



THE MONTANA SIERRAN

FALL EDITION, 2007

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A grouse peers up at the humans it just encountered (and gave heart attacks to) in its forest this past June. Photo by Kris Prinzog



Highwood Coal-fired Power Plant *Sierra Club Joins lawsuit while Montana cities reject its potential electricity*

The proposed Highwood Generating Station, a 250-megawatt coal-fired power plant built on the shore of the Missouri River just outside Great Falls, would spew almost 3 millions tons of global warming pollutants into the air each year. The plant would put thousands of tons of other pollutants into the air as well, including sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, mercury and more. This summer the Sierra Club joined a lawsuit that challenged the project's \$650 million U.S. Department of

Agriculture federal loan request, which would finance construction of Highwood and at least six other plants nationwide.

Loans for those facilities could top \$5.1 billion, including \$650 million for Highwood, according to the Rural Utilities Service, the USDA division that manages the loan program. If secured, the money would cover 85 percent of the Highwood project's costs. Highwood would be the largest coal plant built in Montana in two decades

In addition to the environmental impacts, the plant would be located within a National Historic Landmark, where Lewis & Clark spent a month portaging around the Great Falls of the Missouri River. The National Park Service has said the plant will destroy the site and likely lead to its delisting.

Electric City Power (ECP), a Great Falls non-profit, is trying to build long-term power contracts with customers. The Highwood Generation Station is

(Continued on page 3)

Off Road Vehicle Assaults Sierra Club Staff, Volunteers, *yet justice is not granted.* By Bob Clark

On July 30th 2006, I was leading a local Sierra Club backpack trip in the Great Burn Roadless Area on the Clearwater National Forest in Idaho. Our hiking party consisted of six people, including members of the executive Committee of the Bitterroot-Mission Group. We were on the third day of a three day backpack trip when three motorcycles were encountered on a closed trail (the entire area is closed to motorized vehicles.) I attempted to get a photo of this activity because I wanted to report it to the Forest Service and have the best documentation possible, so standing on



Photo: Bob Clark

the trail I raised the camera to my eye when the lead motorcyclist immediately started his engine and raced straight toward me, lifting the front wheel off the ground in a "wheelie" manner. What I recall from that split second was the front tire of the motorcycle coming at my head. I was able to snap a photo and raise my arm to deflect the impact. The impact threw me off the trail. The rider fell from the impact and a brief altercation and exchange of words followed as the rider got on his bike started it and left, heading down the trail with the two other bikers behind him.

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(Right)
Sierra Club
member
Lucy McCoy
poses
amongst the
wildflowers
on a
mountainside
in the
Petty Creek
Roadless
Area.

Photo by
Doug McCoy



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8 canoe paddlers ready to go, at Coal Banks Landing put-in. This mid-September Bitterroot-Mission Group outing enjoyed superb weather, glassy-calm days, adventuresome side-hikes and campfire camaraderie for 4 days along the historic Wild and Scenic "White-Cliffs" section of Montana's famed Missouri River. Photo by Robbie Liben

Highwood Plant—continued from p. 1

set to go online in 2012. After the plant is built, most of the power supplied through the utility would come from the coal-fired plant.

In August three major Montana cities rejected offers from ECP to provide them with power.

Helena city commissioners rejected an offer from Great Falls officials to purchase electricity from the Electric City Power utility, which is banking its future in large part on the Highwood Generating Station.

Commissioners were influenced by several factors, including uncertainty over the future of and the financial ramifications of the deal, the plants' uncertain future, environmental problems associated with coal and the prospect of reducing NorthWestern Energy's buying power thus hurting residential users.

Helena Commissioner Alan Peura was quoted in the Helena IR; "Environmentally, I have no intention in hitching our wagons to clean coal."

Instead of spending billions to subsidize a massively polluting industry, it's time to invest in clean energy solutions like vehicles that go farther on a gallon of gas. The serious economic and environmental downsides of coal prevent it from being a good option for a cleaner, healthier energy future. Instead of increasing our global warming emissions and funneling billions into a new, dirty industry, we should be investing in efficiency and renewable energy technologies that exist today and can help us solve global warming. It's time to invest in the clean energy industries that will fuel the economy of tomorrow and create hundreds of thousands of new good-paying jobs across the country. Coal is simply not a smart answer for our energy future.

Sierra Club Presentations on Bull Trout and Clean Water Act a Great Success!

On July 21st Sierra Club volunteer Peter Metcalf, who is working on bull trout conservation, was invited by The Missoulian Angler to speak at their 1st annual Women's Fly Fishing Clinic at the Dunrovin Ranch, in Lolo.

Peter gave a 20 minute presentation on bull trout, the Endangered Species Act and its role in the conservation and restoration of western Montana's coldwater fisheries.

A second presentation was given on Tuesday, July 31st, at The Missoulian Angler fly shop - this time with the Liam Woods Fly Fishing School. The school is held for high school students to teach them about the sport of fly fishing and angling ethics.

A question and answer period followed each presentation. Some **100 people** attended the two presentations.

Special thanks to Peter Metcalf!!

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ORV attack— continued from page 1

Due in part to photographs taken at the scene of the incident, Forest Service law enforcement was eventually able to track down the assailant and his cohorts. This summer Tim Turner, of Stevensville, Montana, was charged with felony aggravated assault. Despite excellent police work by Forest Service law enforcement, the federal Department of Justice passed on prosecuting the case before passing it to Clearwater County's proceedings and has now verbally agreed to accepting a guilty plea from Turner's attorney for a misdemeanor charge of disturbing the peace. It seems that Turner (a repeat offender) will no longer be charged with felony aggravated assault or even a violation of the trail closure.

When it comes to enforcing laws on public lands the Forest Service should make a public example of busted

offenders. I'm afraid that a misdemeanor charge for disturbing the peace won't serve as a deterrent to other would-be violators. These are not just a few bad apples. These sorts of incidents are on the rise. I don't think anyone in America should be afraid to hike in our national forests. Unfortunately, giving a slap on the wrist to a repeat offender for vehicular assault won't make anyone feel safer.

The agency needs to rein in this destructive and dangerous form of recreation.

With Travel Planning beginning on many of western Montana's National Forests, this incident makes evident that motorized and non-motorized recreation in the same place is unmanageable and that such situations combined

with more and more illegal trespass is increasing user conflicts in areas traditionally used by pack and saddle.

The Forest service has an opportunity to avoid these problems through proactive policies in each Forest's Travel Plan. The agency should determine what areas are open based on the ability of the agency to monitor and enforce such use and its impacts, not on the desire of a minority of Forest users who engage in this recreation.

Get involved!

In Montana, there are currently 22 Travel Plans

either on-going or in preparation, ranging from forest-wide to district specific. For instance, the Custer National Forest, Beartooth District is currently accepting comments on a Draft Travel Plan EIS (www.fs.fed.us/r1/custer/), and the Bitterroot National Forest is accepting scoping comments on their Travel Plan EIS (www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot/) Contact your local forest service, a Sierra Club office or visit www.quietusecoalition.org (Sierra Club is a coalition member) to learn more about these processes.



A sign along the trail clearly indicates closure to motorized vehicles.

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"Group Photo!"
Not to be daunted by attack-cyclists, this year's participants in the annual 3-day backpacking outing to the Great Burn Roadless Area pauses for a photo this past July.

Reports from the Field.... Notes from the 2007 Missoula Summit Day Outings! By John Wolverton

The Bitterroot-Mission Group hosted Missoula Summit Day on Saturday August 4th which offered hikes to three of Missoula's prominent peaks.



On Missoula Summit Day, hikers marvel at fat little morphing tadpoles inhabiting a rivulet in the meadow immediately below the north summit of Lolo Peak. This beautiful meadow is in danger of being severed from its surrounding habitat by alpine ski runs and chair-lifts which are part of the Bitterroot Resort's proposed mega-ski-resort real estate development. The Bitterroot-Mission Group of the Sierra Club is working hard to protect these beautiful local public lands.
Photo by Sally Carlson

One option was a hike to Lolo Peak from the Mormon Peak trailhead led by BMG ExCom member John Wolverton:

8 people hiked a long day up past Carlton Lake and then onto Lolo Peak for a 3pm summit and lunch amidst gusting winds. Participants got bird's eye and up-close views of the slopes, ridges and meadows under threat of potential development by America's largest proposed ski resort. Forest scientist Clint Carlson came along and was a great asset for everyone to hear his vast knowledge of Carlton Ridge Research Natural Area and the Bitterroot Mountains. One of the many gems we encountered was during our descent back through 8,000 feet. It's the precious little meadow that is just above Carlton Lake; there we found many wildflowers and fat tadpoles in a gently flowing rivulet. Further on in our descent we got a clear view of the Jocko Lakes fire blowup; it was an immensely wide mushroom cloud....

Option 2 was a bicycle approach, then hike to Stuart Peak in the Rattlesnake Wilderness along with the Rocky Mountaineers, led by Mary Dalton:

After significant uncertainty about this trip with triple digit heat and thick smoke looming in the valley for days prior, this turned out to be one of the most spectacular trips of this year! The weather was a cool 88 degrees with a nice breeze, and clear blue sky all day, with the exception of the ominous mushroom smoke cloud belching out on the eastern horizon from the Jocko Lakes fire. We captured some awesome pictures of the slurry bomber flying by virtually at eye-level. We were pleasantly surprised to reach the peak at 2 pm, only 5 1/2 hours from the main trail head to the summit. Along the way we snacked on the sarvas, thimble and huckleberries; which we also identified in the very LARGE pile of bear scat on the trail. A special thanks to Roy Regal, Greg Wermers and Tim Hall for coming along on this hike; although we enjoyed the beautiful weather, scenery and the adventure of the hike, the real treat was the exceptional company!

Rounding out Missoula Summit Day was a short, low elevation hike on Mount Jumbo with Glenn Marangelo of Five Valleys Land Trust:

It was a great chance to point out a lot of the surrounding area and municipality -- Lolo Peak, the Rattlesnake Recreation Area and Wilderness, Waterworks Hill and to make mention of the great spring wildflowers of Missoula's preserved open spaces.

The Bitterroot-Mission Group wishes to extend its thanks to our trip leaders; and especially to Tim Hall of the Sports Exchange for germinating the Summit Day idea and assisting in its promotion and organization... Thanks!

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For more information about the Bitterroot-Mission Group's outings program, contact John Wolverton at 543-6696, yodelingdog@hotmail.com

Spring Wildflower Hike to Packer Meadow! By Adrienne Hopkins

We had a great turnout for this Saturday June 16th trip. Past participants Kerry, Peter, Marjorie and Linda enjoyed themselves enough last year to take on the hike again. New to this eight mile hike - with its' 2500 foot elevation gain - were Kathy, Roger, Jim, Mary, Julie, Mary, Terry and my own father. Though "severe thunderstorms, heavy rain and hail" were predicted for the evening, we had glorious sunny weather and a lovely breeze the whole way.



The weirdest thing we saw (in my opinion) was western coralroot (*Corallorhiza mertensiana*). No leaves, chlorophyll, or photosynthesis, just a red stem with funky little orchid flowers feeding off of fungi.

We encountered the rather unfriendly and parasitic Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja*) and lousewort (*Pedicularis*), and the poisonous mountain death camas, (*Zigadenus elegans*), heartleaf arnica (*Arnica cordifolia*), and false hellebore (*Veratrum viride*).

But we also met with several edible or medicinal plants: Service berry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), blue flax (*Linum perenne*), stoncrop (*Sedum*), yellow and blue violets (*Viola*), kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), Oregon grape (*Berberis aquifolium*), roses (*Rosa*), huckleberries (*Vaccinium*), wortleberries (*V. scoparium*), strawberries (*Fragaria*), wild currants (*Ribes*), thimbleberries (*Rubus*), bunch berry (*Cornus canadensis*), camas (*Camassia quamash*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), false dandelion (*Agroseris*), pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*), western sweet vetch (*Hedysarum*

occidentale), arrow leaf balsam root (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), elegant cat's ears (*Calochortus elegans*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), and glacier lily (*Erythronium*). There were two others I didn't recognize at the time: Sitka valerian (*Valeriana sitchensis*) and pipsissewa (*Chimaphila umbellata*). Julie correctly identified the Elk Thistle (*Cirsium scariosum*) for us.

The only place we found the noxious spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*) was along the logging roads. Coincidence? I think not.

Flitting through the flora were northern flickers, a nesting grouse hen, an owl, fritillaries of all stripes, and mountain swallowtails.

Some old friends from last year's hike reappeared: false Solomon's seal (*Smilacina racemosa*), western meadowrue (*Thalictrum occidentale*), cushion buckwheat (*Eriogonum umbellatum*), American

Bistort (*Polygonum bistortoides*), Alpine Bluebells (*Mertensia*), Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon*), dwarf water leaf (*Hydrophyllum capitatum*), snowbrush (*Ceanothus*), Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium*), coral bells (*Heuchera*), mountain heather (*Phyllodoce*), pussy toes (*Antennaria media*), pink pussy toes (*Antennaria rosea*), blue beard tongue (*Penstemon*), bear grass (*Xerophyllum tenax*), blue lupine (*Lupinus*), trillium, horsetails (*Equisetum*) and golden alexanders (*Zizia aptera*).

For a snack we brought along ginger cookies and some rose petal jam I'd made using wild roses and a recipe I unashamedly stole from Fay Schaller, a superlative Sierra Club hike leader. Last year at the same time, the Packer Meadow camas season was just starting. On this year's trip we found them past their zenith, though they still contributed a beautiful rippling blue end to our hike.

The rain generously held off until we were done with dinner at the Lochsa Lodge in Idaho.

**Mark your calendars!
December 7th and 8th in Missoula**

University of Montana, University Center

Join the Sierra Club for a 2-day event exploring Hunting, Fishing, and Conservation. Participants will enjoy informative presentations, workshops, hands-on demonstrations, and a film showing of "Opportunity for All" a new film by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. We are proud to have Mr. Shane Mahoney on hand to open the event with an introduction to the film on Friday night, December 7th. Mr. Mahoney was Born and raised in Newfoundland, and is a biologist and writer, and is widely known internationally as a lecturer on environmental and resource conservation issues.

The event is Free and Open to the public.

For more information, contact the Missoula field office at 406-549-1142

Did you know?

- In 2006, more than 87 million Americans, or 38 percent of the United States' population age 16 and older hunted, fished or observed wildlife.
- They spent \$120 billion that year pursuing those activities.

Further broken down by category:

- 30 million (or 13 percent) fished and spent a total of \$41 billion on their activities.
- 12.5 million (or 5 percent) hunted and spent a total of \$23 billion
- 71 million (or 31 percent) observed wildlife and spent a total of \$45 billion.

According to preliminary state-by-state data from the new 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, **Montanans were on average most likely to hunt.** A recent survey of **Sierra Club members** found that 18% purchased a hunting or fishing license in the past year. For more information about Sierra Club's Hunting & Fishing Partnership Program go to: www.sierraclub.org/sierrasportsmen

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Editor reserves the right to print letters based on space. All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, usage, taste and libel.

Submissions must include first and last name with city/town (and state, if the letter is not from Montana).

The *Montana Sierran* encourages submissions of articles and photos for upcoming issues. The *Montana Sierran* reserves the right to edit or reject submissions at its discretion. For more information contact the editor at mtsierraneditor@gmail.com or 255-0940.

Winter issue deadline: December 21, 2007
(Please note: it takes roughly one month from this deadline for the newsletter to reach mailboxes: plan your submission accordingly.)

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Thank you! - The Editor

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Montana Chapter
Executive Committee
upcoming meetings:

*Meeting date and
place not yet
scheduled, but likely
to occur in late
January in Helena.*

For more information:
Contact Jeff Van Den Noort,
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