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## ***The Rest of the Story***

January 15, 2015

Dear Dave :

With this e-newsletter we would like to correct an omission in our December 24 message to you.

In that mailing we reported on the success of the **North Fork Watershed Protection Act**, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama in the last days of 2014.

While we listed many of the individuals and groups responsible for that success, we regretfully omitted a key campaign effort and four organizations without which our collective success would not have been possible.

The following story recounts that key event that helped turn the campaign to protect the Flathead and Waterton-Glacier to success.

*Please Donate*

Please click [here](#) to make your donation through our secure, on-line service.



In our next issue, we'll announce the winner of the 2014 *Jack Potter Glacier National Park Stewardship Award*.

*Pictured above: the Award trophy. A hand-blown glass water*

Thank you for your end-of-year support, and Happy New Year to you all.

ouzel by [Bigfork Montana glass](#)  
[artist Lee Proctor](#)

Cheers!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Hauler".

Executive Director  
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## Making the Transboundary Flathead an International Success



We neglect history at our peril. When we lose the thread of history we lose both reference points as well as the heart of a good story. How the **Flathead Wild Team** turned the transboundary Flathead Valley into an international *cause celebre* is that kind of story.

Making the North Fork Flathead River an international conservation issue represented the key challenge and strategy of the campaign. The 2008-10 involvement of the World Heritage organization led to big results.

It all started when Cline Mining, a penny stock Canadian mining company, first announced in 2001 plans for an open pit, mountaintop removal coalmine in the Flathead watershed, just six miles (3.6km) north of the international border. Few people in positions of power could have cared less or pointed to the proposed mine site on a map. British Columbia policy actively encouraged mining, and explicitly prioritized mining practically anywhere in B.C. that was not a federal or provincial park.



But to people who knew and cared about the transboundary Flathead River, Cline's announcement ignited a reaction. Citizens from Montanan and British Columbia came together across the border as the **Flathead Wild Team** to defend our river. The central challenge became clear: *How bring the world spotlight on this remote corner of the world to achieve a legislated, permanent ban on mining and energy development?*

Members of the Flathead Wild Team assemble near Akamina Creek in the Canadian Flathead in 2009. (Photo: Justin Black/iLCP)

Between 2001 and 2003 the challenges continued to mount. BP announced in 2003 their intention to develop the coal bed methane resource of the upper Flathead watershed. Another penny stock company announced plans for a gold mine. Cline also then announced its intention to develop a different coal deposit on Foisey Creek, a tributary of the Flathead, and one of the best bull trout spawning creeks in the entire river system.

The Flathead Wild Team conducted the 'standard' local outreach to regional communities and political leaders. But the Team also expanded its net of interest, and began to play to national and international audiences. The Team contacted the International Joint Commission (IJC), national leadership in Ottawa and Washington, D.C., and the U.S. State Department and Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs.

To confront the BP coal bed methane threat, Team members from Wildsight and Headwaters Montana went to London, UK, to lobby major international banks and financial institutions that held BP stock, and attended the BP annual meeting in 2008. BP eventually withdrew its plans.



*But the effort that decisively brought international attention was the Team's outreach to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.* This initiative unleashed several years of cascading events that eventually led to the breakthrough "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) between B.C. and Montana at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, B.C., which led in turn - over the next four year - to the final watershed-wide ban on mining and energy development in the Transboundary Flathead.

Biodiversity starts with clean water. Protecting this fundamental element of life formed the very basis of the campaign to protect the Transboundary Flathead. (Photo: Justin Black/iLCP)

The Team initiated the UNESCO effort in 2008 in conjunction with **Earthjustice** (U.S.) and **Ecojustice** (Canada). These two groups released a [report](#) that June that examined the threat of open-pit coal mining and coal bed methane extraction to the Waterton - Glacier World Heritage Site.

**UNESCO**, the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, oversees the world system of **World Heritage Sites** (WHS). These sites represent areas and places of "Outstanding Universal Value" to humanity. Waterton - Glacier was declared a WHS in 1995 because of its scenic and biological importance, as well as its significance as the world's first Peace Park.

As part of the WHS program, UNESCO monitors designated sites for their

conservation status. Sites whose values are deemed threatened by development or neglect can be designated as "in danger" of losing their Outstanding Universal Value. The Flathead Wild Team petitioned the WHS program to list Waterton - Glacier as "in danger" due to the threat of mountaintop removal coal mining and coal bed methane proposals in the Canadian Flathead, among other threats.



*"At the time of the petition, the British Columbia government was entirely deaf to our concerns and to entreaties from U.S. politicians concerning the North Fork development threat," observed Tim Preso, a managing attorney with Earth Justice in Bozeman, Montana. "That changed when, in response to our petition, the World Heritage Committee determined that an endangerment finding would be appropriate if the planned developments went forward, and further found that the development threats to the area could not be mitigated."*

The remoteness of the Canadian reach of the Flathead River to the seat of provincial power (Vancouver, B.C.) posed the greatest challenge to citizens' conservation efforts. Between 2001 and 2014, Flathead Wild built the strategy and engaged the players that put the North Fork of the Flathead on the world's conservation map. (Photo: Lenz/iLCP)

Flathead Wild team members from National Parks Conservation Association and Wildsight traveled to Sevilla, Spain, to attend the UNESCO conference that considered our joint petition. A year later, in September 2009, a team from UNESCO was directed to visit the Waterton - Glacier area and to make its own, independent assessment of the threats.

The UNESCO visit was a big deal. It engaged the U.S. State Department, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, First Nations, local scientists, and state and federal land managers from both Montana and B.C. Among U.S. federal officials in Montana, the National Park Service at **Glacier National Park** took the significant lead, with assistance from the **University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station at Yellow Bay**. A year later, in July 2010, the UNESCO team [issued its report](#). It concluded, in part:



*"There is, in the view of the [UNESCO team], no possibility of proceeding with mining in the Flathead watershed without creating an unacceptable direct impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the [Waterton-Glacier World Heritage Site], and there does not appear to be a compromise position in this regard." And...*

*"If the Lodgepole [Cline] coal mine proposal*

Keep in mind that it was citizen effort that brought the decision makers to the table. Here Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer and B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell congratulate each other on agreeing to the historic B.C. - Montana MOU. (Photo: Flathead Beacon and Associated Press)

*should move into the application review stage of environmental assessment, the [UNESCO team] considers that this would constitute a basis for inscribing the Waterton-Glacier property on the list of World Heritage in Danger."*

Earth Justice attorney Tim Preso put it this way, *"The committee's determination shamed British Columbia into abruptly reversing its position regarding the North Fork, pressured in part by the looming prospect of international attention associated with the impending Vancouver Olympics."*

From this point onward, the goal to protect the North Fork Flathead from mining and energy development moved steadily forward. With continued advocacy and media work, the Flathead Wild Team publicized and pushed for protection. Accordingly, in February 2010, British Columbia and Montana signed a "[Memorandum of Understanding](#)" (MOU) that committed both governments to ban mining and energy development in the transboundary Flathead watershed. B.C. moved quickly to implement the ban on its side of the boarder, passing the [Flathead Watershed Area Conservation Act in 2010](#).



The Flathead Wild Team changed some personalities over the decade-plus time of the effort. Here members assemble in the upper Elk River of B.C. for a Team retreat.

Montana's senior senator, Max Baucus, introduced the [North Fork Watershed Protection Act](#) also in 2010, the first of three introductions in Congress.

Then, in 2012, The Nature Conservancy of Montana and Nature Conservancy of Canada [succeeded in delivering approximately \\$10 million](#) to the B.C. government as part of the 2010 MOU agreement.

And as you now know, it took until December 2014 for Montana and the United States to achieve a similar ban with passage of the [North Fork Watershed Protection Act](#). Passage of this legislation constitutes a story in itself that we will share in a future newsletter.

Meanwhile, the campaign to legislate additional protections for the Transboundary Flathead continues. Among our remaining goals: **a new Canadian national park in the Flathead; a Wildlife Management Area between Whitefish, Montana, and Banff National Park in Alberta; and the Whitefish Range Wilderness in the north end of the U.S. Whitefish Range.**



This map depicts some of the key goals of the Flathead Wild Campaign. (Click [here](#) for a larger image.)

### Flathead Wild Team Members



### Key Conservation Allies



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*Protecting the Water, Wildlife and Traditional Outdoor Heritage in the Crown of the Continent!*

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