

**Final**

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**Wilderness Conference Calls for Protecting Wild Lands**

*Northwest Montana Conservation Advocates Ask Delegation to Support Wilderness Legislation*

**Kalispell, MT. Saturday, May 16.** Wilderness advocates from across northwest Montana convened in Kalispell this Saturday to build momentum for protecting pristine wild country in northwestern Montana.

Montanans from all walks of life discussed their favorite places that contribute to their way of life and their economic prosperity.

“We Montanans enjoy a special way of life based on big wild land, clean water and abundant wildlife,” said Edwin Fields, a green building contractor from Whitefish. “Protecting wilderness areas is one way we can pass those treasures on to future generations.”

While Montana has some of America’s most famous wilderness areas — such as the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex — only about three percent of Montana has been protected as wilderness.

Folks at the meeting discussed protecting the wild portions of the northern Swan Range, the Whitefish Range and Ten Lakes Area, Glacier Park, Cube Iron Silcox, LaBeau, and additions to the Bob Marshall Wilderness along the Swan Front, the Great Bear Wilderness, the Mission Mountains Wilderness, and Cabinet Mountains Wilderness.

“These lands are valuable for our economy and valuable in ways that cannot be expressed in dollars and cents,” Fields said. “They provide clean water and support our outdoor traditions. It’s time we gave these lands their due and protected them once and for all.”

As Montana grows and develops, it’s particularly important to keep some places wild and natural, he/she said.

“It’s frightening to imagine Montana without its big country to escape the noise and pollution of everyday life,” said Callie Schieffer, a chemical engineer from Kalispell. “Wilderness helps keep Montana, Montana.”

“We urge the members of Montana delegation to consider wilderness legislation for all parts of the state. We encourage them to not forget all the worthy areas, particularly in northwest Montana,” said Fields.

Retired Columbia Falls dentist and World War II veteran, Loren Kreck, 88, was the oldest conference participant. “Our representatives in Washington need to know that many special places stand ‘Shovel Ready’ for wilderness designation,” Kreck said. “We trust they’ll give these areas their consideration in an open, democratic way.”

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