

Citizens for Balanced Use

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CBU had another busy year in 2008 as we continued our efforts to promote multiple use recreation on our federally managed public lands in Montana. The CFBU attorney that is helping us in cooperation with Families for Outdoor Recreation, Montana Snowmobile Association, Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association and the Montana 4x4 Association traveled with several Executive Board members to Missoula to present oral arguments in front of Judge Molloy on our litigation filed in opposition to the Gallatin national Forest Travel Plan. As of September 2009 we have yet to hear any decision from the high court.

Elk management became one of our focuses early in 2008 as we quickly realized that elk and elk habitat were being used to justify many closures to multiple use on Forest service managed lands. Not only recreation was being affected. Private property owners contacted CBU for assistance in working with the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) with the elk management problems they were having. CBU attended FWP sponsored meetings to gain information on the current status of elk population distribution in Montana. After becoming aware that FWP has not controlled the Elk population to sustainable levels and in fact have allowed 64% of the Elk Management Units in Montana to become over populated CBU has been educating legislature, FWP and the public on this issue.

CBU also learned of property owners concerns over water rights and the lack of protections for the continued use of these rights. CBU understands that previous Federal legislation had been introduced but failed in the past to take control of Montana water. We wrote letters to educate the Montana State government on the importance of completing the water adjudication that has been on-going. Farming and ranching is an all too important industry and heritage in Montana to not show concern for and do everything we can to preserve it.

Early in 2008 was also the time when the new Gallatin National Forest (GNF) Supervisor was appointed and took over management of the GNF. The past Supervisor was brought in with her team to create the new Travel Plan and the new Supervisor, Mary Erickson, then would be the person in charge of implementation even though the CBU lawsuit still remained, without decision, in Molloy's court. Board members of CBU met with Ms Erickson to express our welcome to her but also to express our concerns with implementation.

CBU made presentations before the Beaverhead, Jefferson, Madison and Butte Silverbow county commission when the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest (B-D) released their new Forest Management Plan. The new B-D Plan would have a devastating affect on multiple use recreation and resource management with hundreds of miles of trail and road closures. Members and supporters of CBU asked for our assistance and participated in presenting true science and facts to these commissions. The closures

would harm the economic stability of their counties and the information we provided supported this fact.

We also placed ads in the local newspaper so as to inform the general public of these facts. CBU distributed over 60,000 postcards that people could use if they wanted to contact their United States Senators or Representative along with the Governor. CBU participated in local radio broadcasts in Billings, Butte and Bozeman on the proposed closures in the B-D and helped educate people on how to get involved.

CBU also held a workshop in Butte to educate the public on the new Forest Plan process and how to comment. People busy with their day to day lives do not always have the time to learn the process of Federal land management planning and CBU provided the expertise to help.

In early spring the U.S. Legislature introduced to committee HR 2421, a bill to turn the control of all waters in Montana over to control of the United States. In Montana our Constitution states that all waters in Montana belong to the State of Montana. CBU researched this bill and distributed information to our members as to the consequences of HR 2421. A huge backlash against this bill nationally was the only thing that has delayed its passage. Organizations large and small contacted us and asked CBU to assist them in bringing together numerous groups and organization to discuss HR 2421. Because of our Network Conference the previous year that was so successful, CBU called for an interim Network Conference to discuss HR 2421. The Governor of Montana testified in favor of this bill before the committee in Washington D.C. and we hoped to have a joint statement from the Network meeting to combat his support for HR 2421. State employees with the Department of Natural Resources attended our Network meeting uninvited and tried to explain that Governor Schweitzer may have testified in favor of HR 2421 in D.C. but it was not what he meant.

CBU believes we had an impact on his reversal of position on this important issue. Montana depends on control of our waters for everything in our lives and the control of our waters must be left up to citizens of Montana to uphold our constitution. The power of all the organizations coming together made the difference and CBU was a big part of that. CBU continues to keep an eye on this legislation because it would have a very costly affect to every citizen in Montana if it were to become law.

Because CBU was working so closely with FWP on the Elk issue we were invited to participate in a new committee. The Montana Conservation and Restoration Partnership was formed and sponsored by the FWP. CBU soon realized that this committee was formed in an effort to take control over private property. Several letters were written in an effort to get CBU as a member of the steering committee. After repeated attempts, CBU was finally given a seat on this committee. CBU continues to have one of our Executive Board members attend every meeting and actively engage in the process.

We have concerns at the direction this committee may take and it is beneficial to all private property owners that CBU continue to participate and work for all Montanans in preserving private property rights. This committee could have a positive affect if the right direction is pursued and CBU will work toward that goal.

CBU also appealed the final decision on the South Belts Travel Plan. The severe closures left us no choice but to appeal.

The CFBU Board hired an individual to travel the entire state to distribute information on the 5 organizations (stated on page 1, Paragraph 1) that are involved with keeping our federally managed public open to multiple use. Great contacts were made and concerns of businesses, groups and individuals were heard. Efforts such as these provide CBU with information that helps us react to issues when they arise. We know where the people stand on an issue and we help educate them on how they can get involved and make a difference.

Because our members were interested in the political side of things and were asking for information on where the candidates stood on the issues, CBU created and sent out a survey to all the state office candidates and also some local races. We provided this information to the public so they could become informed voters. We included questions that were formulated by the comments we received when traveling the state.

The CFBU Board also started a video educational project. CFBU hired a professional video production company to record interviews with experts from all aspects of land management practices and techniques. CFBU produced a promotional video of the CFBU license plate that would help increase the sales numbers. CFBU was very pleased with the product and continue to move forward with more productions. Next year will be an exciting time for CFBU when these educational videos start to be released.

CBU participated in several meetings in Billings regarding the Custer National Forest and their travel planning project. CBU provided the Forest Service and the attendees with facts and best available science. CBU was disappointed in the decision and believe it was more politically motivated rather than based on the information we provided them. CBU ultimately appealed the Custer National Forest Travel Plan decision in mid-summer 2008. Again the massive closures and the flawed process in the Custer resulted in our having no choice but to appeal.

CBU attended the annual Western Environmental Trade Association conference in late summer. This gave CBU another opportunity to hear the concerns that other organizations had and extend an offer of working together to solve problems. Organizations in Montana and across the nation are more and more dedicated in working together on issues because we all have recognized that many of the issues facing recreation are also affecting the resource industries and agricultural operations. CBU has always worked to bring people together to solve problems and will continue to do so.

CBU participated in classes to learn about the federal mandate for “cooperation” and “coordination” in federally managed land planning. CBU traveled to several western counties to meet with county commissioners and provide them with the information we had learned and the supporting documentation CBU had collected. Several counties are now in the process of developing Resource Use Plans that will provide them the opportunity to be a part of the decision in federal land use planning.

CBU knows that local governments are the closest representatives to the people and therefore must have the knowledge required to participate in land use policies when representing their citizens. Many times federal land use decisions do not take into account local customs, heritage or economic needs. Local governments are critical stakeholders in all land management decisions that are being made by the federal management agencies because the sustainability of communities is at stake. CBU will continue to support our local governments as they proceed with developing resource

plans and their desire to cooperate and coordinate in land use planning decision with federal agencies.

CBU has engaged with the Montana Mountain Bike Association in attempting to designate a National Protection Area (NPA) for the Lionhead area just West of West Yellowstone Montana. This NPA would permanently preserve 3 mountain bike trails and several thousand acres of snowmobile terrain in the Lionhead area. CBU travelled to several meetings with local organizations and county governments to garner support. CBU was very successful and we hope to accomplish the designation of this NPA some time early next year.

A NPA in this area would provide some economic certainty to businesses already stressed by the continued uncertainty of winter use in Yellowstone Park and provide increased opportunities to bring in additional mountain bike users that would boost their summer visitation numbers. CBU supports West Yellowstone in their need of continuing snowmobile use in Yellowstone Park and by creating a permanent designated use for both summer and winter can only enhance the sustainability of this community and its residents.

CBU held its second annual Networking Conference in 2008 with 25 different organizations in attendance. The 25 organizations all agreed to take the following position on four issues.

- * **Oppose the Omnibus Public Land Management Act** that was being heard in Congress at that time. Senator Tom Coburn threatened to filibuster the bill and for now it looks to be dead but Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid said that he strongly supports the bill so rest assured it will be back in the 2009 congress. The Omnibus bill includes 190 different bills that all together would designate an additional 23 million acres of wilderness mostly in the western United States.
- * **Support MACO Resolution 2007-05** which states: *Now, Therefore be it resolved that the Montana Association of Counties shall urge Congress to support the decisions made by local county officials as to the future designation of Wilderness Study Areas.*
- * **Support MACO Resolution 2007-03** which states: *Now, Therefore be it resolved that the Montana Association of Counties directly opposes any action or plan that expands the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park to create a "buffer zone" for the migration of animals.*

- * Support legislation to require more transparency and accountability in all actions and operations undertaken by the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

This was the first year that any labor unions were present at our conference and we were somewhat hesitant as to why they wanted to be involved with the Montana Network Partnership. It became clear that the union folks are coming to realize that without the industries that rely on the raw materials to support businesses, the jobs for the workers go away. Many good paying jobs are being lost in Montana because of legal actions from environmental groups that are closing access to public lands.

CBU collected names of disabled individuals to participate in a damage Elk hunt in the Madison. CBU was disappointed that the Montana FWP called off the hunt at the last minute and so were the folks that were looking forward to the hunt. The FWP continues to be more of an adversary to the property owners in the Madison Valley rather than a partner working with the rancher for a healthy, sustainable Elk herd in this area.

After the FWP cancelled the hunt CBU was invited to help the ranchers in the Madison by urging FWP to properly manage not only the overpopulation of Elk but also the Bison coming out of Yellowstone Park and elevating the risk of Brucellosis transmission to private cattle herds. The Brucellosis problem should be a Park Service responsibility as that is where the disease originated. Brucellosis is not the fault of the ranchers yet they are the ones severely impacted if their animals get infected. The entire state of Montana is affected by what the Park Service does and CBU is working to hold them accountable.

During the year several CBU board members attended many meetings with Local governments, State agencies, Federal elected Senators and Representatives or their staff, organizations and groups. CBU is particularly proud of our involvement in creating the shared trail use plan for 5 trails in the Gallatin National Forest. A very new concept in the GNF that CBU presented and we were successful in bringing it to completion. Today these 5 trails are available to everyone on a time rotated basis rather than any one user group being denied access. A monitoring program was set up to be revisited next year to evaluate its success.

CBU donated money to several organizations for events they were holding. Through these donations we were able to educate the different user groups on the importance of working together and also on trail etiquette and the protection of trails, a very valuable resource.

Overall 2008 was a very successful year for CBU. The CBU network now reaches over 100,000 supporters in Montana. The organization has grown over the last 4 years and is now recognized as the most powerful multiple use organization in Montana. It is only through the hard work and dedication of our members and supporters that has allowed CBU such great success and we look forward to even more great things happening in 2009.

Kerry White

Executive Board Member

Citizens for Balanced Use

