

Citizens for Balanced Use
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CBU was very busy during 2007. Our organization passed the 2000 active member milestone and now has over 65,000 supporters through affiliated groups and organizations. We have strived to educate people throughout Montana on the different issues that confront our ability to access and actively manage our public land.

The CBU board has provided comments to federal management agencies in the following areas: Idaho Panhandle Forest, Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest, Lewis and Clark National Forest, South Belts of the Helena National Forest, Lolo National Forest, Nez Perce National Forest, Flathead National Forest, and the Custer National Forest. We provided comments on issues such as HR 1975 Wilderness Bill, HR 2421 Water Bill, Polar Bear listing, Recommended Wilderness Area designations, Lynx, Wolverine, Sage Grouse listing, Grizzly delisting, and several BLM projects.

We took on projects to defend private property rights as in the Unionville Clancy access issue, the 63 Ranch access, helped to establish a parking area in the South Rock Creek area of the Gallatin National Forest, gained access for the handicapped in the Lewis and Clark National Forest, traveled as far away as Oregon to help educate groups in the Wallowa National Forest on how to inventory their trail system and fight additional recreation access closures on federally managed public land, provided public training in the Beaverhead Deerlodge and Lewis and Clark National Forest on road and trail inventories.

Board members of CBU participated in a 6 month schedule of meetings with the GN Forest Service, hikers, mountain bikers, equestrian, private property owners and motorized recreation to bring about a plan of shared use of 9 trails in the Gallatin National Forest. This plan allowed all user groups the opportunity to maintain a limited amount of access while enhancing the outdoor experience for everyone. The alternative to this solution would have been that some user groups would have been locked out of these areas. This was quite an accomplishment for CBU and we believe this should be used as a model for other areas with trails that are heavily used.

CBU set up booths at events that provided education materials that the public could learn from and take back to there areas. We promote shared use, tread lightly, pack it in / pack it out and active management of public lands during these events. Some of the events we participated in were the Snowmobile Expo in West Yellowstone, the Montana Legislature Rotunda lunch, the Gallatin County Summer Fair and Mud Bogs, and the Arena Cross in Billings. We also had members of CBU put booths up at different gatherings like farmers markets, fishing Derbys, poker rides etc. in Dillon, Butte, Wise River, Pipestone, Livingston and Bozeman

CBU awarded 2 stewardship awards last year by giving the Gallatin Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen and the Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association new chainsaws for their dedication and contribution to maintaining trails in the Gallatin National Forest. These 2 organizations maintain over 300 miles of trails every year so people can enjoy the great outdoors in this area.

CBU participated in meetings with the Gallatin National Forest, Custer National Forest, Beaverhead National Forest, Lewis and Clark National Forest, and Helena National Forest in an effort to promote shared use and active management of these forests during the travel planning process. We provided material to the land managers on how a healthy ecosystem can be preserved through Best Management Practices and active management. We promoted the continued use of these forests by maintaining access for everyone including the physically challenged and very young. We argued for responsible resource use of the many minerals, oil and gas reservoirs that these lands contain and our country needs. We showed the Forest Service the benefits of responsible timber harvests to preserve watersheds, wildlife habitat and reduce the fuel loads in our forests. Many times our arguments fell on deaf ears but we continue to try and educate these agencies on the common sense approach to forest management. We provided information through science on the benefits of grazing of cattle on public lands so as to preserve the ranches that depend on this off site grass resource.

Members of CBU attended numerous meetings on the brucellosis and cattle issue and supported the Montana Stockgrowers in an effort to keep the Bison inside Yellowstone National Park and uphold the Interagency Bison Management Plan. The bison over population in Yellowstone National Park has put at risk the cattle industry in Montana.

We attended meetings on the Sage Grouse listing, Lynx listing and discussed the lack of management by the Fish Wildlife and Parks of the over population of elk in 64% of the Management Units in Montana. We have been working with property owners across Montana in an effort to get the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks to reduce elk numbers in these over populated areas to reduce elk damage to private property.

Our members have attended many meetings with the Department of Livestock, property owners and the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks on the control of the wolf population. We sent comments in support of wolf delisting in an effort to manage the wolf population through hunting and relieve pressure on the livestock owners.

CBU put together a presentation to local governments on how they can participate more actively in the resource planning of the federally managed public lands that lie within their county boundaries. CBU presented this to county commissioners in Jefferson, Broadwater, Beaverhead, Gallatin, Butte Silverbow, Anaconda, and Park Counties. Adopted resource plans by counties provide the avenue for the counties to gain coordination status when the Forest Service is formulating the management plans of the National Forest lands. Several counties in Montana are pursuing this through local resource planning committees that have been appointed.

CBU traveled to Mineral, Jefferson, Beaverhead and Gallatin counties to provide them with expert testimony on Montana road law and RS2477. RS2477 gives the counties the ability to regain control over the historic right of ways within their counties in order to preserve access to and on federally managed public lands. Through RS2477, local governments can maintain access to mineral and timber resources that provide jobs and increase the economic diversity of the county tax base. These resources provide money for schools, services and infrastructure that are critical to small communities.

CBU provided information to the Gallatin County Commission when the Forest Service destroyed county property in the Bear Canyon area on the Gallatin National Forest. The Forest Service obliterated a county road that had been in existence for more

than 100 years without notifying the county commission. CBU was instrumental in getting the road reopened and helped the grazing lease holder and private land owner by preserving the legal access they had before the Forest Service illegally closed this area.

CBU has met with Congressman Denny Rehberg several times to provide information about us and what we work to achieve. Representative Rehberg has been very helpful to our organization. At the request of Rehberg's office, we met with the National Wildlife Federation and the Montana Wilderness Association in an effort to come together in the future plan for the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest. CBU attempted to bring forward a plan that would have released parts of the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest to active management through legislative language. We proposed hard release language and NEPA sufficiency be applied congressionally to parts of the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest in an effort to reduce frivolous lawsuits filed by extreme environmental organizations. Our attempt failed as the National Wildlife Federation and the Montana Wilderness Association refused to support this legislation.

When the National Wildlife Federation and the Montana Wilderness Association coerced a few lumber companies into supporting an agreement now known as the Beaverhead Deerlodge Partnership, CBU requested to be included in the talks. We were refused participation by the NWF and the MWA because we could not support the existing plan that provides no guarantee that resources will ever be utilized because of the constant litigation that is filed and the NWF and the MWA adamantly refused our proposal of supporting congressionally applied hard release language and NEPA sufficiency that would have reduced the threat of litigation.

When CBU discovered that the Partnership had submitted their plan to the Forest Service after the comment period had closed we advertised a meeting at the Maroon Center in Butte to educate the people that would be affected by this new Partnership Agreement. Over 600 people attended the meeting and CBU provided the people with information on how to fight the proposed closures to multiple use in the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest. We provided information at this meeting on the Federal Code of Regulations, Forest Management Handbook, NEPA Regulations, how to appeal decisions, Freedom of Information Act requirements, RS 2477, State Road Law, Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act, and the Taylor Grazing Act. CBU will continue to work with organization all across Montana and beyond that wish to work together to find real solutions to the mismanagement and gridlock that has become the norm in forest management.

CBU has met with Senator Baucus and Senator Tester to provide them with information about CBU. Both these Senators support the shared use approach and working towards partnerships that include all user groups of our public lands. CBU has worked to stop the Beaverhead Partnership agreement that wrongly locks up another 563,000 acres of the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest into wilderness. Only 2 user groups were at the table when this plan was formed and CBU does not believe all the user groups are represented in this agreement.

CBU will continue to stay engaged in the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest Management and Travel Planning process and we believe that CBU will ultimately file legal action, when the ROD is released, in an effort to preserve the last remaining multiple use lands in this forest.

CBU received information from the Forest Service in Whitehall, MT that off trail riding was occurring and they asked for our assistance in stopping this action. CBU put out a bulletin to our members and created signage that the Forest Service installed at 5 locations in the Pipestone area. The signs were paid for by CBU and they informed the users in this area that CBU was offering a 250 dollar reward for information leading to the conviction of anyone riding off trail. Upon the posting of these signs, all off trail riding stopped. The Butte Standard wrote an article about our efforts and how positive it was that our organization stepped up to help the Forest Service on this issue.

Members of CBU provided the opportunity for the TV station KTVQ to ride snowmobiles into the East Fork of the Hyalite area before it was closed by the new Gallatin National Forest Plan. Even the news crew was bewildered as to why the Forest Service was proposing to close this area. CBU continues to fight the closure of this important snowmobile area through litigation that is ongoing in Federal Court.

Many of our members traveled numerous times to Helena to attend the 2007 legislative session. We testified at our own expense on bills and resolutions that would affect multiple use access and active management of our public lands. We were very successful in making our voices heard and developed relationships with many of our state Senators and House Representatives. CBU continues to work with these folks during the 21 months between sessions.

CBU worked in cooperation with Families for Outdoor Recreation (FFOR) to develop a specialty auto and truck license plate. CBU applied to the Montana Department of Motor Vehicles for approval of this specialty plate under Citizens for Balanced Use (CFBU). FFOR and CBU contacted the Montana Snowmobile Association, the Montana 4X4 Association, and the Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association to partner with these other 3 groups. These 5 organizations came together to promote the new specialty plate.

The money generated by the sale of this plate goes to fund our efforts to maintain access to and on our federally managed public lands in Montana. We notify people on upcoming Forest Service and BLM projects and educate them on how they can be involved in the process through writing letters, submitting substantive comments, and understanding the process. We provide grants to other non-profit organizations to assist them financially in their efforts.

In October of 2007, CBU held our first annual “Networking” conference in Butte, MT. The conference was well attended by the 37 following groups and organizations. Big Sky Snoriders, Montana Snowmobile Association, Montana Grain Growers, Montana Petroleum Association, United Property Owners of Montana, Montana Stockgrowers, Beaverhead Outdoor Association, R.T. Farms, Montanans for Multiple Use, Montana Agri Business Association, Castle Mountain Ranch, Western Tradition Partnership, Environomics, Montana Cattlewomen, Treasure State Alliance, Families for Outdoor Recreation, Ravalli County Off Road Users, Montana Wood Products Association, Western Environmental Association, Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association, Midland Empire Snowgoers, Billings Motorcycle Club, Billings Drag Racers Association, Idaho’s Governor’s Office, Arizona Cattlegrowers Association, Hi Mountain Recreation, Montana Motorsports Dealer Association, Montana Farm Bureau, Montana Logging Association, Montana Multiple Use Association, Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Association, Montana Mining Association, Montana Trappers Association, Bitterroot

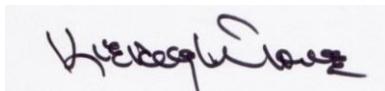
Ridgerunners Snowmobile Club, Bozeman Mountaineers 4X4 Club, Capital Trail Vehicle Association, South West Farm Bureau, and Save the West.

Communication between like minded organizations and groups was discussed and all the attendees had the opportunity to communicate the important issues they were facing. A list of the many issues were gathered and compiled during the first day of the conference and the second day provided the opportunity for everyone to discuss them. Everyone found themselves facing several of the same issues. The largest issue that faced all of the organizations was the new wilderness bill, HR1975. The 38 organizations voted unanimously to oppose HR1975 and any additional wilderness designation in Montana through this type of legislation. CBU produced and sent out a press release with the information from the summit and the opposition of HR1975 that was reached by the 38 attending organizations.

As a result of this summit, Senator Baucus came out with a statement in opposition to HR1975 and Representative Denny Rehberg also reiterated his continued opposition to this legislation and any future top down wilderness designation without the support of local governments, organizations, and citizens of Montana.

CBU continues to reach out to businesses, individuals and organizations in an effort to join together and make our voices heard. We are trying to preserve the last remaining multiple use lands in Montana and other states so that everyone both young and old can enjoy this beautiful land. CBU does not have membership dues and we rely solely on contributions from like minded members and supporters. The executive board of CBU encourages our members and supporters to get involved in the process and our organization, as we believe it is the people coming together that really can make a difference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kerry White".

Kerry White
Executive Co-Chairman
CBU