

LAST CHANCE BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN
April 3, 2019 6:00 P.M.
Montana Wild, Helena, MT

Members present: Nicole Anderson, Fred Benson, Jeff Brandt, Clif Caughron, Mike Cannon, Bud Criner, Matt Darfler, Jim Darfler, Susan Egbert, Neil and Darlene Horne, Linda Huso, Merlyn Huso, Megan Klingoman, Joe Meek, Jim Milliron, Howard Reid, Julia Sandy, Lyndsay and Tony Smith, Jim Stein, Russ Wattnem, Tom Weiss, Gary and Lynda Wiles, Rick Yearry, Sue Mohr

Katy opened the meeting.

She introduced Sara Sylte and Marcus McDowel USFS (United State Forest Service) trails coordinator.

Sara Sylte is the bear education and training coordinator for FWP (Fish, Wildlife and Parks), Forest Service and private groups. She provides guidance with wildlife/human interactions to assist with wildlife issues.

Grizzly bears once lived all over the west and Midwest. They are very adaptable and will live wherever they can survive. Grizzly bears are endangered. They were delisted in 2017 and re-listed in 2018.

As grizzly bears move around, they push black bears too and so if black bears enter an area, grizzly bears may not be far behind.

Three safety elements:

1. Respect
2. Awareness
3. Knowledge

Differences between grizzly and black bears.

Grizzly: dished face, hump on back

Black bears: Straight face..

Daily cycles:

Peak activity

Sows and cubs most unpredictable.

Day Beds: bears take naps daily so be aware of where beds may be found especially in open areas.

Bear senses: bear sense of hearing about same as humans.

Bear sense of smell seven times stronger than dogs. This is how they find food and how they sense what is coming.

Springtime: bears come out of hibernation usually March 1.

They come out hungry and often can't find food right away and will come down to the valleys and creeks because that is where the warm up is: so people getting out to fish or recreate should be aware of bears. Clean up around your home and put bird feeders up and out of reach.

Sows and cubs come out of hibernation around May.

Summertime: This is when bears mate and when bears and humans are more spread out and less likely to have interactions.

Fall: most issues occur here due to bears needing to eat as much as possible during hunting season. Bears will be eating berries and insects and not paying attention to humans. Bears also know that bulls get hurt during the rut so bears are attracted to bugling elk.

Winter: bears will be hibernating. It is important to note that if bears start eating human food and garbage they may stop hibernating.

Where are the bears? Bears are opportunistic and prefer to eat what is already down: for example carcasses from hunting or road kill. Road kill attracts bears which exposes them to getting hurt on the road. So if you hit an animal, try to drag it as far as possible off the road.

Insects and plants make up the largest portion of bear diets.

Bears will cache carcasses.

Look at the scat to see what they are eating.

Tracks are good ways to tell species...small tracks with big tracks mean a cub.

Bears can be anywhere.

Bear behavior drives your response to a bear encounter.

Avoiding conflict should always be your goal.

Tips:

Be prepared: tell someone where you are going.

Carry your bear spray in an accessible place.

Stay alert: we often see them before they see us.

Travel in groups: 3 or more means much less chance of seeing a bear.

Make noise. Human voice is the most effective noise for bears.

Have bells on pack animals and dogs.

Avoid travelling in dusk or dark.

Anything you do at high speed that is quiet increases risk (think mountain bikers).

High speed encourages chase behavior.

Horses are good to have along because they smell and make noise.

Hammering, chain sawing and doing work on the trail all decrease our awareness.

Bears use the same trails we do.

Help each other stay alert; set a good example by being aware.

Hunting: everything we do in hunting increases our risk, both fall and spring hunting.

Have a plan regarding what you will do if you kill an animal at 3 pm.

Know what you will do with your game if you have to leave it behind overnight.

Scout the area thoroughly when returning to a kill site.

If a bear gets your animal, leave it be.

Report incidents to FWP.

Never hunt alone.

Animal distress or mating calls may attract bears.

Gut piles are food sources for bears so gut your animals away from trails, road and sleeping areas.

What to do if you encounter a bear.

Your behavior matters.

Never run away.

Never approach the bear.

Two different categories:

Defensive Bears

Warning signals by a bear mean that it is trying to decide what to do.

Reasons for defensive encounters

- Distance

- Food resources (defending food)

- Offspring (defending cubs)

A defensive bear stands on its hind legs to better see/smell you.

Agitated bear behavior: jaw clacking, huffing, puffing

Ideally, the bear disengages and leaves: you should wait and give them a chance to get away.

Charging bears: if you have bear spray, get it out. Most effective in a charge.

If necessary, get on ground face down and play dead; leave backpack on, hands over neck, face down. Stay flat; don't allow yourself to be rolled over. Make no noise.

If they leave, give them time to get away. Deploy the spray wherever you are.

Predatory Bears

No warning

Have no respect

Predatory bears tend to be black bears; they are cute, curious and not scared.

Stand your ground

Be aggressive; get loud and wave your arms.

Use your bear spray: 30 to 60 feet.

If the bear contacts you, FIGHT BACK.

Make this encounter unpleasant.
Report these bears as they must be removed.

If you see a bear at a distance:

Stop and assess: figure out which way to go; if it appears unaware of you, move away undetected.

Don't get between a mom and cubs; look for an escape route.

Good idea to talk to them; don't yell but talk and give them a chance to figure out you are human.

If in a group, stay calm and stay together.

Bear spray: non-lethal deterrent.

Most effective tool to change a bear's behavior.

Reduces bear's ability to breathe, see and smell and makes an impression since it sticks to their face.

Operating your bear spray:

Accessible: in a holster in a spot you can get to.

Know how to remove the safety cap.

Become good at doing it all in one motion: practice taking out of holster, taking off the safety and spraying all in one motion.

Try to spray not too high and not too far away.

7 to 9 seconds of spray.

Spray couple seconds and create a cloud and see what happens while you still have some spray left.

Spray toward their feet where they will be 20 to 30 feet from you.

Let someone know if you had to deploy bear spray or you had a bear encounter.

FWP or Forest Service.

Have a second canister in your pack in case you empty a can and then have to hike out especially if you are travelling alone.

Spray is not just for bears: it works on wolves, moose and cats.

It is a weapon: check expiration: write on bottom with a sharpie.

Transport in a case: it can explode in extremely high temperatures.

Check for punctures.

Bear spray first aid:

Flush eyes and skin with water and dawn soap.

Avoid inhalation

Food storage orders apply everywhere. March 1 to December 1 rule.

Anything can be attractant including toiletries.

Electric fence; certified resistant panniers; vehicles count. Roll up windows and lock doors.

Horse feed are attractants including horse cookies, dog food.

Outside practice with RV bear and fake spray. 3 second rule. You have three seconds, to unholster, pull spray out, take safety off and spray.

Business meeting:

Marcus: new targets for Forest Service, regionally and nationally.

Priority is on meeting timber and fuel targets. This impacted budgets and programs of work.

Recreation has a very small budget this year. Marcus lost two trail crew members: he is down to two people for 500 miles of trail! Marcus has no dollars to give any partners. They will be looking at RAC grants or other funds. The work of partners is needed more than ever.

Marcus' priority work is clearing trails. There is no money for any projects. If we want to put in a stock bridge or anything else, it will be heavily vetted by Forest Service first and unlikely to get approved.

Marcus spoke with Neil about all this. Marcus was running a two person crew in Townsend to do Belts and Elkhorns but will be pulled into Helena to help out there.

They need us to do Gates of the Mountains trails this year.

Marcus will continue to add to deferred maintenance list to keep awareness in the Forest Service up.

They may not be able to provide support to Eagle Guard station this year.

One goal is to try to get the treated posts in this year. Marcus has supplies on hand.

Kading re-route project is a four mile trail. An RTP grant was awarded for two years for \$45,000 to the Bicycle Guild. There is a clause on liability and someone needs to take that on.

The plan is to get the trail corridor open. The Guild is soliciting contractors to build the trail.

Kading grade work weekend will be June 28 to July 1. Forest Service will book as many campsites as possible. Plan is to eliminate the old Kading grade trail. The new trail will be non motorized and take off right behind the cabin with a dog leg off to the south. There may not be enough money or people to get it done but will try.

Marcus encourages anyone who has certifications to work on any trail they want: funnel information on what you want to do through Neil and Darlene to the Forest Service. If you want to step up and grab a trail, call it in and make sure you have an agreement on it from Forest Service.

Getting first aid/CPR person in to conduct training. Plan on early May.

Chain saw certifications: focus on recertifications first and then new people.

RAC grant: grant not happening for FY 2019. What we apply for is for 2021. Can identify as heavy deferred maintenance or a specific project.

Katy continued the meeting:

She introduced guests and new members.

Julia came with Sara: moving from UK. Interested in learning about our group.

Megan is also interested in attending and joining. Welcome to these new folks and hope to see them in future meetings!

March Minutes

The motion to approve the minutes was made by Howard and seconded by Tony .
The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report.

Jim Darfler

Checking: \$16550.71
Savings: \$1688.11
New CD: \$10,000 matures 8/20/2020.
CD: \$10,000 matures 6/9/2019

Bills: One bill for \$20 paid by Jim to register club with Secretary of State.
Motion to approve Merlin, Clif second. Unanimously approved.

Old Business.

Certifications: Neil

S-212, crosscut saw, chainsaw, first aid, defensive horsemanship, bear awareness training.

We know who needs certifications: need to know who wants to be re-certified.
Once we have a date, we will reach out.

Upcoming Projects: Neil

Sign installation, Elkhorn WL management Unit 5/31 to 6/3. National Trail Day.

Gates of the Mountains trail clearing: Sherri will be coordinating.

High Divide Trail Work at Kading: Dennis will reach out with information on this.

BMCF WCC #4 7/25 to 8/1: Katy. Out of Indian Meadows: 6 miles in to Silvertip Trail. Wilderness conservation corps will need stock support. 3 head. Speak to Neil about taking the lead on this. Three people with one animal each. Must have defensive horsemanship. Need a crew leader.

Website update: Lyndsay

Ready to go live. Plan to roll into the Montana BCH website. Waiting to hear back from state webmaster. Lyndsay added a newsletter page and minutes.

Plans to put classifieds on the Facebook page. Getting lots of hits on FB page.

Good job Lyndsay! Will get notice out to membership when the page goes live.

Bob Marshall LAC meeting: April 6 in Kalispell. Katy is going and invites anyone else to go along. Howard will go along.

Challenge at Challenge: Howard

We have been invited to come to this by Rick Maedje and Roland Cheek from the Flathead. August 22 to 25.

Lots of room to park at the cabin. 15 to 20 places to ride. Close to Badger-Two Medicine. A way for the various clubs to get together and visit about common issues and have fun! Katy and Howard and Sue are going. Anyone is welcome!

Spotted Dog WMA working group: Neil

They had a meeting on this. The group is split on who wants to accept grazing and who doesn't. They have not gotten final comments.

A letter was written and sent to the FWP commission for their meeting on April 25 in Bozeman. People plan to come in and testify.

New Business

Next meeting: **Freeze branding** will be May 11.

There are a number of animals to brand this year so if you have an animal to brand, let Neil know so they have enough supplies.

We will do a packing clinic. There will be lots of new people so will split up into small groups.

Dutch oven challenge is on!

Fred moved to adjourn; Matt second. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Sue Mohr, Secretary.