lineup is available on warrenmillerpac.org beginning Nov. 15.



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Making it in Big Sky: Centre Sky Architecture

BY MIRA BRODY

BIG SKY – Centre Sky Architecture remembers a Big Sky before the Yellowstone Club and Spanish Peaks Mountain Club—that’s because they were some of the firm’s first projects in the area. Today, they work on projects across the Rocky Mountain West, with 20 employees across Montana, Utah and Colorado, designing custom, high-end residential, ranch and resort hospitality projects.

Explore Big Sky spoke with Jamie Daugaard, CSA’s principal architect and founder. Daugaard arrived in Big Sky with his family in 2003 and opened an office to provide architecture services to big sky country. CSA’s team understands the passion residents have for the area and they share that passion in the work they do for the community as they shape the narrative of Big Sky.

The following answers have been edited for brevity.

Explore Big Sky: *Tell me about yourself and the history of Centre Sky Architecture?*

Jamie Daugaard: In November of 2003 my family and I moved to Big Sky from Colorado and opened our first office in the “Blue Mall” of the Westfork Meadows Shopping Center, eventually relocating to our current office in the RJS Tower Building in Town Center. At the time, Big Sky was much smaller and the private clubs on the mountain were just forming. CSA’s first projects in Big Sky were YC171 (Yellowstone Club), Tuscan Farm (Big EZ) [and] Schultz Homestead (Spanish Peaks).

From there we continued to grow, as Big Sky was. We were able to add more team members and expand our architectural services. When the crash of 2008 happened everything in Big Sky changed for the next couple of years. During this time, architecture, construction and development was slow to say the least. By 2009, almost all of our projects went on hold, except one major project located in Whitefish called Great Northern Lodge. To this day, this is still one of our most recognizable projects.

EBS: *How/when did you become involved with CSA?*

J.D.: I am the Principal Architect of CSA. I formed Centre Sky in October of 1998, 23 years ago. Our first big project was a large ranch development in a remote area of Colorado. That project really got CSA off the ground and we just grew from there. Currently, Centre Sky Architecture works across the Rocky Mountain West. We design custom high-end residential, ranch and resort hospitality projects.

EBS: *How has the company grown as the community has?*

J.D.: CSA has expanded from one office in Big Sky’s Town Center to include offices in Bozeman, Park City and Telluride! We have been involved in projects throughout Big Sky including the Gallatin Valley, Meadow Village, and all over the mountain including the private clubs. We worked with Boyne on the Big Sky Resort remodel. We are proud to be a part of so many great projects around Big Sky and helping to create the fabric of Big Sky.



Jamie Daugaard is Centre Sky Architecture’s principal architect and founder. Daugaard arrived in Big Sky with his family in 2003 and opened an office to provide architecture services to big sky country. PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMIE DAUGAARD

“ We want to be a part of the development and the narrative of Big Sky. ”

– Jamie Daugaard, founder & principal architect,
Centre Sky Architecture

EBS: *Tell me about the different services you provide?*

J.D.: We specialize in residential and ranch architecture, but we also have a history with resort and commercial projects. The fun part is every project is so different. Whether we are working with a family on a custom residential home or a developer group on a commercial property – the needs and priorities are different. That’s what makes architecture so fresh and unique! We learn about our client and turn their ideas and vision into a living space. ...

We provide typical architectural services, but we take it a step further. We do site reviews with clients while they are in their due diligence phase. We have started to help clients procure lots to purchase. Recently, we have had several clients come to us without land and asked for our help in choosing a lot. We will spend time with them studying and comparing different lots to help them and their realtor decide which has the best potential for designing and building their future home.

EBS: *What is the best part of working at Centre Sky Architecture?*

J.D.: Our team and our clients. The knowledge our team members have is amazing. Getting to collaborate with the CSA team members makes me a better architect. The architectural process brings delight to our clients. We are lucky to have great clients who want to interact with us during the design. And we are starting to get repeat clients! Over the years, people we have worked with in the past have started new projects to accommodate their changing family needs and we get to design for them again.

EBS: *What sets you apart from other local architecture businesses?*

J.D.: Our team and our process. We are local, our employees live in these mountain towns and are passionate about this area and the landscape. We want to be a part of the development and the narrative of Big Sky. Our process through design, cost exercises, client inclusion, implementation of drawings into construction, and our creativity all set us apart from other architecture firms. We are very involved in not only the design phases, but the construction phases as well.

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

J.D.: ‘Here is your first dollar, now it’s up to you’—from my dad. He gave me a start but taught me that Centre Sky Architecture would be what I make it. Owning a business is rewarding and difficult, especially with the challenges of a resort town. Looking back we have contributed, adapted, and grown in Big Sky. And we are proud of that!

EBS: *Anything else you would like to add?*

J.D.: We are lucky we get to do what we love, and it has allowed us to make a life here in Big Sky. We have great client base spread throughout this community, whether it is Boyne with Big Sky Ski Resort, Yellowstone Development, Lone Mountain Land, or private individuals.

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Altitude Control Technology

Mountain living without the altitude sickness

BY MIRA BRODY
SPONSORED CONTENT

BIG SKY – The imposing outline of Lone Mountain is framed in your living room window, shrouded in a blanket of white. While strikingly beautiful and home to an abundance of recreational activities, there is one major setback to mountain living—the adverse effects of altitude sickness.

Luckily, Altitude Control Technology, the leading experts in in-home oxygen control in the Rocky Mountains, has found a scientific solution so you spend less time recovering during your vacation and more time enjoying it.

There’s nothing worse than watching your friends and family gearing up for a fun day on the slopes when you don’t feel your best. Altitude sickness occurs at high altitudes where oxygen is thinner and can cause fatigue, sleeplessness, headaches and dizziness. In fact, at 9,000 feet, there is 30 percent less oxygen than there is at sea level. To recover as the body adjusts to Big Sky’s high-mountain lifestyle, it often takes days of rest.

“It’s a solvable problem,” says Bill Sinclair, who owns Altitude Control Technology with his business partner, Kyle Bassett. “We’re not talking about moment-changing stuff, we’re talking about a life-changing solution.”

Clients across the country, such as the U.S. Air Force Academy and the Smithsonian Museum, trust Altitude Control Technology’s systems because they’re based in science. The system consists of air units stored in a mechanical area, a high performance controller for monitoring the space and controlling the equipment, a touchscreen control pad and a small wall port through which the oxygen is delivered.

As weather and temperatures change at altitude, so do the oxygen levels, and any firefighter can tell you pumping too much oxygen into a room can warrant a fire hazard. The Altitude Control Technology system adjusts accordingly so you can set it and forget it without worrying. It can even be adjusted remotely from your phone as you arrive to Montana so your living space feels as though you are 7-8,000 feet lower in elevation by the time you reach your home, preparing you for a good night’s sleep.

“Our system is actually accounting for those changes in pressure to deliver the right amount of oxygen in an equalized environment,” says Sinclair. “These issues are grounded in science and were not just spraying oxygen into a room.”



Do away with the adverse effects of altitude sickness and enjoy your time in the mountains with Altitude Control Technology. PHOTO COURTESY OF ALTITUDE CONTROL TECHNOLOGY

Since your body will benefit from oxygen absorption overnight, these systems are most effective in bedrooms, but some homeowners will also install one in their home office, depending on where you benefit most from renewed energy. It requires minimal construction and does not disrupt the aesthetics of your home.

“You wouldn’t consider living in Phoenix, [Arizona] without air conditioning,” says Sinclair. “Why would you move to Big Sky without oxygen?”

You’ve made an investment in your home in Big Sky. Allow your mountain living to reach its full potential of enjoyment by stopping altitude sickness from getting in the way. This is your time—make it count.

Visit altitudect.com for more information and to change your idea of what mountain living is today.



Altitude Control Technology systems consist of air units stored in a mechanical area, a high performance controller for monitoring the space and controlling the equipment, a touchscreen control pad and a small wall port through which the oxygen is delivered. RENDERING COURTESY OF ALTITUDE CONTROL TECHNOLOGY

Enjoying the Ride: What are you thankful for this Thanksgiving?



BY BENJAMIN SPIKER
EBS CONTRIBUTOR

Personally, Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday of the year. I'm a big fan of gathering with friends and family, frying or smoking a couple of turkeys, watching football and generally enjoying the relaxation and fun that comes with a shared feast. Inevitably, the question always comes up in some way or another, "What are you thankful for this Thanksgiving?" The answers vary, but typically I hear responses including my family, my health,

the bountiful food. Ultimately, it all seems to boil down to, fundamentally, a sense of security and stability for myself and my family.

Today, in most households, the idea of a bountiful harvest—the centerpiece of Thanksgiving—is not a reference to the actual farming and harvesting of securing food for the winter but instead represents the financial security and stability to afford and provide for the gathering of family and friends.

To that end when the question is posed, "What are you thankful for this Thanksgiving?" take the time to consider what got you where you are. If you are feeling the sense of security and stability of your own personal harvest, share with loved ones lessons you may have learned over the years. Ask yourself, what are some of the best and worst decisions I've made to get me to this point? Are there things I know now that can be passed on to future generations? What can I do to continue to grow and secure my family's bountiful harvest for the future?

Putting on my financial advisor hat, I think in terms of building wealth and the steps needed to get to that point of financial security and stability. Do I save enough? Am I invested properly? Am I careful when it comes to debt? What protections have I built into my plan for my family's continued security? Are my goals realistic and achievable? What do I need to do to make those goals realistic and achievable? Understanding your answers to these questions can certainly take you one step closer to your sense of security and stability.

Take the time this Thanksgiving to understand and celebrate your bountiful harvest and sit back and Enjoy the Ride!

Benjamin D. Spiker is the Co-Founder and Managing Director of Shore to Summit Wealth Management. His wealth management career spans more than 22 years and he currently works and lives in Annapolis, MD with his wife, two sons and daughter.

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Clark's nutcracker // *Nucifraga columbiana*

DID YOU KNOW?

The Clark's nutcracker has a unique pouch under its tongue used to carry seeds long distances. The nutcracker collects seeds from pine trees and carries them away to hide for later use.

This bird hides thousands of seeds each year, and studies have shown that they can remember where they have hidden nearly all of their seeds.

The Clark's nutcracker is one of the only members of the crow family where the male incubates the eggs.

Local declines in Clark's nutcracker populations may be due to a pine beetle epidemic and the arrival of white pine blister rust, both of which kill the whitebark pines that many nutcrackers depend on.

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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.

Put your palate where your mouth is



BY SCOTT MECHURA
EBS FOOD COLUMNIST

The average grocery store has 82,000 items. That's a massive amount of food and products when you really think about it. And many of those products you see lining the shelves are so basic and—let's be honest, boring—that we take them for granted.

But even the tritest foods go through a rigorous process to get just the right placement on your local shelf.

After a products conception, it undergoes several phases of research and development. Many of these phases include taste panels and test groups.

I was part of one such phase last week when I was invited to Montana State University's Gallatin College to be a part of a taste panel, or sensory evaluation, for Sumedha Gard, a graduate student in the MSU Food Product Development Lab.

On the surface, taste testing anything is beyond fun, at least for a chef it is. But there's also a deeper dive into any number of things; from ingredient make-up to what the desired demographic is. All of that determines much of the success of the product.

Gard is developing a smoothie premix made of novel Montana berries such as serviceberry and currant. While this may seem less interesting than going to the dentist, it was a chance to nerd out with peers and colleagues and really dissect, in this case, just what makes a good smoothie good.

Imagine a chef, four culinary instructors and a Ph.D. of food development (no, not walk into a bar) talking about berry smoothies for an hour and 15 minutes.

I sat in with the rest of the culinary instructors from the program as we first independently then collectively went through the modality of 10 different samples, with one blind commercial smoothie thrown in the mix for some perspective and reference.

We first mapped these 10 samples on our own. Mapping is the process of organizing things inside an empty square or rectangle box for the purpose of comparing that box to other boxes to see patterns, similarities and differences.

But here's the interesting part to this empty sheet of paper: There is no uniform or standard for where you place them in the box, or what your individual criteria are for why you place them where you do. The only thing you must do is make written notes so when they are all collectively compared for differences and similarities, there is some explanation behind each person's thought process.

We touched on bliss point, something I've written about before; texture; flavor; ingredients; color; mouthfeel; and on and on. After the tasting, we took off our chef and instructor hats and put on our consumer hats. What a chef may believe to be the ultimate smoothie may be mildly interesting at best for the average consumer.

Confusing, I know.

This is just a simple smoothie, and Gard and her instructor, Dr. Wan-Yuan Kuo, have the task of digesting all our notes, all our discussion and each of our individual maps to decipher commonality.

It's as if someone told you to analyze 10 vehicles on what you believe you like, and then what another driver might like, with no parameters as to what makes any given vehicle better or worse to you.

And this was only one step of many in a long process. For a smoothie.

But this is literally how the sausage is made. The next time you are in the grocery store and grab a jar of pickle relish without thinking about it, think about it.

Modality.

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.

American Life in Poetry

BY KWAME DAWES

Sometimes “dream poems” give an account of the strange revelations of our subconscious, and sometimes, like here, the “dream poem” is the poem of wishes and hope, expressing a fantasy of a certain longing. A.D. Lauren-Abunassar’s poem, “Dream in Which My Body Is a Snow Storm”, imagines a world in which the “bad” outcomes are upended by a kind of magical hope; and here we have a lesson in the innocent pleasure of wishing for the good by the force of imagining.

Dream in Which My Body Is a Snow Storm

BY A.D. LAUREN-ABUNASSAR

and doesn’t make anyone cold. If I fell I would fall in state-shaped flakes. One for every place my body lingered. One for every little bit of light I stole and kept. No cars startless. No tangled up roadways. Neck becoming mountain of drift; foot becoming fierce kicking eddies. Heat would not melt me. Hands would not help me undo. Blanketing softly. Whimsy not pretend. Dream in which my body is a snowstorm and the storm says a purpose in falling.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

- Slavic nurse
- Political action committee (abbr.)
- Semitic deity
- Aid
- Bantu language
- Today (Ital.)
- Whirring sound
- Auto
- Muslim ship’s captain
- Leopard’s bane
- Spotted cat
- Us (Ger.)
- Amer. Automobile Assn. (abbr.)
- Evernia (2 words)
- Biblical poem
- Pother
- Exclamations of delight
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (abbr.)
- Electric unit
- Oral
- Surety (Lat.)
- Org. of Amer. States (abbr.)
- Mex. president
- Vent
- People
- Formal dance (Fr.)
- Berne’s river
- Funeral notice
- Girdle
- Austral. marsupial
- Broad structural basin
- Shelter
- Fencing sword

DOWN

- Polish rum cake
- Indian red powder
- City on the Aare
- Enclosure
- Sp. painter
- Axilla
- Braz. fiber plant
- God of the north wind
- Bedouin headband cord
- Premium exchange
- Itemize
- Chief of Naval Operations (abbr.)
- Graduation attire
- Dolt
- Ohio college town
- Homer
- Son of Ra
- Abridged (abbr.)
- Golf ball position
- Silly
- Informer: slang
- Parsee scripture
- Daughters of the American Revolution (abbr.)
- St. Anthony’s cross
- Landed property
- Plant shoot
- Disputable
- Coptic clergyman
- Devil (Scot.)
- Eucalyptus secretion
- Great Lake
- Head (Fr.)
- Presidential nickname

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

| | | |
|---------|---------|------|
| HELM | WEFT | SGD |
| AGAO | ILIA | TAE |
| WORD | GAGE | EIN |
| BELAH | NINNY | |
| LOOSEN | SIC | |
| ELATE | BRASSIE | |
| APR | LAI | LED |
| REDDEER | ADORE | |
| ALA | BIOTIN | |
| COMMA | MONTH | |
| AGA | IBAN | AFAR |
| ARA | NICE | GUAN |
| MEM | EGER | ELLA |

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Corner Quote



“If I ask anybody who learned to ski after the age of five, they can remember their first day of skiing—what the weather was like, who they went with, what they had for lunch. I believe that’s because that first day on skis was the first day of total freedom in their life.”

— Warren Miller

BIG SKY BEATS



Après Ski Party

With Big Sky Resort’s opening day quickly approaching, it’s a perfect time to get your après ski playlist ready for celebrating a day on the slopes. Listen as you’re grabbing a cold one with your buddies at your favorite après destination.



Explore Big Sky brings you a stacked playlist of classic sing-along hits that will be sure to get you stoked for ski season and ready to party in your onesie.

- “Abracadabra” by Steve Miller Band
- “Bad Moon Rising” by Creedence Clearwater Revival
- “Love Shack” by The B-52’s
- “We’re Not Gonna Take it” by Twisted Sister
- “Pour Some Sugar On Me” by Def Leppard
- “Go Your Own Way” by Fleetwood Mac
- “Hooked on a Feeling” by Blue Swede, Björn Skifs
- “Take On Me” by a-ha
- “Livin’ On A Prayer” by Bon Jovi
- “Stayin’ Alive” by Bee Gees
- “Uptown Girl” by Billy Joel
- “Sweet Home Alabama” by Lynyrd Skynyrd
- “Don’t Stop Believin’” by Journey

BACK40

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”

The Icemen

A glimpse into an extinct Montana industry

BY MICHAEL J. OBER

To my grandmother, Opie, it was always called “the icebox.” As my brother and I unpacked her groceries looking for tasty goodies, we learned to read by identifying words on the labels of the boxes and cartons in the brown sacks from the market.

“Oh, just put that’n in the icebox,” she would say when we found something that needed to be refrigerated. We always knew that she meant the giant humming Kelvinator refrigerator in the corner of the kitchen, but as a carryover from her era in rural Montana, food items meant to be kept cold belonged in the icebox.

It was one thing to have a root cellar for onions and potatoes but quite another to have an icebox to chill meat, eggs, butter, milk and cheese, and no well-appointed household would be without one. It was a mark of prosperity.

In the early part of the 19th century many homes had iceboxes and the cottage industry of ice harvesters occupied the workforce alongside wheelwrights, teamsters, harness makers and livery managers—now-forgotten working classes.

All across Canada and northern states—anywhere there was water and cold winters—humans gathered ice to cool their food.

The early 19th century ice trade industry flourished, generating nearly \$700 million in today’s value. It dramatically altered the way fishing and meat packing businesses marketed their products. Most of Montana’s ice harvesting was done on the local level with small commercial markets, and the ice box became a common household appliance.



Ice harvested from Flathead Lake was stored at this icehouse in Somers, Montana. PHOTO BY MICHAEL J. OBER

Eventually, electricity replaced them with bulky refrigerator units, some with freezer compartments. But for decades, households relied on Sears Roebuck catalogs to select that ideal kitchen implement to keep things cool, with a block of ice resting on a grill inside an insulated, tin-wrapped box.

Obtaining the ice required more ingenuity than real skill. Just about every harvesting method that could be thought of was used. Early on, lengthy hand saws with dual handles sliced through river and lake ice blocks of all sizes. Later, harvesters employed gas-powered saws and conveyer belts to increase productivity. Skilled farmers used their tractors, modified with powered belts to drive circular saw blades with special teeth for ice chipping.



This photo from the 1950s depicts the annual ice harvest in Montana for Western Fruit Express, which began in 1904 and peaked in the middle of the 20th century. PHOTO COURTESY OF STUMPTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Most ranchers in Montana had stock ponds for their animals and with homemade devices like these they could not only secure ice for their home, but could also keep the ponds open as a winter water source for their herds.

In town, small businesses emerged to deliver ice, on regular schedules, to households in the same way that milk, mail and newspapers arrived at doorsteps. The ice, after all, was free to the harvesters and tidy profits awaited entrepreneurial souls.

Today, many small communities in Montana have a museum with an antique icebox on display, relics of the 19th century trade. The icehouse in Somers, Montana, just a short stroll from Del's Bar, is an industrial artifact of the state's past that looms large over the town. A paved bike path has replaced the old railroad bed adjacent to the three-story, faded wooden structure with its 3-foot-thick walls lined with sawdust and its louvered venting tower. Ice harvested from Flathead Lake was stored there, awaiting shipment on Great Northern Railway "cooler cars" to cities and towns along its northern routes.

As a young girl in Helena, Opie recalled her mother using a cheese grater to shave the last melting chunks of ice from the bottom of the tray to fill glasses with ice chips. Over that she would pour Kool-Aid or lemonade—the original snow cone.

"Our chore was to check the drip pan daily and empty it on the vegetable garden," Opie told me. "If it overflowed onto the kitchen floor we always got a scolding."

In the Helena Valley, the winter delivery of ice almost always came from blocks carved out of Canyon Ferry Reservoir. Most of it arrived on wagons, or by sledges in heavy snow seasons. As time went on, Ford Model T trucks with insulated bunkers brought the ice, and a numbered card in the window would tell the deliverymen how many blocks to deposit.



Ice harvesters employed gas-powered saws and conveyer belts to increase their productivity. PHOTO COURTESY OF STUMPTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"They would sometimes leave the block on the boulevard in front of the house and it was the job for us kids to get it into the house before it melted. They were God-awful heavy!" Opie recalled. "We would use our little wagons to get them to the back steps of the kitchen."

Opie lived to be 101, long enough to see modern refrigerators feature automatic ice makers and dispensers. I'm not sure how she felt about all that, but I do know that, to her last days, it was always "the icebox."

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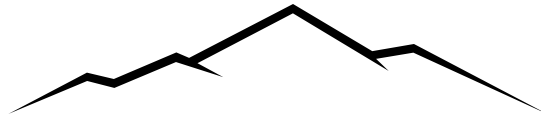
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