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SAVINGTHEWILDPLACES.ORG

by

ANN ELIZABETH FLEISCHLI

A.B., University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, 1964

J.D., University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, 1966

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Approved by:

Sandy Ross, Associate Dean of the Graduate School

Nadia White, Chair

School of Journalism

Clem Work

School of Journalism

Rick Graetz

Department of Geography

Abstract

Purpose

The focus of this professional paper is the description of both collaborative and individual efforts to save a wild place, the Rocky Mountain Front (RMF) in Lewis and Clark National Forest in Montana. The purpose of doing that is to provide an example that others could use to save their own beloved wild place, wherever that might be.

Methods

The description includes the formation of the Friends of the Front in the late 1970s by Gene Sentz and Roy Jacobs. The group, now a coalition with three major environmental organizations, continues its activities in April 2012, the date of this paper's completion. During this period of over 30 years, the participants in collaboration modeled a respectful, neighborly approach intended to build public support to prevent the use of the Front as an oil and gas industrial area.

They accomplished the 1997 banning by forest supervisor Gloria Flora of any new oil and gas leases in the Lewis and Clark National Forest for the duration of that USFS Resource Plan. Then they obtained a buyout of existing leases, using a tax credit method through Congressional legislation, followed by the withdrawal of those forest lands from any future leasing. In a strenuous effort, hundreds of supporters of the RMF subsequently attended USFS meetings to shape the other part of forest planning, the Travel Plan. A Travel Plan balances motorized uses with other uses in the forest.

Lastly, the Travel Plan was incorporated into a second federal law, introduced in Congress but yet to be passed in April 2012, that creates a new approach to forest management. By its terms it makes the Lewis and Clark National Forest a conservation easement of 208,000 acres, freezing the uses as they now exist under USFS management, permanently. It also sets up 67,000 acres of wilderness areas.

While these monumental efforts continue, east of the RMF parcels of land owned by individuals removed their development rights from their lands using conservation easements, totaling 173,000 acres as of the summer of 2011.

Conclusions

The example described here works for a collaborative group effort to save wild places but it may require neighborly members. However, individual efforts can also achieve similar results, at least on private lands.

This professional paper is published as a web site for easy dissemination and can be found at <http://www.savingthewildplaces.org>.