

Citizens for Balanced Use

Box 606, Gallatin Gateway, Mt 59730

www.balanceduse.org

1-406-600-4228

Another year has passed and CBU celebrates our 12-year anniversary promoting multiple use recreation, active forest management, and responsible resource development on our federally managed public lands. CBU continues to increase in members and knowledge. We share information and facts with the public, we testify at meetings, write letters to legislators, and meet with our local, state, and federal agencies in an effort to educate the public on the importance of proper land management to provide a clean and healthy environment.

In January we sent a delegation to Idaho on two different occasions to discuss issues they face with federal land managers. CBU is getting involved with other states as we share many of the same concerns, closures of our public lands. Specifically, Idaho and Oregon organizations have become strong partners with CBU.

CBU is represented on several collaborative groups across Montana. In the Gallatin we are a voting member of the Custer Gallatin Working Group (CGWG). This collaborative was formed by the nine Counties within the Custer Gallatin National Forest. The collaborative meets on the second Wednesday of every month with a focus on providing input on Forest Service projects. Projects include timber management activities, forest planning, grazing issues, mineral activities, etc. This collaborative provides CBU the opportunity to support projects that benefitting the public and its communities. It also gives CBU an avenue to educate members of the collaborative on proper land management.

CBU founding member, Kerry White is a current Montana legislator. Representative White HD 64) introduced HJ 13 in the 2015 legislature. HJ 13 was the result of a focused study identifying the thousands of miles of roads closed by the Forest Service and BLM in Montana during the last 20 years. The study was assigned to the Montana legislative interim committee (EQC) of which Representative White is a member. The final report of this study was released late 2016 and can be found at <http://leg.mt.gov/content/Committees/Interim/2015-2016/EQC/Committee-Topics/hj-13/hj13-finalreport.pdf>

The report shows more than 20,000 miles of roads have been closed to motorized public access since 1995. These closures should concern everyone. Closures affect the disabled, elderly, handicapped, physically challenged and veterans with amputations and disabilities, who depend on motorized transportation to enjoy their public lands. These closures negatively impact active management including fuel reduction projects, watershed restoration, mineral exploration, and grazing lease management, all of which has an adverse effect on the social and economic needs of communities all across Montana.

In January CBU sent our Executive Director to an American Lands Council meeting in Salt Lake City. The American Lands Council is based in Utah and works to promote management of our federal lands back to the states and providing for more local input into these federal land management activities. CBU believes that decisions on public land management are better made by local citizens and organizations most affected. This contradicts the one size fits all, top down approach, developed in Washington D.C. This one reason why local collaborative groups have been held up as the future of making federal land management decisions. CBU and our members are also part of other collaborative groups in other forests across Montana and other western states including Idaho and Oregon. We also engage with BLM agencies on their land planning actions.

CBU sponsors many outdoor activities including poker rides, fun runs, hunting trips, motorcycle racing events and participants, trail cleanup projects, trail maintenance, winter trail grooming, weed control, and amenity construction.

February brought another meeting of the CGWG and on the 19th and 20th CBU participated in the Western Council of Snowmobiling's annual meeting. CBU is a strong partner with many snowmobile clubs and the Montana Snowmobile Association. We were proud to be invited to this conference. Closures to snowmobiling in Montana and other states adversely affect local and state economies. Snowmobiling in Montana has grown in popularity with yearly spending topping \$96 million per year and, according to the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research report, more than 100,000 individuals participated in this activity in Montana in 2014. Snowmobiles have continued to gain popularity in Montana since their first factory sales businesses began in 1964. Snowmobiles are the least impactful to the landscape as this equipment never touches the ground and in the spring leaves no trace of their presence.

On February 23rd the Director of CBU hosted a delegation of students from California. An outdoor tour and round table discussion brought awareness to the students of how important the resource rich state Montana is to our nation. Our official moniker is the Treasure State. Providing not only recreation, but also clean water, our forests provide carbon sequestration and produce fresh oxygen. These subjects were of high interest to these students during the round table discussions. These students returned to California and CBU hopes they shared their adventure and knowledge gained in their visit to Montana.

March of 2016 brought the Forest Service release beginning the process of development of the new Forest Plan Revision. This plan will guide the management of the Custer Gallatin National Forest over the next 15 to 20 years. CBU will be very engaged with the Forest Service during the development of this plan. We hope to influence the agency in a way that will preserve multiple use of the Custer Gallatin. The Travel Plan of 2008 severely restricted multiple use access to this forest. Hundreds of miles of roads and trails were closed to motorized and mechanized users. The Forest Plan revision is expected to be complete by 2019 and CBU will do our best to stay engaged with the agency and express upon them the importance of areas available for motorized and mechanized recreation, the importance of active forest management to reduce fuel loads and the risk of catastrophic fires, provide areas of responsible resource development to provide jobs and economic benefits to local communities, and provide access to leases including grazing, cabins, guide services, and inholdings.

On March 5th and 6th CBU helped with the historic East West Ride which is a 2 day snowmobile ride on the Big Sky Snowmobile Trail. This trail begins in the Little Bear drainage South of Gallatin Gateway and travels South through the Gallatin National Forest for a distance of over 90 miles and terminates in the small community of West Yellowstone at the west entrance to Yellowstone Park. CBU helps with this event every year and more than 30 riders participated in 2016. Overnight accommodations were provided by the 320 Ranch located at the Buffalo Horn trailhead.

Another monthly meeting in March of the CGWG provided more insight into the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan where the Forest Service told the CGWG their first focus was on future recommendations of additional wilderness and wild and scenic rivers. Also the CGWG began discussions on a couple of forest fuel reduction projects in the Bridger Mountains and Hebgen Lake area south of West Yellowstone.

March 9th and 10th the Legislature EQC met in Helena and on March 10th the Gallatin RAC met in Bozeman. The RAC is the Resource Advisory Committee with members appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. The Gallatin RAC recommends dispersal of Title 10 funds on projects that benefit the environment and communities. CBU's Executive Director is a member of this RAC.

CBU members and the Board participated in the West Yellowstone Snowmobile Expo again this year on March 11th through March 13th. We provided information to the public on the positive economic and social benefits of snowmobiling. We signed up new members and promoted our organization to all who attended. CBU has a great display for these events with pictures of all the different outdoor recreation activities posted and we hand out information about CBU and our current involvement in the issues. We share information with other organizations from all across Montana and other states.

The April CGWG meeting involved 2 days of discussion in Livingston. The first day was focused on the Grizzly Bear delisting in the Greater Yellowstone area of Montana. The Grizzly Bear has reached capacity in the area and the bear is expanding its range causing conflicts with humans and livestock. Grizzly / human encounters and mauling are increasing. Livestock depredation continues and the numbers of bear has reached a point where delisting is necessary to properly manage the bear. CBU supports delisting of the Grizzly Bear so the State of Montana can assume management responsibilities of this species. The Endangered Species Act provides for a clear process to list a species but nothing in this Act provides a clear direction to delist. CBU is in support of federal legislation to review and revise the ESA so this Act clearly defines a delisting process. The second day of the CGWG meeting focused on the Forest Plan revision and other projects.

Judge Holly Brown held the annual meeting of the Water Availability review for the Gallatin River during the evening of April 13th. This report is important to the members of CBU as snow pack levels affect potential late summer closures to recreation in the Gallatin National Forest. Also the effect of low river flows directly affects float companies, fishing guides, and irrigators

with senior water rights in the Gallatin. Snowpack levels were reported below normal at the meeting with hopes of more spring moisture to come.

The Executive Director of CBU travelled to Helena on April 18th to meet with FWP to discuss recreation access on state land. The closure of roads on federally managed land has raised the discussion about the state providing multiple use recreation activities on State Land. Montana FWP has a State Recreation Plan which includes inventory of State Parks for recreation facilities, and mapping all winter snowmobile groomed routes in Montana on all lands. The last project to be completed by FWP in the plan is to map all motorized and non-motorized trails and roads on all public lands in Montana. This project is scheduled to be complete sometime in 2018 or 2019. CBU has always promoted and advocated for the state to provide more recreation trail opportunities and to identify connections from federally managed land to state land.

The CBU Executive Director attended a leadership workshop on April 20th sponsored by Americans for Prosperity. National leaders provided information on outreach, marketing, leadership training, and technology strategies to help organizations such as CBU be more efficient and effective.

CBU attended another meeting with the Gallatin National Forest on April 29th to further discuss the new Forest Plan revision and the desired conditions our organization wanted to see in the completed plan. On May 2nd CBU met with Montana FWP to advise them of progress in the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan. Another meeting of the CGWG was held on May 10th and 11th to discuss two fuel reduction projects and the Forest Plan.

CBU held our annual Trail Raiser banquet on May 14th with our biggest attendance ever and raising more funds to help our organization. Fun, games, silent and live auction items, and great speakers filled the night and CBU is so blessed to have so many generous supporters. The grand prize raffle ATV was donated by BRP this year and the winner was Ron Albee from Lewistown who was overjoyed in winning this beautiful machine.

CBU Director Kerry White travelled to Oregon to attend the annual Forest Access For All banquet. FAVA, a sister organization CBU helped initiate, continues to work very closely with us in their fight to keep access open in Eastern Oregon. On May 28th we participated in a meeting with the American Lands Council to update their organization with the current issues from CBU.

The Capitol Trail Riders Association held their annual fun run June 16th through the 19th. This event included a day of maintaining trails, two days of riding, and trail cleanup day. Representatives from the Forest Service, BLM, and Montana FWP stopped by to update the club on current actions and projects along with answering any questions people had about specific topics. CBU attends this event every year and we appreciate the support CTVA provides.

In June CBU continued meeting with the CGWG collaborative and move management projects and planning efforts on the Forest Plan forward. On June 23rd CBU travelled to Seeley Lake and met with members of the snowmobile club. We also put on a presentation to the public explaining the Forest Planning process and answered questions about engagement opportunities they have in working with the agency.

CBU attended the OHV grants meeting in Helena on June 28th to advocate for trail maintenance funds for several OHV clubs across Montana. These funds are critical in maintaining trails for all users despite the Forest Service having depleted trail and road maintenance funds in favor of other areas the agency believes more important.

Another CGWG meeting in July was followed by CBU being invited to participate in a panel discussion in Billings by the National Outdoor Writers Association. The topic was federal land management and whether these lands were being properly managed or if there were other alternative management ideas. CBU presented facts on the poor health and condition of our federally managed public lands and provided a power point presentation of pictures ranging from the fuel load of dead and dying timber, effects of catastrophic fires including poor air quality, soil erosion and stream sedimentation. We also presented the economic and social impacts to local communities from the loss of the timber industry and active management of our forests.

The final RAC meeting to distribute Title 10 funds was held July 28th to review eligible projects. Trail maintenance received several of the grants which our CBU RAC member and others on the committee strongly supported.

The monthly meeting for August was held on the 9th and the board met at Jackson Creek trailhead. The board decided to incorporate a trail ride with our meeting and several members of the public attended. On August 20th CBU joined the CTVA club from Helena for a ride on the Boulder and Basin area trails. CBU has been working with the Jefferson County Commission to help establish Boulder as an ATV and outdoor multiple use recreation hub. Boulder is centrally located in Montana and provides access to many trails in all directions. Outdoor recreation could become a major economic driver in the Boulder area when a complete interconnected trail system is developed. The many stake holders and land ownership partners involved make this process complicated but the Jefferson County Commission is dedicated to seeing this through and CBU is working with them towards this goal.

On August 27th the Gallatin Valley Snowmobile Association held one of their trail clearing days in Taylor Fork in the Gallatin National Forest. Several members of GVSA and CBU participated in the event. GVSA clears, maintains, and grooms over 142 miles of trail in the GNF. Summer trail clearing and maintenance is an important part of their grooming program which is administered by Montana FWP. Time spent by members and supporters provide for the match in acquiring funding for their program.

On September 7th CBU hosted the residents of Condon in another effort to educate the public on Forest Planning. These residents were concerned about the closures being considered by the Helena National Forest. CBU informed the public on the process of development of the plan, the release, and ultimately to objection process. Many compliments were made to CBU about our presentation and the information provided.

CBU is one of the board members of Treasure State Resource Association and they held their annual meeting in Helena September 11th through the 13th. CBU joined with the many resource groups that are a part of TSRA to discuss the issues of coal, timber, oil, gas, and mining. We

looked at the economic and social benefits of resource production in Montana and the international trade opportunities. CBU is a welcome member of TSRA as we work to preserve access to the very lands these resources are located. Once access is lost, so are the jobs and economic benefits of resource production in Montana. Most of these resources are located on federally managed public lands.

CBU attended the Montana Petroleum meeting in Bozeman on August 21st to hear a presentation on the future of oil and gas development in Montana. With new fracking technology available to the industry the amount of surface occupancy to recover oil and gas is greatly reduced. 2016 oil prices have dropped as a result of this new technology. MPA is looking to the future of their industry and again tapping into overseas markets. CBU again is an organization advocating for access to our federally managed public land so jobs and economic benefits from this industry will benefit Montana.

On September 28th CBU travelled to Malta for a presentation on coordination sponsored by the Montana Community Preservation Alliance. This was an educational meeting hosted by MCPA and they brought Margret Byfield from the American Stewards Of Liberty (Texas) to instruct local governments on the coordination process. Federal statutes require federal agencies to coordinate their planning with local governments when local governments have a local growth policy or resource plan in place. Federal agencies have been reluctant to coordinate with local governments and most federal agencies are not educated on the coordination process.

When a local government has a local growth policy or resource plan, federal agencies are required to make their plan “as consistent as possible” with the local plan. In Montana 55 of the 56 counties have a local growth policy and CBU is working to educate local governments on their ability to coordinate, how to invoke coordination, what is required of the federal agency, and what to do in the event the federal agency ignores their local plan. Coordination is just another tool local governments can use to influence a federal agency plan in order for that plan to benefit their community.

CBU attends the monthly meeting of GVSA and our Executive Director is the Public Lands officer on the GVSA board. GVSA meetings are held every second Wednesday of the month at the Groomer Shed south of 4 Corners west of Bozeman.

CBU met with Senator Daines on October 17th in Bozeman to discuss federal legislation which may affect the members of CBU and our supporting organizations. CBU keeps in contact with our Washington congressional members to inform them of our issues. CBU also meets with our state Representatives and Senators on a regular basis to discuss the state issues that affect CBU. It is important for CBU to educate the public on the importance of engaging with not only our elected representatives but also with our local, state, and federal agencies to communicate our issues and concerns and build relationships with these individuals.

The annual conference of the American Lands Council was held in Salt Lake City on September 19th through the 21st. CBU attended the conference and made a presentation on the issues of Montana. This was a very successful conference and many contacts were made with other groups, clubs, and organizations. This conference brings in elected officials from several western

states including Governors and legislators both state and federal. These are the policy makers and we understand the importance of forging relationships with likeminded groups and individuals in order to be successful.

In November CBU had several meetings with industry leaders in the area of Bozeman, Big Sky, and West Yellowstone. Fundraising and marketing of CBU continues throughout the year and CBU depends on strong relationships with businesses across Montana. We appreciate their support and we work every day to preserve and protect our way of life in Montana.

December 1st brought the annual Christmas party of Safari Club International at the Land of Magic which board members of CBU were invited to attend. SCI is another great organization and a partner of CBU. We also enjoyed attending the December 2nd Christmas party of GVSA at the Holiday Inn in Belgrade.

The Farm Bureau held a meeting on December 6th to discuss the agriculture issues of their organization. Agriculture still remains the number one industry in Montana and CBU works with the Farm Bureau, Stock Growers, Grain Growers, and United Property Owners of Montana in helping to preserve this important industry. Property rights and government regulations are always topics of conversation. CBU helps educate the public on the importance of private property rights and building strong relations with property owners. These people provide most of the wildlife habitat including habitat for big game, water fowl, and upland birds which all are popular for supporting the hunting industry.

CBU believes a balanced use approach to federal land management with the focus on multiple use access for everyone. We believe 2016 was a successful year and we appreciate all who helped make CBU the best organization in Montana. We are looking forward to next year and a possible change in direction by the federal land managers with a new administration coming to Washington D.C. For too long we have witnessed continued closures to our public lands and CBU will continue to educate and inform the public and elected officials on the importance of multiple use recreation, active forest management, and responsible resource development on our federally managed public lands while protecting and preserving the right of property ownership.

Sincerely,
Kerry White
Executive Director
CBU