



STEVE ELLIS

Backpackers can choose from more than 100 trails that wind through the wilderness complex.

tatives went to work, taking on the task in addition to their regular jobs. Team members recognized that it would be impossible to produce a detailed fish and wildlife plan because of the diversity of resources and issues across the Bob. They also believed that the attempt to produce such a plan probably led to failure of earlier efforts. After much deliberation, the team opted to craft a general framework for managing fish, wildlife, and habitat that would provide joint responsibility and shared guidelines. They further reasoned that managers could design specific plans and projects with these agreed-to guidelines in mind.

The team's approach turned out to be the right one. After a dozen meet-

ings, a dozen drafts, and the work of two dozen public and agency reviewers, the final framework was signed in April of 1995 by supervisors of the Flathead, Helena, Lewis and Clark, and Lolo national forests, and supervisors of FWP regions in western, northwestern, and north-central Montana. The framework is now the official guideline for management of fish, wildlife, and habitat in the Bob.

"I believe this step shows that our agencies are of the same mind on the need to cooperate more fully in the Bob," says FWP's Region 2 Supervisor Rich Clough. "This framework sets the tone for a genuine working relationship and information-sharing relevant to fish, wildlife, habitat, and enforcement.

We hope this partnership will help us solve some problems that have divided us in the past." Clough notes that the framework discards the notion that the state is concerned only with wildlife and the USFS only with land.

Flathead Forest Supervisor Joel Holtrop agrees. "To meet our wilderness mission we must work together more effectively. This framework shows the commitment of both agencies to ecosystem management. It will help us resolve fish, wildlife, and habitat issues in the wilderness ecosystem up front before they become problems."

Coincidentally, about a month before the agreement was signed, state and federal officials, led by USFS Chief Jack Ward Thomas, jointly issued a letter urging agency managers to "work together to meet wilderness and fisheries management objectives whether managing for endangered species recovery, community diversity, or for recreational fishing opportunities." The timing of this directive was uncanny, and the framework immediately became a model that attracted notice around the West.

First of its kind in the nation, the framework establishes:

- A collective management vision agreeable to both agencies.
- Shared fish, wildlife, and habitat goals.
- Sixteen sets of specific guidelines on management of fish, wildlife, and habitat in the complex, including fish stocking, wildlife and wildland law enforcement, visitor education, fire management, and control of noxious weeds.
- An administrative partnership between the two agencies—i.e., FWP has a say in habitat issues and the Forest Service has a say in fish and wildlife issues.
- A standard process for judging project proposals brought forward by either agency.

Thus far, shared management seems to be working. For example, FWP wardens and forest officers around the Bob now meet regularly to discuss joint enforcement of wildlife and visitor use laws. This ensures a consistent educa-

tional message to the public and avoids duplication of effort. In 1995, FWP wardens traveled nearly 1,800 trail miles in the Bob and checked more than 200 outfitted and private fishing and hunting camps. Wardens and USFS officers teamed up on many of these efforts.

Biologists, too have begun cooperative projects, working together last summer to open a logjam blocking bull trout spawning habitat in a wilderness tributary and developing a management plan for the Bob's mountain lakes. All these activities have been accomplished in the spirit of preserving wilderness values.

Public reaction to the framework has been mostly positive. The citizens who originally called for a cooperative wildlife plan have found the framework acceptable so far, but only if both agencies remain committed to making it work.

It has even received guarded praise from outspoken wilderness advocate Gene Persha, a history and government teacher from Edina, Minnesota. Persha has visited the Bob many times over the past 20 years and often voices opinions about its management. Like

Socrates in his dealings with the rulers of ancient Athens, Persha has been something of a gadfly in his relationship with the USFS. He has mounted a persistent campaign to open management of the Bob to other agencies, and to the public near and far.

"Hiking trips in the Bob have been some of the most meaningful experiences of my life," he explains. "I want to give something back."

Persha points out that members of the public represent an untapped resource that could aid in obtaining funds and other resources to help manage the complex. He believes that ideas too often come from the top of agency hierarchies rather than from the grassroots level. He feels that government officials assume the public knows less than bureaucrats do about an issue.

"Management is only successful," says Persha, "when you seek input from the public. You must develop ownership and support of the majority of the people for your actions."

Persha views the framework as a benchmark in agency cooperation, but feels citizen members should be added to the Bob's decision-making group. In this way he believes agencies and wilderness users can forge a more direct link.

Wilderness outfitter Jack Rich and his family have hosted visitors in the Bob for decades. A big, friendly man, Rich loves the Bob just a little less than he loves his wife and children. He has provided valuable input on the area's management for many years and recently helped prepare the fisheries plan for the South Fork of the Flathead.

"One of the major problems I see," he says, "is the conflict of interest between FWP's goals of producing hunting and fishing recreation and the Forest Service's philosophy of allowing nature to dominate."



JOHN FRALLEY

Remote and inviting, George Lake typifies the solitude and aesthetic beauty that inspired Bob Marshall to work for wilderness preservation.

What is wilderness?

Wilderness protection, like public stewardship of fish and wildlife, is uniquely American. The 1964 Wilderness Act was enacted "in order to assure that an increasing population...does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States...leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition...." Wilderness is defined as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

Of the many people who advanced the concept of wilderness preservation, Aldo Leopold and Robert Marshall are perhaps best known. In 1921, Leopold published in *Journal of Forestry* his suggestions for a wilderness policy and defined wilderness as "a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state, open to lawful hunting and fishing, big enough to absorb a two week's pack trip, kept devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, or other works of man." Leopold later became known for the land ethic concept, which extended the

idea of ethics to the natural world. Wilderness occupies a unique niche in Leopold's land ethic as the model of ecological health.

Robert Marshall worked for the U.S. Forest Service in Idaho and Montana from 1925 to 1928, and in 1937 became Chief of Recreation and Lands in the agency's Washington office. He was responsible for designation of "primitive areas" that later became the nation's first permanent wilderness areas. A prodigious walker, Marshall once hiked in a single day from the Black Bear Guard Station on the South Fork of the Flathead River to the top of the Chinese Wall, along the crest of the wall and back to the guard station, a distance of 42 miles. Bob Marshall defined wilderness based on the physical challenges and aesthetic beauty it offered.

As an example, Rich points to reluctance of the USFS to ignite fires to replenish deer and elk winter range and forage inside the wilderness. Also, he notes that almost all the mountain lakes supporting fish in the Bob were originally fishless. "Fish stocking has built a traditional use with most visitors," he says, "and it should continue." Rich notes that the Wilderness Act acknowledges the importance of recreation in wilderness areas.

"Sometimes it seems that managers with a more purist attitude look at humans as intruders rather than a legitimate part of the system."

Citing the framework as a step toward better cooperation, Rich calls for more participation by FWP and the public in the Bob's management. "Without it," he says, "you're just playing with half a deck."

Jim Posewitz, too, believes that agencies must allow the public greater influence in managing the Bob. "Wilderness was not designed by federal managers," he says. "It was clearly a public creation. We need broader thinking. Citizens must be absolutely a part of it, not tangled in the process, not part of some focus group, listened to and then ignored."

Although critical of the process, Posewitz agrees that the framework offers promise for better cooperation and public involvement. But he feels the guidelines fall short in addressing lands adjoining the Bob. "How can you preach ecosystem management when you ignore winter habitat outside the Bob that 80 percent of the wilderness elk depend on?" he asks. "Management of those lands has to be consistent with wilderness principles, even if the land is outside the wilderness boundary."

Bud Moore, long-time Swan Valley resident, trapper, and wilderness enthusiast, also has taken a keen interest in the framework. "The two agencies just have to work together, the closer, the better," he says, noting the futility of separately managing fish and wildlife. "If one outfit owns the cattle and the other outfit owns the ranch, you're going to have problems."

Moore's main interests in the process revolve around the guidelines



PHOTOS BY STEVE WIRT



Due to fuel buildup from decades of fire control, the 1988 Canyon Creek Fire burned with great intensity. Many of the Bob's forest types are fire-dependent.

Fire and wilderness

In wilderness, where natural processes dominate, fire is as vital as rain and snow. The Bob Marshall has many forest communities that have evolved with fire and depend on it for periodic renewal. Fire control over the last 80 years has altered and delayed these natural fire cycles, resulting in heavy fuel accumulations and unnatural changes in plant communities. They also have worsened the impact of white pine blister rust,

an introduced disease that is decimating the Bob's whitebark pine.

The goal of wilderness fire management is to restore fire as nearly as possible to its natural role and, where necessary, to remedy the past effects of fire control. In the Bob, lightning-caused fires are being allowed to burn where feasible, but with regard for public safety and effects on adjacent lands.

on fire and trapping. He has long been an advocate of fire's natural role in wilderness. "In the past, managers considered fire as public enemy number one," he says. "But the Wilderness Act tells us that nature has full swing and to put out fires is contrary to the law." Moore points out that fire control has led to unnatural fuel accumulations and changes in the landscape, and he supports the fire guidelines set forth in the framework.

In the case of trapping, however, Moore is not a happy camper. The conservative guidelines are designed to

avoid attaching the stigma of "commercial activity" to recreational trapping in the Bob. In the past, Moore was able to get permission to exceed the 14-day camp limit for the purpose of trapping marten and other furbearers. Trappers can no longer secure this exception, and he feels this makes it almost impossible to operate in all but the fringes of the Bob. "Let there be no doubt," he says, "that for a few it is the ultimate primitive experience. Those of us who trap in wilderness are motivated by something more than economic returns for our work. We are hooked on

Clearly, management of fish, wildlife, habitat, and visitor use can't be separated.

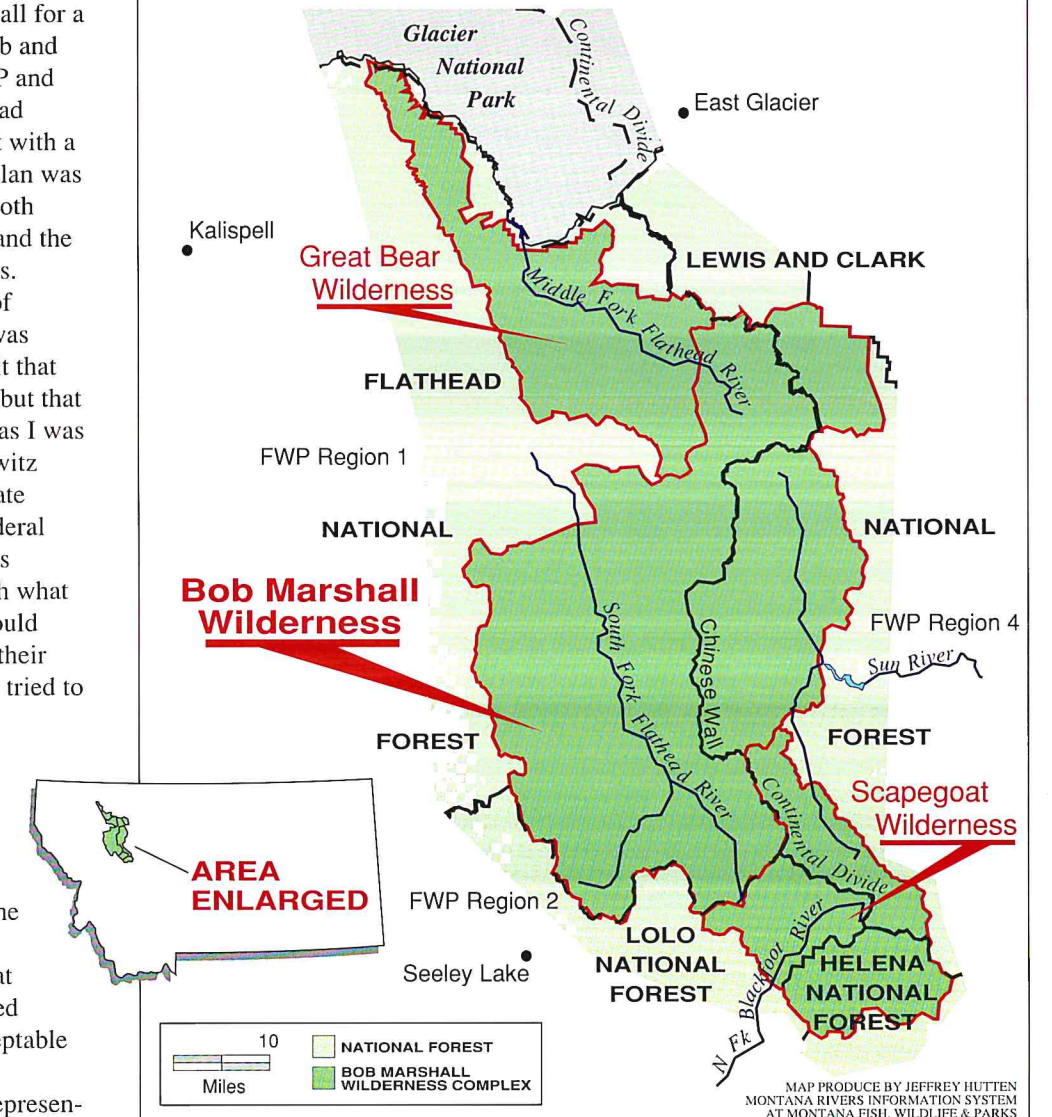
During meetings held by the USFS in the 1980s, citizens began to call for a specific wildlife plan for the Bob and better cooperation between FWP and USFS. By 1987 an FWP team had produced a draft plan, but it met with a cool reception. In 1991 a final plan was released, but some officials of both agencies found it unacceptable and the plan languished for several years.

Jim Posewitz, major author of FWP's early plan for the Bob, was frustrated by the outcome. "I felt that we delivered a good document, but that I had to shove it across the line as I was on my way out the door" (Posewitz retired in 1993). He says that state officials were lukewarm and federal managers denied the document's validity because it didn't fit with what they expected his committee would come up with. "The report was their child," says Posewitz, "but they tried to deny its parentage."

Finally, the spring thaw of 1994 brought a corresponding thaw in agency relations regarding the Bob. The two agencies took another look and signed a pledge to cooperate. The pledge called for a process to resolve fish, wildlife, and habitat management issues and promised development of a mutually acceptable fish and wildlife plan.

A team of FWP and USFS represen-

BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS COMPLEX



and bald eagle, and the endangered gray wolf and peregrine falcon. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service cooperates in managing these four species. The area also provides habitat for mountain goats, elk, deer, moose, mountain lions, black bears, bighorn sheep, numerous smaller animals, and an abundance of birds. The lakes, streams, and rivers are best known for native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout.

Recreation: Visitors can access the Bob from more than 40 trailheads around the perimeter. Dominant activities include packstring and backpacking trips, hunting, fishing, and photography. Visitation has mushroomed in the last two decades. While only about 500 people visited the Bob in 1943, the number of visitors each year now exceeds 100,000!



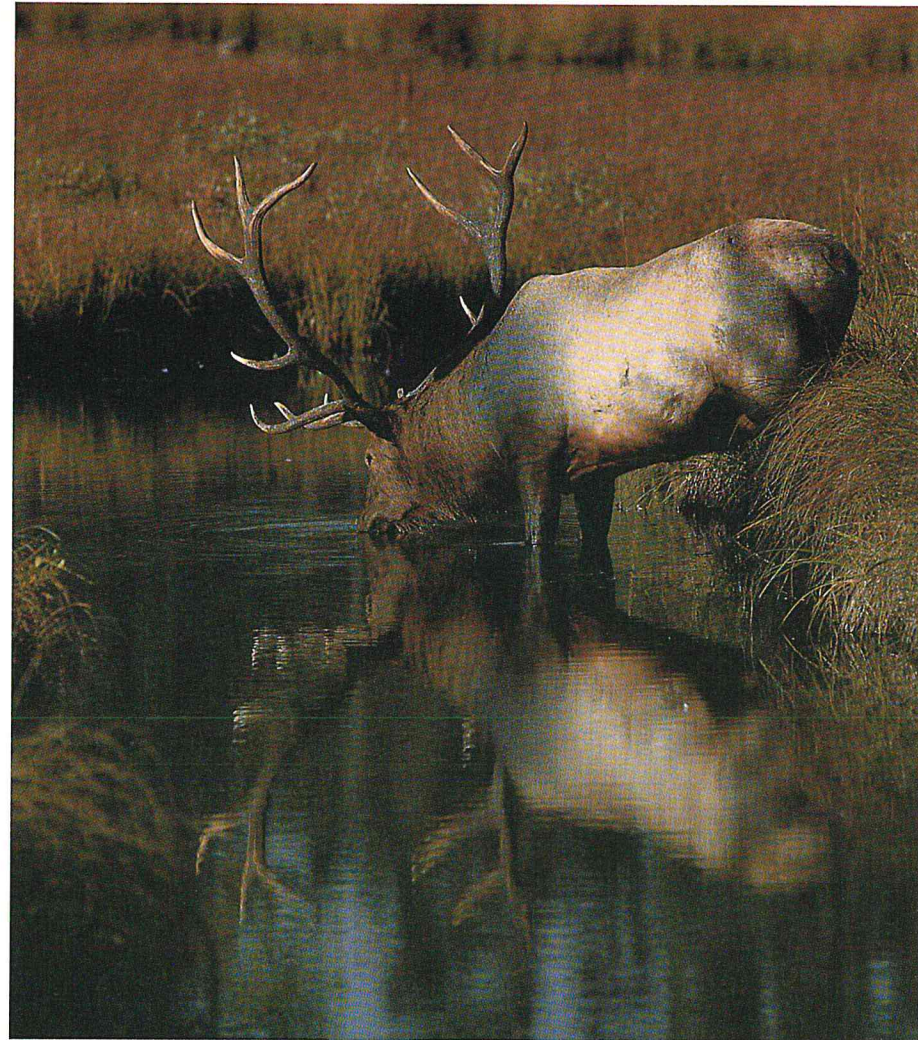
DIANE ENSIGN

Through conservation and habitat management, elk have been brought back from near-extinction to record numbers in the Montana Rockies. Today, people come from around the world to enjoy the Bob's legendary hunting and wildlife viewing.

Ellers Koch rode horseback through what is now the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Describing the trip years later in *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, Koch wrote that "with the exception of one goat, [I] never saw or got a shot at a single big game animal..." Today, roughly 10,000 elk live at least part of the year in the Bob.

The area's resources have become more valuable over time, as opportunities for recreation in wild areas have diminished. Wilderness supporters have become more insistent that the best possible stewardship be applied to the Bob, and that they have more of a say in how the area is managed. This has prompted the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to strive for closer cooperation and better ways of including the public in decision-making. One initiative is a fish, wildlife, and habitat management framework adopted last spring that promises to begin a new era of cooperation between resource agencies and the public.

Like many turf-breaking efforts, the management framework required long months of work and some concessions on the part of both agencies. While



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division between agencies with differing responsibilities and outlooks is natural, both parties recognized that closer cooperation could bring stewardship of the Bob to a new level.

Although the USFS administers

most wildernesses in the West, state agencies traditionally have managed fish and wildlife. This shared responsibility has often led to inconsistent policies and has been a source of frustration for managers and the public.

Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

In 1940, a year after Robert Marshall's death, three primitive areas were combined to form the Bob Marshall Wilderness. With passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, the area received permanent protection as part of the national wilderness system. In the 1970s, Congress designated the Scapegoat Wilderness to the south and the Great Bear Wilderness to the north. This 1.5-million-acre area is now

collectively known as the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

Geography: The terrain is typical of glaciated mountain lands, with high alpine basins and broad, U-shaped valleys. Elevations range from 3,900 feet to 9,400 feet. The Chinese Wall on the crest of the Continental Divide is the area's dominant geologic feature. Rivers west of the divide include Wild and Scenic sections of the Middle and

South Forks of the Flathead, and the North Fork of the Blackfoot; east of the divide, rivers include the Sun, Teton, and Dearborn. Elevation, precipitation, and temperature extremes, coupled with the area's geologic history, have created diverse plant and animal communities.

Wildlife and Fish: The Bob provides habitat for at least 250 species, including the threatened grizzly bear

the spell that wildness creates on natural land."

Clearly, the management framework is not universally accepted by every member of the public or every agency manager. But most people believe the agreement is a step toward better cooperation and that it will be good for the Bob. USFS and FWP leaders have referred to the approach as "consistent with ecosystem management principles, with sound science, and with common sense."

Citizens have long played an important role in shaping the Bob, and have established a proud tradition of activism. Their voices "haunt the deep shadows of the spruce thickets," wrote Jim Posewitz, "and sing across barren ridges." As citizens join agency managers in new initiatives, like the fish, wildlife and habitat framework, the quality of the Bob's management can only get better. ■



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Long-time Bob Marshall outfitter Jack Rich leads a packstring in the wilderness.

For a copy of the "Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Framework for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex," contact: Flathead National Forest, 1935 3rd Ave. E., Kalispell, MT 59901; or FWP Region 1, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901.

To stock or not to stock?

Fish stocking is one of the most controversial management issues in the Bob and other wildernesses across the West. Critics contend it distorts the naturalness of ecosystems and disturbs the solitude of visitors (aircraft are typically used to deliver fish to mountain lakes). Proponents feel stocking can supplement native fish populations and provide better angling.

Biologists are becoming increasingly aware of the ecological value of fishless lakes, formerly referred to as "barren." Fishless lakes can support high numbers of native amphibians and invertebrate animals. Under the concept of ecosystem management, these animals, formerly ignored, are recognized as integral parts of the system.

In 1994 managers poisoned the brook trout in Devine Lake, returning it to a fishless condition, to reduce chances of these non-native fish moving downstream into a tributary of the South Fork of the Flathead and interbreeding with native bull trout, a state "species of special



JOHN FRALEY

Biologists apply a fish toxin to remove non-native brook trout from Devine Lake. About 40 of the Bob's mountain lakes support fish through natural reproduction or stocking, while three times that many are fishless.

concern." The question now is whether Devine Lake should be stocked with native westslope cutthroat trout to provide angling recreation and a refuge for the species, or whether it should remain fishless.

In the months ahead, managers will consider a proposal by concerned citizens to restock the lake; the proposal will offer a good test of the management framework's guidelines and processes.



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Getting Together

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the U.S. Forest Service team up to manage the Bob

by JOHN FRALEY AND GREG WARREN

THE BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS COMPLEX is a special place among unique areas. The flagship of the nation's 92-million-acre wilderness system, the "Bob" supports thousands of native elk and bull trout, vital habitat for the threatened grizzly bear, and the finest westslope cutthroat fishery in the world. Features like the serpentine Chinese Wall and the clear waters of the Sun and Flathead rivers create passion in the minds of visitors and a desire to preserve the area's values.

Stewards of the Bob can point to a number of management successes over the years. Elk have not always been abundant, and records indicate that uncontrolled shooting and habitat loss contributed to their near-demise by the early 1900s. For a month during the fall of 1905 and again in 1906, biologist



Backbone of the Bob, the Chinese Wall dominates the wilderness landscape.

NELSON KENTNER