

# THE NORTH FORK LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Spring is on the way! It's that time of the year when full-time residents are waiting for the snow to melt & the road to dry out and the summer residents are making their lists of what to pack for the annual trek to the North Fork. Soon we will have the chance to once again share our common love of this unique and beautiful place.

The board and I want to take this opportunity to thank you for being a member of the North Fork Landowners Association. I feel that participating in the NFLA is important in preserving the traditions that the original homesteaders envisioned when they started the association in 1947. It is our chance to promote a healthy community spirit that can be shared by all and passed down to the next generation.

*Looking forward to seeing everyone soon,  
Karen McDonough, NFLA President*

## **Bears are emerging from their dens...**

Spring has arrived in the North Fork and both black and grizzly bears are beginning to emerge from their winter dens. Some adult male grizzly bears will leave their dens as early as mid-March, but most of the bears emerge during the month of April. Remember April 1<sup>st</sup> is a good date to bring in your bird feeders and secure any other food items that might attract bears to your property. These include garbage, pet food, and livestock grains. I would also like to remind residents of the North Fork that it is illegal to feed wildlife like deer, elk, and bears. That creates problems for both people and wildlife.

We are planning to have another Bear Fair in the North Fork this summer. There is a lot of interest in having another one at Polebridge. The date has yet to be decided, but we are anxious to put on another one. Hope everyone has had a great winter and enjoy your time in the North Fork! If you have any conflict with grizzly bears, please contact me: Tim Manley 406-250-1265 or tmanley@mt.gov.

## **Square Dancing at the Hall**

Historically, square dances have been held in the North Fork since the time of the early homesteaders. Throughout this summer, square dances will be held at the Community Hall. The dancing is geared for beginners. Debo Powers will teach the various figures and moves for each dance, so everyone can do this even if you have never danced before. At the break, there will be instruction in simple waltz steps.

This is a community dance where everyone changes partners regularly, so you don't need to bring a dance partner with you. Please check the calendar for dates and join us for fun and merriment!

## **Mark your Calendars!**

### **2014 events at Sondreson Hall**

- May 24<sup>th</sup> at 10 am  
Hall Clean-up
- May 17<sup>th</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup> at 9 am  
Hazardous Fuels Project Work day
- 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday June - October 8pm  
NFLA Business Meetings, please join us!
- June 28<sup>th</sup> at 11 am-Community  
Potluck at Red Meadow Lake
- July 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm  
Pie and Ice cream Social
- July 16<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am & 1pm  
FireWise Day Workshop &  
Summer Interlocal Meeting
- July 19<sup>th</sup> at 8pm  
NFLA Fund Raising Dinner
- July 26<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm  
NFPA Annual Meeting
- July 30<sup>th</sup> 10am-2:30pm  
5<sup>th</sup> Annual Robin Cox Weed  
Round-up & BBQ

## North Fork History Project

The North Fork has had a rich history full of adventure and challenge. This beautiful remote section of Montana has attracted colorful characters over the years beginning with the native people who traveled through it to hunt bison east of the Continental Divide. We can still see their ancient trails along Trail Creek Road. Many European-heritage homesteaders came to the North Fork to make a home and live from the land in the early 1900s. There are people living in the North Fork today who remember them.

In order to capture North Fork history before it is lost,

The North Fork History Project began in 2011 to record oral histories of some of our oldest neighbors. To date, we have interviewed 19 North Forkers and the project continues. These oral history recordings can be listened to by going to the history page on the NFLA website at



Photo by Lauren Amato

[www.nflandowners.org](http://www.nflandowners.org). You can also read several short stories written by local people about those who preceded us. In addition, the website includes old letters and postcards from the past.

We hope to add pictures to the website history page this year. We are looking for old pictures, letters, and diaries to add to our collection of North Fork history. If you would be willing to provide copies of things that you have, please contact the committee chair, Debo Powers at: [debopowers@gmail.com](mailto:debopowers@gmail.com).  
*Debo Powers*

## Happy Trails!

We are lucky to live in a place that is surrounded by so many spectacular mountains to explore! The North Fork trails provide some of the most remote backcountry experiences that a person can have. When I hike these trails, I rarely see any other people and the panoramic views from the top of peaks are wonderful. Regular reports about specific trail conditions can be found throughout the hiking season on NF News at [nfnews.net](http://nfnews.net).

The NFLA Trails Committee seeks to promote hiking in the North Fork as a way to intimately experience the wild beauty of the North Fork and to learn about the flora and fauna that live here. There are books that people can check out from the Community Hall on the flora and fauna of the North Fork. The titles can be found on the NFLA website ([www.nflandowners.com](http://www.nflandowners.com)) under the Trails Committee.

The NFLA Trails Committee is also interested in improving North Fork trails. We worked on two trail projects during 2013:

- (1) The trail to Thompson-Seton through Inuya Pass was cleared of 70+ logs and brush was cut back to allow easier passage
- (2) Old Trail #4 to Coal Ridge was cleared almost to the ridgetop. This trail was rapidly disappearing through lack of maintenance and use. Trail committee members have been meeting with the Forest Service to discuss joint projects in trail maintenance for the future.
- (3) A Montana Conservation Corp team accomplished substantial restoration work on the Tuchuck Trail in late fall 2013, including the first part of the switchbacks leading to the summit. We are hopeful that this work will be completed this year.

*Debo Powers*

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## FIRE MITIGATION COMMITTEE REPORT, LATE WINTER 2014

### **2014 Firewise Day**

For the ninth year, the North Fork has been recognized as a Firewise Community. One of the requirements for recognition is holding an annual Firewise Day event.

This year, the Fire Mitigation Committee will sponsor its Firewise workshop on **July 16, 2014** from **9:30 to noon**, preceding the Summer Interlocal meeting. The program will include a powerful video about several recent, destructive fires in Colorado. The fire behavior depicted in the video is similar to that seen in large fires on the North Fork. A principal message of the video is that firefighters can't save structures if landowners haven't done their part by modifying the fuels around them. Tentatively, several landowners will showcase fuels modification work they have done on their properties. Planning for the workshop continues.

### **Hazardous Fuels Grants**

The DNRC awarded the North Fork its fourth hazardous fuels grant in the Fall of 2013, this one in the amount of \$91,000. Monies are available on a cost-share basis, with the grant paying 75% of the cost of an eligible project and the landowner contributing the remaining 25%. A primary objective of the grant is to thin vegetation on private land along Trail Creek Road,

making it a safer exit route in the event another large fire visits the area. The committee will be working with private landowners, the Forest Service and possibly Flathead County to accomplish the work.

Funds under the third hazardous fuels grant are almost exhausted. The grant has been used to connect landowners' treatments with those on public lands, as well as to treat around homes. For those interested in applying for grant monies, additional information is available on the NFLA web site.

### **Mapping Project**

The Fire Mitigation Committee hopes to update maps of complementary fuels reduction work that has been done on public and private land since the Wedge Canyon Fire in 2003. Wally Bennett, Type 1 Incident Commander during the Wedge fire, anticipates that the work will make a big difference in future fire behavior and suppression efforts on the North Fork. He spoke at our successful and well-attended 2013 Firewise workshop, after visiting many of the sites. Updated maps would enable North Fork landowners and their agency partners to see what they have accomplished in the last ten years.

*Report by Molly Shepherd*

## **FINAL CALL FOR NORTH FORK COOKBOOK SUBMISSIONS**

Have you heard about the new North Fork cookbook? Gary Haverlandt and Lois Walker have been working for over a year to gather and compile North Forkers' favorite recipes, together with photos of the submitters in their North Fork kitchens. Plans are to have the cookbook published in time for the Polebridge centennial in July 2014. Proceeds will benefit the NFLA.

Deadline for submission of recipes is May 1st. The editors recognize that some photos may have to wait until people arrive in the spring and early summer, but get your recipes in now. Lois will contact you about a photo, if you don't submit one with the recipe(s).

Send submissions to: Lois Walker, 11233 North Fork Rd., Polebridge MT 59928, or electronically to [LEWalker@nvdi.com](mailto:LEWalker@nvdi.com) Phone: 406-407-2791 *Lois Walker*

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**The Backwoods Book Lovers book club**...meets the third Tuesday of June-September at 7:30 at Sondreson Hall. Everyone is invited. Bring a snack to share.

- **June 17, *Plainsong*** by Kent Haruf. In library system, Amazon \$12.34. Host Monica Phillips. Haruf interweaves the stories of a pregnant high school girl, a lonely teacher, a pair of boys abandoned by their mother, and a couple of crusty bachelor ranchers into a taut narrative.

- **July 15, *Dream Chasers of the West: A Homestead Family of Glacier Park*** by B.L. Wettstein. In library system, Amazon \$13.39. In 1913, unmarried and alone at the age of thirty, Clara Miller settled on the remote southern border of Glacier National Park. Based on Clara's remarkable letters to friends and family, it includes a collection of historic photos of Clara, her family, and the places she lived and worked.

- **August 19, *Lost in Shangri-La: A True Story of Survival, Adventure, and the Most Incredible Rescue Mission of World War II*** by Mitchell Zuckoff. In library system, \$9.03 Amazon. Host Jane Reardon. On May 13, 1945, twenty-four American servicemen and WACs boarded a transport plane for a sightseeing trip over the jungle-covered mountains of Dutch New Guinea and crashed. Two men and a woman survived. Caught between man-eating headhunters and enemy Japanese, they endured a harrowing journey straight into a primitive tribe of superstitious natives who had never before seen a white man—or woman.

- **September 16, *The Whistling Season*** by Ivan Doig. In library system, \$11.59 at Amazon. Host Donna Harrison “Can’t cook but doesn’t bite.” So begins the newspaper ad offering the services of an “A-1 housekeeper, sound morals, exceptional disposition” that draws the attention of widower Oliver Milliron in 1909. The ever-whistling Rose Llewellyn and her font-of-knowledge brother, Morris Morgan, go to Marias Coulee along with a stampede of homesteaders drawn by the promise of the Big Ditch—a gargantuan irrigation project intended to make the Montana prairie bloom. *Gerry Stearns*

## **Sondreson Community Hall Hazardous Fuels Project**

As discussed at the October Business Meeting, the NFLA Board has proceeded with application for a Hazardous Fuels Project grant from the Flathead Economic Policy Center.

The intent of the project is to remove surface fuels, ladder fuels, and provide space between the crowns of the remaining trees to reduce the fire hazard. Excellent work has been done on the property to reduce surface fuels and prune the remaining trees. This project will remove additional trees to provide more space between crowns, and prune the trees that are left.

We are fortunate to have several

nice trees of different species on site. Several excellent western larch are present which are the most desirable tree from a fire standpoint. We also have some Douglas fir, Engelmann Spruce, lodgepole pine and both cottonwood and aspen. From a fire hazard standpoint, there is no need to remove cottonwood and aspen.

The unit around the Hall is approximately 0.5 acres, just under half of the total ownership. That would make us eligible for compensation of \$300 on completion of the project.

Allen Chrisman has flagged trees to leave in the unit with blue flagging, selecting leave trees based on species, size, form and vigor. Workdays are set up for

May 17, May 31, and June 21 beginning at 9:00 a.m. each day. Bring sack lunch, water, leather gloves and work clothes. Volunteers will be cutting up small trees, cutting firewood and piling and burning slash. Chainsaws to be brought and used only by people experienced in running them with appropriate safety equipment.

NFLA members are encouraged to look at the marking on the project and contact Allen Chrisman with comments or concerns at [chrisman@bresnan.net](mailto:chrisman@bresnan.net). Anyone interested in green firewood also please contact Allen. Photos of the project are online at [www.nflandowners.com](http://www.nflandowners.com).

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## 2014 Winter Interlocal Meeting Report

The 2014 Winter Interlocal Meeting was held February 19 at the Hungry Horse Ranger Station. The meeting was well attended with excellent Agency representation. Notes from the meeting are on the NFLA website at [www.nflandowners.com](http://www.nflandowners.com).

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Rox Rogers and Shannon Downings:** Grizzly Bear status being reviewed for possible delisting in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem. Final rule on Lynx expected in September – should be little to no effect on small private landowners.

**MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks – Chris Crane, Tim Manley, Kent Laudon, Tim Thier:** North Forkers are doing well coexisting with grizzly bears. Ten bears caught last year – six bears were removed from the population. Wolves maintaining – only one wolf has been taken out of a quota of two. Increase in foxes and bobcats in the North Fork.

**Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation – Brian Manning:** Coal Ridge logging completed, site prep and burning remaining. Road accessing Coal Ridge will be open July 1 to September 15. Planning a timber sale in the Moran/Cyclone area west of the North Fork Road.

**Flathead County – Dave Prunty & Ovila Byrd:** Got \$60,000 RAC grant for crushing that will be matched by the County. Crushing will begin in mid-August out of Demers pit, may not be able to spread it this fall. No funding for dust control for Camas to Polebridge. County looking at cost of maintenance – County has spent significant amount on the North Fork road in the past ten years.

**Homeland Security (Border Patrol) – Kip Stratton:** Logging community has built 5 miles north of border in Canada – will be active for at least five years. Expect to see increased number of illegal entries and drug smuggling.

**Glacier National Park – Scott Emmerich:** Scott is scheduled for mandatory retirement at the end of July – he has submitted a request to the Washington Office for extension until the end of September.

**Flathead National Forest – Rob Davies:** Trail Creek road blading is a priority but funding is short and they will not be able to blade as often as they would like. Planning to hold Bear Fair at Polebridge this summer.

**\*\*\*Summer Interlocal Meeting: Wednesday July 16 at Sondreson Hall. Road Safety Coalition will be the sponsor.**

*Report by Allen Chrisman*

### **An Invitation to Join the fun at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade in Polebridge!**

Whether it's parades, BBQs, fireworks, or a day off work to relax, these are a few things we enjoy on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July each year. But let us remember the reason we are able to freely pursue these enjoyable moments. For the past 3 years, before the start of the Polebridge Parade, local veterans have been reading the Declaration of Independence as a reminder of our heritage of freedoms set forth over 230 years ago. *This year* we would like to invite North Fork youth to participate alongside our veterans by reading Independence Day writings or songs. Suggestions include what became of the original signers and a chronology of events after the signing. The reading of the DOI begins at 11:30 a.m. in front of the viewing stand (aka Ed's Tractor) at the intersection in front of the Merc. If you or someone you know is interested, or for more information contact Ray Brown at [polebridgeray@yahoo.com](mailto:polebridgeray@yahoo.com). Any veterans not already involved with this event are invited to come forward to join with us.

*Ray Brown*

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North Fork Landowners' Association  
Secretary-Treasurer  
P.O. Box 1603  
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

SEE ENCLOSED **2014 NFLA CALENDAR**  
FOR MORE EVENTS AND DETAILS...

*Join us in celebrating*  
**100 years of the**  
**Polebridge Mercantile**  
*at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade*

**CHURCH SERVICES:** Sundays at 10:30am at the  
Hall July 6<sup>th</sup> - Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>. Hosted by Sue and  
Don Sullivan

Monday August 4th at 9:00 am  
**Tour of North Fork Gardens**

Begins at Debo's House.  
Food provided at each stop.  
Carpools will leave from the Hall and  
the Merc at 8:30 a.m.

**WEEKLY YOGA WITH SPHIE**

**STARTING IN JUNE  
AT THE HALL**

**DATES AND TIMES TBA**

\*\*\*Contact [nflatreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:nflatreasurer@gmail.com) regarding membership concerns