

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.