

HELENA National Forest

Caring for the land and serving the people since 1906

Update



Welcome to the Helena National Forest....

This Helena National Forest *Update* provides you an overview of the activities, programs, and accomplishments of the Helena National Forest over the past year.

2004 brought a number of changes to the Forest and to the agency as a whole. The Forest Service completed a study of our technical services staff, which numbered approximately 900 people across the nation. The study considered whether the work could be done more economically if retained in-house or contracted out to external vendors. The determination was made that a system which retained expertise in-house, using employees who would generally function remotely, is the most efficient system. Nation-wide, staff retained to conduct the work, primarily computer support, have been reduced to 550.

As that study was nearing completion, the Forest Service announced its intention to centralize most Budget and Finance functions and Personnel functions in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 2005 and 2006 respectively. These actions, together with the restructuring of tech services, have all been selected to improve business efficiency in the future. Because the Helena Forest houses a human resources zone staff of eight individuals who provide service to four other Forests and the North Dakota grassland, centralization means a major disruption to our workforce and to our close relationships with these employees.

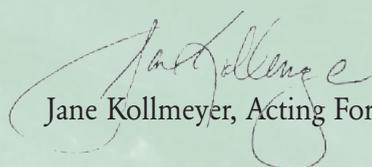
Retirements also created some transition in our workforce. Tom Clifford retired as Forest Supervisor after more than eleven years in that job and a thirty-five year plus career. Other familiar faces who retired at the end of the year are Realty Specialist Sharlene Larance (16 years on the HNF), Planner Chuck Neal (6 years on the HNF), and Surveyor George Rice (24 years on the HNF).

A lot of our energy this last year was directed to planning and implementation of fuels reduction projects. We have developed a number of valuable working relationships with other agencies, governmental entities, and private landowners, all directed toward addressing the serious fuels buildup in our western forests. While it was wonderful in 2004 to have a respite from the brutal fire seasons of recent years, I certainly hope that people will stay focused on the need to actively manage our forests.

As always, other activities included road maintenance, weed control, salvage sales, range management, mine reclamation, contracts for services were awarded, outreach opportunities were provided to local communities, special use permits were issued, wildlife and fisheries monitoring and enhancement projects were completed.

I would like to again acknowledge the wonderful assistance we enjoy from our partners, which include individuals, other natural resource agencies, non-profit organizations, volunteers, and civic groups. We truly appreciate the time and effort of our partners in helping us accomplish the important land management work we do. Many of the services enjoyed by visitors to the Helena National Forest would not be possible without the help of these partners.

The Forest is looking forward to many accomplishments in 2005, including a number of events which are planned to commemorate the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition as well as the centennial of the creation of the U.S. Forest Service. Please visit us at any of our offices or on our new <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena> website with your thoughts and ideas on management of the Helena National Forest.


Jane Kollmeyer, Acting Forest Supervisor

Helena National Forest • 406-449-5201 • www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena

The Helena National Forest

Fiscal Year 2004 Activities

Helena National Forest (acres)	975,359
Scapegoat Wilderness.....	80,697
Gates of the Mountains Wilderness.....	28,560

Payments to Counties (total 2004)	\$414,996
Broadwater.....	\$83,115
Jefferson.....	\$40,467
Lewis & Clark.....	
Meagher.....	\$19,124
Powell.....	\$97,095

Employees	permanent	temporary
Helena Supervisor's Office	64	20
Helena Ranger District	44	47
Lincoln Ranger District.....	26	32
Townsend Ranger District	21	26
TOTAL	155	125

Senior Community Service Enrollee (Lincoln)

Recreation

Developed Campgrounds.....	9
Picnic areas.....	3
Rental Cabins.....	7
• 1,305 people enjoyed our rental cabins	
• The cabins were occupied 651 nights	
• Receipts from the rental cabins totaled \$15,385	

Trails (Total miles)	1,085
Trail construction/reconstruction (miles).....	4.5
Trail maintenance (miles)	540
- 80 miles were maintained by volunteer crews	

Heritage Resources

New Sites Discovered (prehistoric & historic sites)	8
Acres surveyed in 34 total surveys	2,471
Site Investigations & National Register evaluations.....	3
Sites Stabilized & Rehabilitated	4
Interpreted Sites/Landscapes	5

State & Private Forestry Assistance Grants

L&C Kiosks–Townsend Chamber of Commerce	\$12,000
Townsend Heritage Park Pavilion Project.....	\$6,000
N. Central Mt. Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.	\$6,000
Townsend School District–weed mapping.....	\$39,500
Broadwater County Trust Feasibility Study.....	\$5,000
Townsend School Vegetation Establishment	\$2,930

Range

Rangeland monitored/evaluated (acres).....	106,000
Grazing allotments administered	41
Total AUM's.....	32,523

Noxious Weeds

Number of Treatment Acres.....	
Chemical Control	4,356
Biological Control	1,500
TOTAL	5,856

Soil & Water

Soil and watershed rehabilitation (acres)	19
Soil Quality Assessment on Timber Harvest Sites	16
Soil/Water BMP Effectiveness Evaluation Reports	1
Watershed Assessments for TMDL Planning areas.....	2
Water Quality Monitoring Stations	3
Sediment samples processed by HNF Lab	1,660

Lands

Land exchanges	0 acres
Land purchase completed	51 acres
Special Use permits administered.....	252
Special Use applications processed	55 cases
Road Right-of-Way easements acquired	0
Land Adjustment Surveys	3 cases
Site Surveys	9 cases
Trespass Surveys.....	5 cases
Road Right-of-Way plats	4 cases
Utility plats	0 cases

Forest Management

Reforestation (acres planted).....	448
Seedlings planted.....	148,500
Regeneration monitoring (acres)	1,893
Mortality reduction actions [due to activity of Douglas-fir and mountain pine (lodgepole) beetles in burn areas from 2003] with various pheromone treatments	11,500 acres
• Deployed 24 Douglas-fir beetle collection traps	
Total timber volume sold (ccf).....	10,752
Christmas tree permits sold @ \$3.00 each.....	2,454
Commercial Mushroom Permits.....	283
Personal Use Mushroom Permits.....	1,038
Personal use firewood permits sold	1,114
Personal use post and pole permits sold.....	62

Fire

Number of wildfires	23
Area burned in wildfires (acres)	77
Prescribed fire application (acres).....	1,938
Mechanical thinning (acres).....	1,338

2004 Post-fire Activities

by Dan Seifert, Resource Planner

Helena National Forest personnel have accomplished a great deal of work in areas burned in the 2003 Snow Talon and Moose-Wasson fires. Since the fires, approximately \$600,000 has been spent on emergency fire rehabilitation and \$500,000 on other post-fire restoration. Work has focused on providing for visitor safety within the fire areas, addressing post-fire natural resource needs, preparing plans for commercial salvage of burned timber, and monitoring post-fire recovery.

The removal of vegetation by a large fire generally results in increased stream flows. Vegetation is no longer present in such fire areas to soak up precipitation and runoff. Snowbank Lake campground and much of the Copper Creek drainage within the Snow Talon fire perimeter were closed to camping in 2004 to provide for visitor safety in the event of post-fire floods and debris flows. The intent of this closure was to prevent campers and recreational users from being caught in floods or trapped behind debris flows or road wash-outs. The Helena National Forest worked with numerous State and local agencies to devise flood warning and evacuation plans.

Several warnings and one evacuation were issued in summer 2004. Luckily, no extreme flood events occurred. Summer thunderstorms in 2004 resulted in small erosional events that deposited rock, sediment, and debris on the Copper Creek Road. Runoff from these thunderstorms created some new channels on hillslopes above Copper Creek Road and created some morphological changes in Snowbank Creek. Ditches and roads were cleared using heavy equipment and culverts were installed to allow one newly formed channel to cross under the road surface. Flood potential will remain elevated until adequate vegetation is reestablished in the fire area. Based on snowpack accumulations this winter, the Helena Forest will assess 2005 flood potential and re-evaluate needs for any closures and/or camping restrictions. The Forest and State and local agencies will also work to devise a flood warning and evacuation plan for 2005.

Within the fire areas, trail crews cleared downed logs from 4 miles of trails and replaced several burned trail puncheons and waterbars. It is anticipated that burned timber will continue to fall across trails each year due to wind and decay in the root structures of these dead trees. Keeping trails cleared of downfall will be an ongoing task in the fire areas.

In anticipation of increased runoff in the fire area and to prevent damage to roads and streams, a variety of road-related construction work has been completed, with more planned for the Snow Talon fire area. Work completed to date: 13 new culverts installed; 50 culverts replaced and upgraded with inlet and outlet protection; 9 culverts replaced with larger culverts and overflow structures; 700 feet of conveyor diversion dike installed in five locations to divert potential sediment away from Copper Creek; 2 temporary bridges installed; spot aggregate resurfacing of the road at a number of culvert locations; 16 culverts and associated road fill removed along a closed road; 1 culvert replaced with an arch pipe; numerous waterbars installed; and removal of the bridge crossing Copper Creek that burned in the Snow Talon fire, pulling back the abutments. A number of additional road improvements are proposed for implementation and should be completed in 2005 and 2006.

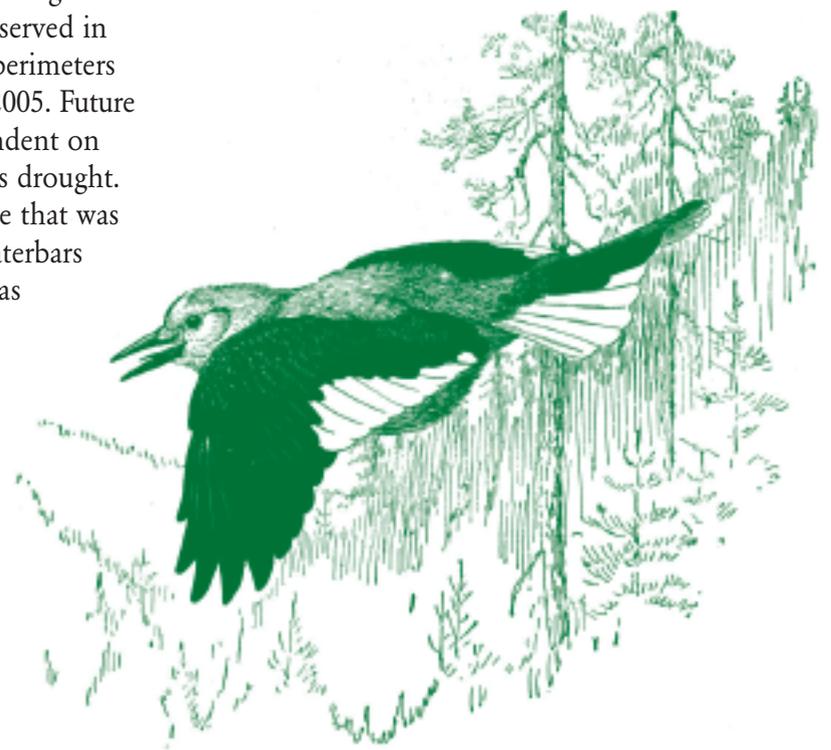
Some trees were only partially burned in the 2003 fires and are still alive. These trees are often stressed and are highly susceptible to insect infestations by a variety of bark beetles. To prevent insects from killing these few remaining trees, pheromone capsules that repel bark beetles were placed in live trees near Indian Meadows Guard Station and Copper Creek Campground in early spring of 2004. No bark beetles were observed in these trees in 2004 and capsules will again be placed in 2005. Bark beetles were observed in dead trees elsewhere within the fire perimeters and may begin infesting live trees in 2005. Future beetle infestations will be very dependent on weather-related stress to trees, such as drought.

Forest personnel monitored fireline that was reclaimed in 2003 and noted that waterbars were functioning and revegetation was occurring. Additional fireline efforts included seeding with native plants and planting of willow slips. Monitoring of the firelines will be ongoing to ensure that disturbed areas fully recover.

An interdisciplinary team of Helena Forest personnel have been working on an environmental analysis to develop plans for salvaging burned timber in the Snow Talon fire area. A Draft Environmental

Impact Statement (EIS) was released in spring 2004. Public comment on the Draft EIS and additional data collection needs identified by the interdisciplinary team resulted in monitoring and data collection throughout 2004. Archaeological surveys, sensitive plant surveys, old growth surveys, wildlife use monitoring, bark beetle surveys, fisheries habitat surveys, stream monitoring, soils surveys, and general reconnaissance of areas where salvage-related activities are planned occurred throughout 2004. Information collected is being used to further develop and refine plans in support of a Final EIS. The Final EIS will provide information that will be used to decide the location and type of any salvage activities that occur.

Other resource elements monitored in the fire areas in 2004 include noxious weed spread and control, grizzly bear population monitoring through the Northern Divide Grizzly Bear Project, monitoring mountain goat populations on Red Mountain, black-backed woodpecker habitat use and nesting, winter wildlife track surveys, trailhead use, off-highway vehicle use, snowmobile use, bull trout redd counts, and core sampling of stream bed sediments in Copper Creek, and monitoring of stream flows in Copper Creek. Similar monitoring efforts are planned for 2005.



Birds of a Feather

By Denise Pengeroth, Forest Wildlife Biologist

In May of last year we held our first annual International Migratory Bird Day Celebration for the folks of Helena. While we've been engaged in other celebrations across the Forest in the past, 2004 marked the first year that citizens of the Queen City were able to participate in a local, home grown celebration!

The theme: *Conservation of Colonial Birds*. The place: *Helena Valley Regulating Reservoir*. Our celebration began at o-dawn-thirty. Local bird experts and enthusiasts – volunteers who donned their field clothes and binoculars and chugged their early morning coffee – led bird hikes around the reservoir.

Why celebrate? Migratory birds are some of the most beautiful, observable, remarkable wildlife that share our world. They are harbingers of spring as well as an important economic resource, controlling insect pests and generating billions in recreational dollars. Unfortunately, many migratory birds face a growing number of threats, the majority of which are human related. Some of the most significant threats of the past century have been overcome due to increased awareness and advocacy for birds; however several threats still persist. International Migratory Bird Day is a call to action, and it's fun! Public awareness and concern are crucial components of migratory bird conservation.



Bird enthusiasts enjoy one of the many activities provided at the Celebration

Colonial nesting birds; think *birds of a feather nesting together!* Coloniality has been a successful evolutionary strategy for many bird species. Birds nesting together may enjoy “safety in numbers” in terms of chasing off predators. Also, colonial nesters may learn the whereabouts of scarce food resources from their neighbors. Coloniality may have its disadvantages – colonies may actually

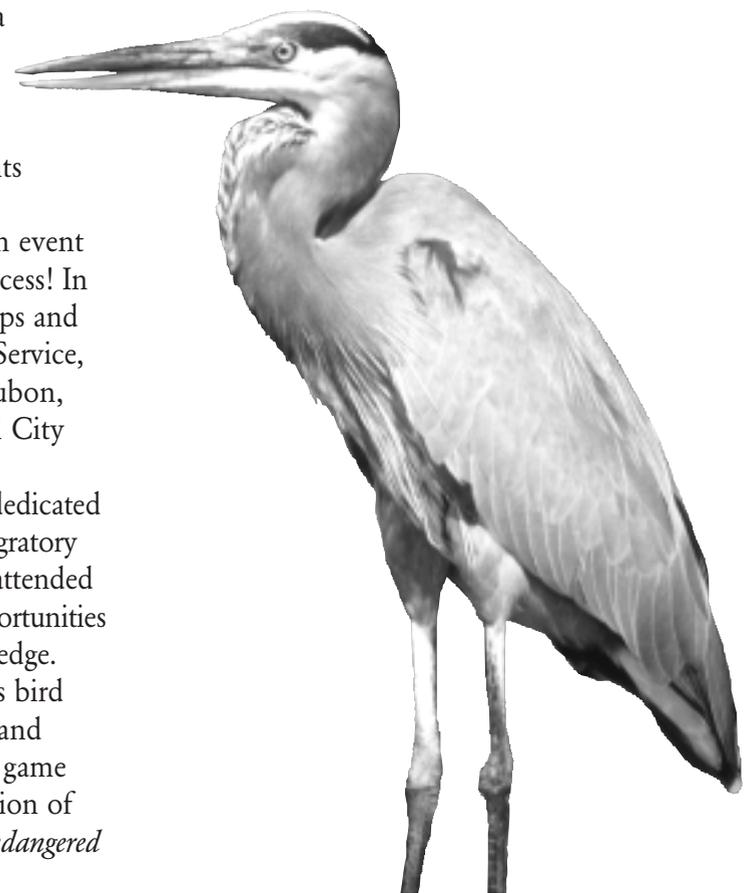


At the overlook near the heron rookery

attract predators or lead to higher rates of disease. Regardless, colonial birds and their colonies are often highly visible and impressive such as the great blue heron rookery at the Helena Valley Regulating Reservoir! With several spotting scopes available at our overlook near the rookery, visitors enjoyed observing these seeming remnants of a prehistoric time.

International Migratory Bird Day is an event that takes many partners to ensure its success! In 2004, we strengthened existing partnerships and forged new ones. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Audubon, Montana Discovery Foundation, Capital City Sports, Helena Flying Tigers, Knights of Columbus, Shades of Green and several dedicated individuals came together to celebrate migratory birds! Over 100 folks – young and old! - attended the festival. Several activities provided opportunities for folks to test their creativity and knowledge. Kite-making was a huge success as well as bird origami, bluebird mobiles, woven nests, and nesting box construction. An innovative game of Bird Jeopardy provided a fun exploration of the feathered world around us “*I’ll take Endangered Birds for \$200!*”

See you on May 7th at the Helena Regulating Reservoir. Birds Hikes begin at 6:30 am, hands on activities begin at 9:00 am.



2004 Lincoln Ranger District Cooperative Weed Projects

by Shawn A Heinert, Rangeland Management Specialist

The Lincoln Ranger District is enthusiastically involved in and supports cooperative weed management on forest and adjacent lands. Without the cooperative efforts between the private landowners, local organizations, and agencies we would not have a successful program.

During the Fall of 2003, the Lincoln District submitted a project proposal to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation [RMEF] to assist in funding the treatment of 200 acres of knapweed infested elk winter range in the Moose Creek drainage southwest of Lincoln. The project was approved by the RMEF, and herbicide treatment by district personnel was initiated in July. Photo points for monitoring have been established and treatment will be completed in 2005.

In June of 2004, the district weed management crew started the season on the Dearborn Weed Management Area in Lewis and Clark County. The district provided personnel and equipment to team up with the many landowners and the state to treat 312 acres of noxious weeds on Forest Service, State, BLM, and private ground over a two day period. A cost-share for chemical purchase was provided with grant dollars from the county to the participating landowners. Along with the treatment, the weed infested areas are mapped and monitored each year. The successful cooperative effort has led to other adjacent landowners in the area requesting to participate in the management of noxious weeds.

In late June district personnel worked with the Patterson Prairie Weed Management Area in Powell County. The district provided personnel and equipment to treat 36 acres within the management area, in cooperation with four private

landowners and The Nature Conservancy. The landowners, with some assistance from county cost-share funding, purchased the chemicals. The Patterson Prairie Weed Management Area was established by the homeowners and the Powell County weed coordinator in 2003, while the Forest Service provided assistance in planning and implementation. The establishment of the Weed Management Area has not only been an integral component to the management of noxious weeds in the area, but has also provided a great educational avenue to the land owners understanding how significant an impact noxious weeds pose in trying to maintain a healthy diverse ecosystem.

The Ponderosa Snow Warriors, a local snowmobile club, and the Lincoln Ranger District have a cooperative agreement whereby the club treats designated snowmobile routes and road right-of-ways. The Ponderosa Snow Warriors are made up entirely of volunteers, and purchase the majority of their herbicide and equipment with grant dollars from various agencies and organizations. The group works closely with district personnel in the planning and implementation of treatment each year. They treated 1897 acres of Forest road right-of-ways and snowmobile routes, with the Lincoln Ranger District providing \$4,250 of in-kind dollars. The Ponderosa Snow Warriors also work with the Nature Conservancy, State, County, and private landowners in treating weeds along area snowmobile routes, treating 1233 acres of ground.

In early August, the district rangeland management specialist, the forest ecologist, and the regional entomologist looked at the feasibility of establishing an insectary to help control spotted

knapweed. A site was identified, and in late August 100 *Cyphocleonus* weevils were released into a constructed corral. Once these biological control agents are established at the insectary, they can be collected and redistributed to help control weeds in the areas burned in the 2003 wildfires. The district provided the materials for the insectary, and the Forest Health Protection Department provided the biological control agents.

In September, the district submitted a proposal to the Powell County Resource Advisory Committee to request funding to implement herbicide treatment on 20 acres of yellow toadflax infestations in the Dry Creek drainage northwest of Lincoln. Funding was approved and treatment was initiated this fall to prevent the infestation from progressing into the riparian areas and the Dry Creek trailhead.

During the 2004 field season, the Lincoln District weed management crew treated 914 acres of Forest Service noxious weed infested ground. The treatment was completed primarily with the use of a skid sprayer mounted in a truck, an ATV sprayer, and a specialized eight wheeled Land Tamer equipped with a 100 gallon spray tank. The treatment areas encompassed road right-of-way, rangeland, and forested areas.

The partnerships which have been established on the Lincoln Ranger District are an integral component in maintaining the highest degree of noxious weed management possible. These cooperative agreements allow the district to be more adaptive in the treatment of new infestations and to utilize an integrated weed management approach to control the variety of noxious weeds that are present in the area.

An Opportunity to Serve Humanity

By Donna Hawkins, Forestry Technician

I recently responded to a detail at the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in Washington, DC as the Operations Center Manager. I had acted in this capacity several years ago when the idea of an Operations Center was just coming to fruition. I reviewed the updated position description to prepare for my month's detail and was somewhat unsettled by my newly acquired responsibilities. I discovered that the position and the technology had evolved tremendously since their infancy. Upon arrival in DC in April of 2004, I did not know whether a disaster would develop that would result in activation of the Operations Center.

A bit of background information may be in order to explain how a U.S. Forest Service employee may work within OFDA. The Disaster Assistance Support Program (DASP) is a little known program within the USFS's International Programs division. DASP was formally established in 1985 by an interagency agreement between the US Agency for International Development and the Forest Service. By this time, the Forest Service had already established an outstanding reputation as an agency capable of responding to emergency wildfires in an efficient and effective manner. It was determined that the Incident Command System that had been developed for responding to wildfire could be applied to any type of disaster.

Currently, there are only seven fulltime DASP employees within the Forest Service. In order to be successful, the program relies heavily on USFS and BLM detailers to fulfill personnel requests by Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. I am fortunate enough to have received training to be a member of a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) and have responded to a variety of requests since 1995.

Upon arrival at the Ronald Reagan Building on a Monday morning in April, I was detained by security guards until my security clearance could be verified. Subsequently, I met with a full-time DASP employee to receive a briefing. The Operations Center was not currently active. This would allow me to become familiar with the new computer system and filing methods, the Response Management Team scheduling, the Duty Officer assignments, the meeting and planning room scheduling protocols, the location and operation of numerous safes, the operation of secure phone/fax, printers, phones, scanners, copiers and any other newly assigned responsibilities in support of OFDA's mission.

By Monday afternoon, we had learned that our

Disaster Assistance Support Program field representative had just returned from the Darfur region of Sudan and would be providing an informative account of the developing humanitarian crisis the following day. On Friday, the Response Management Team (RMT) "stood up" and the smaller of the two Operations Center was activated. Once activated, responsibility for decision-making and coordination concerning Darfur moved to the RMT, which also became the primary point of contact for DARTs and all resources in the field.

Throughout the remainder of my detail, the Darfur RMT was conducting their daily business from the Operations Center. It was my job to keep things running as smoothly as possible by performing such tasks as opening safes to provide access to classified documents, contacting computer personnel with computer problems, making contacts to replace broken furniture or sick employees. The job presented a variety of small challenges with accompanying protocols to follow.

The core members of any RMT consist of a Response Manager, a Deputy Manager for Response, a Deputy Manager for Coordination, a Press Officer, a Planning Coordinator, an Information Officer, a Logistics Coordinator, a Communications and Records Coordinator, and an Administrative Coordinator. There are numerous other positions that may be added depending on the complexity of the disaster. The Darfur team had fourteen members with a variety of duties. Initially, the focus was on getting a DART to the field.

The DART leader was already in Sudan and was making personnel and resource requests through the daily phone calls with the RMT. A major obstacle to the DART deployment was the government of Sudan. Every day the government would postpone the issuance of visas. When I returned to Montana three weeks later, the visas had not yet been secured. The RMT had many other jobs to keep them busy during this time period. The infrastructure of Darfur was evaluated to determine the options for food distribution. Appropriate food

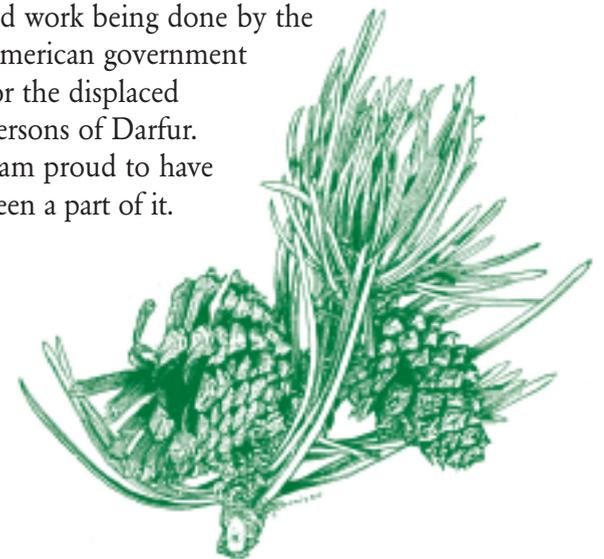


Operations Center at the Office Of Foreign Disaster Assistance

availability and food location were pinpointed. Funding was confirmed. Security issues were identified. The Bush Administration was provided with daily updates. Grant proposals by humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations were reviewed.

In a month's time, I learned so much about Sudan, the largest country in Africa, and about the government of Sudan's treatment of the non-Arab Muslims. It is a fact that the government of Sudan is supporting the Jingaweit militia as they systematically attack towns and villages, looting, killing, and raping village residents while they burn their crops and houses. Colin Powell visited the region and said that the situation in Darfur is genocide.

The Darfur RMT is still active today, nine months later, and from what I hear on the news, the situation has not improved. Although I am now in Montana, I have not forgotten the important aid work being done by the American government for the displaced persons of Darfur. I am proud to have been a part of it.



The Crown Jewel Comes Home

By Jodie Canfield, Elkhorn Coordinator

The Crown Jewel of the Elkhorn Mountains is now a public treasure since the Helena National Forest purchased Crow Creek Falls in 2004. Until then, this spectacular waterfall sat in the middle of a 20-acre patented mining claim.

In 1895, Crow Creek Falls was just another pretty place. The local paper, *The Townsend Messenger*, published an article entitled "One Day's Ramble" by "Little Joe." In this article, Little Joe describes the falls: "The falls are not over twelve feet across and take the plunge from a granite cradle in a perpendicular fall of about fifty feet. Ten feet from the bottom a villainous looking rock protrudes a brawny arm into the falling water, showing into the sunlight a million sparkling gems."

The Elkhorn Forest Reserve was permanently withdrawn (by Presidential proclamation) from the public domain in 1905. Because of the 1872 Mining Law, three individuals were able to patent the falls in 1924, essentially carving out a 20-acre private mining claim they called the Hawkeye Placer. Some locals estimate that the dozer work that made the trail drivable from Tin Cup Creek to the bench above Crow Creek was done in the late thirties; road construction essentially ended in the early forties when mining activities were stopped by fuel shortages due to WWII. But the road never reached Crow Creek Falls itself. In 1978, the Helena National Forest made a decision to close the area and the road to motorized vehicles; the old road became part of the non-motorized trail system (Trail #135).

In 1981, the owner of the claim illegally reopened the old roadbed and in 1983 extended the road to the falls. Ignoring a series of citations, convictions and a restraining order, he eventually drove equipment into the claim, for which he was arrested, but was released on his own recognizance. He went back to the claim and diverted the falls via a head gate at the top of the falls, and a hole, blasted through the adjacent rock, took the water through a wooden flume to the bottom of the property where it dumped back into the streambed. This diversion, along with a pump, allowed him to dredge the streambed below the falls.

The legacy of this mining was abandoned heavy equipment, camp trailers, and other debris. With time, people again visited the falls, no longer posted against trespassers, to see the water falling majestically over rock, and shook their heads at the littered remains of an unsuccessful mining venture.

What happened next changed the fate of Crow Creek Falls forever. Mitch Godfrey, an investment

banker living in the Townsend area, was fishing Crow Creek when he came upon the ravaged falls property. He mentioned his chagrin to Ernie Nunn, retired Helena Forest Supervisor and owner of the Silos Bar and Restaurant. Ernie introduced Mitch to Butch Marita, a retired Forest Service Regional Forester and part time Townsend resident. Butch was also a board member of a group called the American Land Conservancy, a non-profit group specializing in conservation solutions to



threatened land and water. Together with John Flynn, and Lynn Robson they formed the core of the Crow Creek Falls Citizen's Group, whose goal was to clean up the falls and turn it over to the Forest Service.

On a hot summer day in 2001, an assemblage of horses and riders, including Harriet Burgess, President of the American Land Conservancy (ALC) in San Francisco, rode to Crow Creek Falls across the ridges and creeks of the Elkhorn Mountains from Eagle Guard Station. Both the members of the Citizen's Group and the Forest Service employees on that fateful ride hoped that Harriet might fall in love with the Elkhorn Mountains and its most renowned waterfall.

It turned out that Harriet did love waterfalls, and in under a year (relatively lightening speed considering the history of Crow Creek Falls) ALC

purchased the Hawkeye Placer, and its crown jewel, Crow Creek Falls for \$150,000 on April 15, 2002.

ALC applied for a road use permit from the Forest Service to use motorized equipment to access the property and remove the equipment. When the call to clean up Crow Creek Falls was out, many groups and people came forward to help. Dick Juntunen (private consultant), the Montana Mining Association, Graymont Western US Inc. of Townsend, Montana Power and Equipment, Quarry Services, and Broadwater County contributed the equipment and labor, estimated at over \$40,000, needed to reclaim the property.

Getting heavy equipment out of the falls was no light undertaking. The final quarter mile to the falls consists of a 35% grade on a shale-strewn slope. Working up and down this grade took both intestinal fortitude as well as temporary insanity. Dick Juntunen, John Hinthier (Graymont) and Steve Heitschmidt (Graymont) provided much of the brain and brawn for this risky operation.

By nightfall, two of the three pieces of old equipment sat in a meadow, and the following day they were loaded onto lowboys and driven out. The remainder of the operation included cutting up and burying the crane and reshaping the disturbed ground. Forest Service employees helped clean up garbage and remove contaminated soil. It took only two weeks to free Crow Creek Falls from its past and to transform a junkyard to a site with a future of family picnics. For their clean-up efforts, the Crow Creek Falls Citizen's Group and other volunteers received the 2003 Wildlife Conservation Award from the Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society.

The Crow Creek Falls Group submitted a proposal for \$150,000 to the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust for purchase of the parcel. The Trust granted \$75,000 and the Northern Region of the Forest Service was able to match the \$75,000 with lands funds. Finally, in the summer of 2004, the Helena National Forest purchased Crow Creek Falls from the American Land Conservancy.

So as the story ends, people visit the falls not only to witness the water falling majestically over the rock, but also to turn in a full circle and smile at the adjacent scenery on their public lands.

For a more complete history of Crow Creek Falls, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena/elkhorns/elkrecreation/index.shtml> and look for "History of the Crow Creek Falls" and check out "Crow Creek Falls Essay."

Mushroom Harvest on the Lincoln District

By Sadie Campbell, Recreation Technician

In 2003, the Snow-Talon and Moose-Wasson wildfires burned approximately 36,300 acres on the Lincoln Ranger District. After the fire season came to a much-welcomed end, planning began for the aftermath in the burned areas. Along with discussions on salvage, roadwork, landslides, and public safety, the 2004 mushroom season was a topic at hand. The burned areas provided conditions for increased production of morel mushrooms, a type of mushroom collected around the world and highly valued for its unique flavor. Several Helena National Forest employees worked to prepare for the influx of visitors to the burned areas collecting mushrooms for both personal consumption and commercial harvest.

We began the planning process by reviewing management strategies and permitting systems from forests that had recently experienced large fires. The goal was to pull their findings together and develop a program somewhat consistent with other forests in the region, which were also anticipating a large number of mushroom harvesters in 2004. Our staff addressed issues such as disturbance to wildlife species, harvest in Wilderness and Research Natural Areas, camping, food storage, sanitation, weed spread, and conflicts between commercial and personal-use harvesters. Mitigation methods were developed and incorporated into the strategy and permit system to help minimize the possible impacts.

Consistency with other forests in the region was important because we knew many harvesters, especially commercial harvesters, rotate from one burned area to another in search of mushrooms. The commercial harvesters vary in ethnic background, and many do not speak fluent English, so we did not want the rules and regulations to change drastically with each forest they visited. Several drafts of the commercial harvest, personal-use, and commercial camping permits were reviewed and edited before a final version was sent to the printer. We hired additional personnel to help with the permitting process, and officials throughout the forest offered their assistance with patrols and law enforcement.

Cool temperatures delayed the emergence of morels until the latter part of May. Students on a field trip from the Lincoln School were among the first to harvest morels. They visited the Snow-Talon burned area to experience the changes that had occurred since the previous



Kids show off the fruits of their labor

fall and were excited about the opportunity to learn about the morels and found some to take home and sample the taste.

The Snow-Talon burned area, being the larger of the two burned sites at approximately 34,000 acres, attracted many of the early harvesters and hosted most of the harvest activity throughout the season. The Copper Creek drainage offered the best access into the Snow-Talon burned area and was abuzz with harvesters as well as people curious to witness the effects of the fire.

Personal-use gathering peaked during the early season prior to the influx of commercial gatherers, who arrived in July. The Helena National Forest issued 1,038 personal-use permits, which were free of charge. Gatherers of all ages and many families visited the burned areas and collected the morels, which were accessible from roads and trails. Kids and grown-ups alike enjoyed the opportunity to hunt for the fungal treasures and shared many of their favorite recipes with us. Most of the people gathering for personal use came from the near-by communities of Lincoln, Helena, Great Falls and Missoula. The Western Montana Mycological Society hosted their annual Memorial Day get-together at a

campground near the Snow-Talon burned site.

In early July, commercial harvesters came to the Lincoln Ranger District to purchase their permits and set out gathering the morels. With the increase in harvest activity, access to good harvesting locations became more of a challenge. The individuals issuing permits did an outstanding job educating the harvesters on issues specific to the area. The number of commercial permits issued totaled 283. Most of the commercial harvesters stayed in a commercial harvester camp near the Snow-Talon burned area and gathered morels in the Copper Creek area. However, in mid-July, at the height of the commercial harvesting season, many commercial harvesters also gathered morels in the Moose-Wasson burned area and stayed at a commercial harvester camp near the site. In all, 57 commercial camping permits were issued.

Two buyers set up stands in Lincoln. Many commercial harvesters complained about the small number of mushrooms they were finding in the two burned areas and the low rates that the buyers were willing to pay. In spite of this, some commercial harvester stayed in the area and gathered mushrooms until the end of August.

YFMP Completes 7th Year With Help of Diverse Partners

By Liz Burke, Conservation Education Specialist

The Youth Forest Monitoring Program (YFMP) is a seven-week field internship for high school students who live near the Helena National Forest. Despite budget challenges, 2004 was a great year. As federal dollars tightened, several partners stepped up to the plate to help make this program a success by providing additional support.

Over the years, students from Boulder, Clancy, Helena, Jefferson City, Montana City, Townsend, and Lincoln have participated. YFMP is a forest ecology and career training opportunity that challenges students to consider forest health on public lands. Students complete one week of training by forest scientists and local educators on topics of forest ecology and field monitoring techniques. After this training, students split into teams, each focusing on one of the following study areas: streams, soils, and weeds. Students spend the remaining six weeks conducting measurements and observations at monitoring sites throughout the Helena National Forest. At the end of the program, students submit data to the Forest and present their observations and recommendations to Forest Service employees and the public. In 2004, YFMP



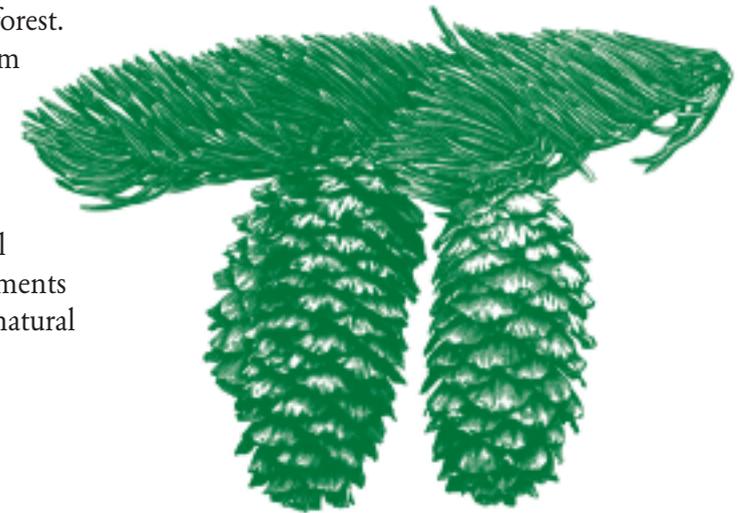
The 2004 crew studied recreation impacts in the Scapegoat Wilderness after the 2003 wildfire

students monitored 27 sites throughout the forest.

Support in 2004 came from various program partners. Crucial financial funding came from Jefferson and Lewis & Clark County commissioners who decided to provide "Title 3" funds, which are Federal dollars distributed annually to counties with Federal land holdings. The terms of Title 3 disbursements specify that the money be must utilized for natural

resource-related projects. Additional partners included University of Montana – Helena College of Technology who provided workspace for the students, including access to computer labs and computer staff support, and the Montana Discovery Foundation who provided administrative help and financial assistance for supplies and equipment.

Plans are currently under way for YFMP 2005. Program partners listed above have continued their support for this year, in addition to a new partnership with the Tri-Counties Resource Advisory Committee (Deerlodge, Granite and Powell Counties). Applications for new students will be accepted until May 6th. For more information call 495-3713.



Recreation Survey Results

By Dave Payne, Recreation Planner

In 2003, the Helena National Forest participated in a National Visitor Use Study. The survey was designed and implemented by all National Forests to provide statistically reliable information about recreation use. Visitor use information was gathered for both the type and amount of recreation activity. In 2004, final results of the 2003 recreation survey were released.

Based on survey information obtained from personal interviews and traffic counts, there were an estimated 528,855 visits to the Helena National Forest in 2003. Approximately 74% of the 823 individuals who agreed to be interviewed indicated their primary purpose for visiting the Forest was recreation. While it's important to note that 26% of Forest visitors were there for other purposes, recreation use was the focus of the study.

The survey provided interesting statistics regarding profiles of those who visited the Helena Forest. Of the total number of visitors, over 78% were Montana residents. Men were more inclined to frequent the Forest than women, 82.6% vs 17.4%.

Somewhat surprising, almost 24% of Forest visitors were under the age of 16. Of the remaining visitors, approximately 55% were between the ages of 30 and 60.

One objective of the recreation study was to determine the range of activities enjoyed by Forest visitors. Survey questions were developed to identify the percentage of visitors participating in general recreation activities. During 2003, the top five recreation activities in terms of total use were:

ACTIVITY	% PARTICIPATING
1. Viewing Wildlife	63.32
2. Hiking/Walking	62.04
3. Viewing Natural Features	60.33
4. Relaxing	54.13
5. Driving For Pleasure	41.15

Most individuals visit the Helena Forest to enjoy a variety of recreation activities. However, there is often one primary activity that specifically draws recreationists to the Forest. As identified

during 2003, the top five recreation activities in terms of primary use were:

ACTIVITY	% PARTICIPATING
1. Hunting	36.46
2. Other Non-Motorized	11.71
3. Hiking/Walking	9.06
4. Gathering Forest Products	8.47
5. OHV Use	5.46

Recreation information obtained in 2003 provides a one-year estimate of visitor use. Survey results should not be viewed as an absolute representation of recreation activity because it does not address other influences such as weather and forest fires. A second visitor survey scheduled for 2008 will help provide a more complete picture of recreation use on the Helena National Forest. Visitor information from 2003 and future surveys will ensure the Helena Forest is managed to provide the appropriate type and mix of recreation opportunities desired to meet public need.

Don't See Red When You See Purple!

By Diane Johnson, Townsend District Range Technician

Expect to see knapweed when you pass through Whites Gulch. That's because it is part of the Townsend Ranger District Noxious Weed management program treating noxious weeds with insect biological control agents.

Formally known as classical biological control, this method focuses on introducing natural enemies from the weed's area of origin to local plant populations. Biocontrol suppresses host weed populations, but generally does not eradicate them. Because biocontrol is self-sustaining, it is highly effective on dense weed infestations covering large areas.

We have already released several species of knapweed insect agents in Whites Gulch. Seed-head feeding insects and root-boring insects have been released in areas where spraying weeds is difficult or impossible. Now we will establish an insectary, which will be used to supply biocontrol agents to other infested sites.

Several criteria should be met to establish an insectary:

- The weeds inside the insectary must be protected from herbicide spraying, grazing, and disturbance by vehicles.
- The weeds must be contained and not allowed to spread.
- The insectary must not be adjacent to private land.
- The weeds should not be visible from a road.
- There should be only one dominant noxious weed species in the insectary.

The lower mine reclamation area in the Whites Gulch drainage meets all the criteria listed above, except D. The Whites Reclamation area makes an ideal insectary site because the insects do well, establishing and proliferating because this is a well-protected site. Knapweed roots in this location are also large enough to accommodate the root boring insects. The reclamation area is in a riparian area so the weeds stay green longer than in the upland sites, and the adult insects can stay active longer eating foliage or nectar.

The mine reclamation site is a place where

spraying herbicides has been counterproductive to the Townsend Ranger District's efforts to establish willows and other riparian vegetation. Biocontrol of weeds will fit nicely into both the goals and environmental restrictions of the project area. The first few years an insectary site will look like no treatment has been done. Then about the 4th year we expect the knapweed to look stunted; instead of 3 ft. tall it will be 2 to 2.5 ft. tall. The density of the knapweed patch, the size of the plants, and the number of flowers per plant will all gradually decline. In 10 to 15 years there should be a few scattered knapweed plants in the area. At this stage of the project, the remaining plants are expected to be only about 18" tall, have few flowers and the knapweed should be unobtrusive.

A successful biocontrol treatment will not eradicate the weeds but will keep the plants at a "tolerable level" so that the weeds are a part, but not dominant, in the plant community. So please be patient when you see 'purple' in Whites- the bugs are on the job.

The Gould Helmville Trail, A Cooperative Project

By Ernie Lundberg

Early day miners pioneered two track roads into many areas on the Lincoln Ranger District in search of gold. Some of these roads have been upgraded and are present day system roads while others have become trails and some are overgrown and gone. The eastern end of the Gould Helmville Trail #467 is one of those primitive roads that remain a trail. In the 1980s the trail was closed to full size vehicles, but remains open to motorcycles, ATVs, and snowmobiles as well as all non-motorized uses. The trail runs along a ridge on the north boundary of the Nevada Mountain roadless area and offers views of both the Helmville and Lincoln valleys.

The trail has received very little maintenance over the years, with the result that some rutting has occurred and the trail is two ATVs wide in places. Bob Bushnell, a member of the Lincoln Ponderosa Snow Warriors Snowmobile Club applied for and received a Montana Trails Grant to perform maintenance on the Gould Helmville Trail. The proposal included using a crew from the Montana Conservation Corps. The Forest Service



agreed to design and supervise the work project.

Dave Payne, Recreation Planner in the Helena SO, volunteered to assist with the project design. Our primary objective was to control existing

erosion and try to prevent future erosion. We staked locations for water bars and drain dips. Drain dips are the preferred method of water diversion because they require less maintenance than do water bars. The Ponderosa Snow Warriors used their ATVs to distribute treated logs to the water bars locations.

The Montana Conservation Corps crew arrived at the trailhead on Monday, August 16 and set up their camp. We held a safety meeting, identified potential hazards and discussed ways to mitigate the hazardous situations. Following our meeting we hiked a mile down the trail to discuss the project. I told them the trail was staked to the junction with the Prickly Trail #487 and I wasn't sure if they would be able to accomplish all the work, particularly because we had also flagged areas where large ruts needed to be filled in, and where unauthorized user-built trails needed to be

closed. The crew was very enthusiastic and ready for hard work. We spent Tuesday morning cleaning and improving the existing drain dips close to the gate. In the afternoon we constructed some drain dips that would rival in size and quality those a small excavator would build. It was pure pleasure working with such a cooperative crew each day. As the crew hiked along areas worked in previous days, they would stop and touch up spots without being told to do so.

The Ponderosa Snow Warriors came on Wednesday to look at the trail work and transported tools, lunches and water up the trail for the crew. The crew was anxious to meet the Snow Warriors—after all what does a Snow Warrior look like? They also wanted to personally thank the people who made it possible for them to work on this project. The crew did an excellent job and accomplished all the work that had been identified. On Friday afternoon, as part of their education, I took them on a tour of the snow-tel site and Granite Butte Lookout.

The trail is safer and will be more enjoyable for all users. We thank everyone involved for all their hard work and support in accomplishing this project.

2005 Schedule of Events

Helena National Forest and the Montana Discovery Foundation
Working together to educate and instill an appreciation of our natural resources.

May 7—International Migratory Bird Day. Helena Regulating Reservoir. Bird hikes begin at 6:30 am, hands-on activities—9 am-1 pm.

May 12, 7 pm—Centennial Lecture Series: The Elkhorns—Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow. Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Elkhorn Forest Reserve with a Theodore Roosevelt re-enactor, lectures and art exhibit. *Myrna Loy Center, Helena.*

May 20, 7 to 9 pm—Moonlight Hike. Canyon Ferry Dike Road.

May 21 & 22—Leave No Trace Trainer's Course. Eagle Guard Station Overnight backpacking trip. RSVP required.

May 23, 5:30 pm—Wildflower Training with Montana Native Plant Society, Mt. Helena.

June 11, 10 am to 3 pm—Lookout Celebration. Strawberry Lookout in the Elkhorn Mountains.

June 18, 8 to 10 pm—Moonlight Hike. Continental Divide National Scenic Trail near MacDonald Pass.

July 14—Moose Creek Cabin Dedication—In 2001, restoration work began with plans to use the cabin as a summertime administrative facility and winter rental cabin. The Fiddling Foresters will be on hand to christen the facility. *Moose Creek Cabin, Rimini Road, time to be announced.*

July 16—Musical Currents: A Gates of the Mountains Bicentennial Concert. Performers will be "staged" at various river bank locations blending performing arts with the natural and historical values of the Gates. The "Currents" final acts, the Fiddlin Foresters and Rob Quist and Jack Gladstone with Odyssey West, will perform at Meriwether Picnic Area. The event is free, but there is a \$12 fee for the tour boats. Private boats are invited. 4:00 to 8:30 pm.

July 17—The Elkhorns—Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow. Driving auto tours and guided interpretive trail tours. In the afternoon, the Fiddlin' Foresters will perform. *Eagle Guard Station, Elkhorn Mountains, time to be announced.*

All events are free and open to the public. Please call the Montana Discovery Foundation at 406-495-3711 or 406-495-3718 for more information!

Practicing What We Preach

Amber Kamps, Lincoln District Ranger

Hazardous fuels reduction has been a topic of interest, particularly since the 2000 and 2003 fire seasons, for landowners and homeowners living in or near the wildland urban interface. Some landowners have already completed work or are planning work around their property to reduce fuels to prepare for fire seasons to come. On the Lincoln Ranger District compound, we also undertook work that needed to be done to make the site more defensible from wildland fire. The work has also improved this forest by increasing resilience to bark beetle attack, enhancing the likelihood of maintaining a healthy ponderosa pine community into the future.

and to high-intensity wildfire. Thinning of trees releases trees from competition for nutrients, light, and water and increase the overall health and vigor of the residual stand.

This fuels reduction and forest health improvement work included 3 acres of pre-commercial thinning of small diameter trees to retain the most vigorous trees and remove others of sub-merchantable size and 34 acres of commercial thinning where low vigor trees and undesirable tree species were removed. This work was conducted with a timber sale contract sold through a competitive bidding process to R-Y Timber of Townsend. Total volume removed to achieve



Thinning complete, underburning next

Historically, ponderosa pine have adapted to frequent low-intensity fires. Such fires would have thinned less vigorous trees and prevented the thick in-growth of small trees beneath the forest canopy. With the advent of fire suppression in the Blackfoot Valley, many of our ponderosa pine stands are becoming more heavily stocked and less healthy than they were historically. As the forest canopy becomes thicker with in-growth, less fire-resistant species such as Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, and Engelmann spruce grow in beneath. The small trees act as ladder fuels, which carry fire up into the crowns of the overstory. Tightly spaced trees are also more susceptible to insects and diseases. Without mechanical treatment, such as thinning to remove some of these trees, ponderosa pine stands are less resilient to insects and diseases

the desired conditions and meet treatment objectives was 155 thousand board feet or approximately 40 log truck loads. The commercial harvesting was conducted and completed in February/March of 2004.

The pre-commercial thinning of small diameter/non-merchantable trees was completed the summer of 2004 with Lincoln Ranger District fire crews. The only remaining work is 70 acres of low-intensity prescribed fire and hand felling of sub-merchantable material. The work is planned for this spring or the fall of '05.

The Ranger District Compound is an example of a successful hazardous fuels treatment project, one where we can have a healthier and safer forest to live and work among. Stop in sometime and see for yourself – we'd love to give you a tour and share a cup of coffee.

The United States Forest Service Turns 100!

By Amy Teegarden, Community Outreach Coordinator

Throughout 2005, the USDA Forest Service is celebrating its 100th anniversary. On July 1, 1905, the Forest Service was created as an agency with a unique mission: *to sustain healthy, diverse, and productive forests and grasslands for present and future generations.*

The first Forest Reserves in Montana were established in 1897 not long after Montana achieved statehood. These early reserves, the Bitterroot, Lewis & Clark and Flathead were large and remote. Forest Reserves and later National Forests continued to be established in abundance through 1908. In these early days every little mountain range was its own separate Forest reserve. By 1908 new National Forests were being established from consolidations with names of some of the early Reserves being eliminated in the process. By the 1930's most of the major changes and consolidations had taken place in Montana and a map of the various Montana National Forests would have looked much more like the present one than one from the 1910 era.

The present day Helena National Forest was established in 1908 from the consolidation of the Big Belt Forest Reserve (established 1905), the Elkhorn Forest Reserve (established 1905) and the Helena Forest Reserve (established 1906). Later additions came from the accumulation of public domain in the Blackfoot Valley and portions of the Lewis & Clark, Missoula and Lolo National Forests in the present Scapegoat Wilderness areas. Substantial boundary adjustments resulted from the south end of the Big Belts going to the Gallatin National Forest, a small portion of the Elkhorns going to the Deerlodge and a large portion of the original Helena Forest Reserve to the Deerlodge.

Today, the Helena National Forest surrounds Montana's Capital City and offers close to one million acres of distinctive landscapes. The Forest is administered by District headquarters in Lincoln, Helena, and Townsend, with the Forest Supervisor's Office located in Helena.

The Scapegoat Wilderness occupies the far northwest portion of the Forest, about ten air miles

north of Lincoln, Montana. Almost eighty miles of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail stretch through the Helena National Forest, extending from the Scapegoat to the adjacent Deerlodge National Forest. Numerous mining claims were patented over the years, and many of these private inholdings are now homesites. Managing this intermingled wildland/urban interface has



become one of the Forest's primary challenges.

The Big Belt Mountain Range lies east of Helena, extending south to Townsend. The Gates of the Mountains Wilderness area is situated on the north end of the Big Belts and takes its name from the distinctive cliffs along the Missouri River noted in the journals of Lewis and Clark. Much of the Big Belts are dissected by rugged limestone canyons and provide scenic enjoyment for hikers and motorists.

South of Helena, the Elkhorn Mountains are home to the only designated Wildlife Management Unit in the National Forest System. The mountain range is managed cooperatively with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Deerlodge National Forest, and the Bureau of Land Management to optimize wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

Reaching across six counties, the Helena Forest provides considerable stimulus to the area's economy while offering a host of recreational opportunities in close proximity to area residents. Forest employees are committed to providing quality visitor information, education, and community outreach programs. Many Forest employees work

with a variety of agencies and conservation partners to accomplish these goals.

The history of the Forest Service is a proud one. The Helena National Forest has partnered with the Montana Historical Society and other community partners to recognize this significant milestone by sponsoring a community lecture series. Anniversary events kicked-off with a showing of

the Forest Service centennial film, "The Greatest Good: A Forest Service Centennial Film". This was followed by a performance featuring a re-enactor personifying Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service; and a presentation by Forest Service historian Gerry Williams, reflecting on the history of Forest Service through political cartoons.

On May 12th, 7:00 pm, the series will conclude with an "Evening in the Elkhorns", at the Myrna Loy Center, celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the Elkhorn Forest Reserve. In addition to informative speakers, the

program will include the debut of a documentary film featuring interviews of people who have lived, worked and played in the Elkhorns. The evening also includes the opening of an exhibit featuring works from artists who have participated in the Forest's Artist-Forest-Community program, as well as a re-enactor featuring President Theodore Roosevelt and a reception.

Local centennial special events will continue into the summer and fall, culminating in December 2005 with the opening of a special exhibit at the Historical Society, "Splendid Was the Trail: Photographs of the National Forests by K.D. Swan."

The creation of the Forest Service initiated a century of change in managing public forests and grasslands, with introduction of a new conservation ethic and professional workforce to carry it forth. As the agency approaches its centennial, we ask that you join us in reflecting on the organization's proud history and traditions and exploring ways to move into a new century of "caring for the land and serving people." As we celebrate the past, may we examine where the agency has been and where it's going in its new century of service.