

Wildland Friends gather to celebrate anniversary

Friends of the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness (FSPW) toasted the 10th year anniversary of the organization at a summer gathering held Sunday at the Bull River campground.

Formed to promote federal designation of one of the last great wild areas in northwest Montana, members were told the end may be in sight as more and more individuals, agencies and groups are coming on board with support.

Doug Ferrell, chair of the FSPW board, said it's a remarkable effort and reflects a commitment to collaboration rather than conflict.

Ferrell had hoped to introduce former Congressman Pat Williams as the keynote speaker in the celebration but he received word before the gathering that Williams had fallen and was "pretty banged up." A strong supporter of wilderness, Williams sent his regrets.

Although the push to gain formal recognition of the 88,000 acre area, which spans

the border between Idaho and Montana, has stalled, Ferrell said he's encouraged by legislation being promoted in Idaho.

The area nearly gained formal recognition back in the 1980s and was passed in Congress and sent to President Reagan. But instead of signing the bill, Reagan did nothing, effectively vetoing the designation. At the time, it was reported, the Scotchman Peaks proposal had more wilderness support than any other proposed designation.

Among the individuals speaking at the session was Bill Martin, one of the founding members of the Cabinet Resource Group. He related a tale to the group of how Bear Creek Mining had once held a mining claim in the area but in an perceived oversight, failed to file the required annual report on their claim one year. Wilderness supporters jumped on the opportunity and filed "over" the claim, thereby taking over ownership of the claim



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PHIL HOUGH of the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness addressed a 10th anniversary celebration Sunday and told the group they may be closer than ever to achieving protected status for the unique area.

and denying Bear Creek's effort.

Scotchman Peaks Wilderness."

Martin continued saying the support in Lincoln and Sanders

"Without that," said Martin, "there might not have been a

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County for the wilderness area designation is very strong and continues to grow. "We must continue our outreach and education, but its time to get something done," he said to supporters.

FSPW Executive Director Phil Hough told the group that conversations with congress members in Washington, D.C. have been very positive. He said all three of Montana's delegation are interested in

the solving the challenge of managing natural resources. In a report to "friends" he noted that the Bonner County, Idaho Chamber of Commerce and County Commissioners have signed letters of support for the

wilderness. Montana's Governor Steve Bullock is also on board, they said.

Hough continued, saying that although there's no definitive timeline, but a critical time to get our voices heard.

Ferrell then told the group that its' time to ask supporters to take action and specifically suggested sending messages and calling on county commissioners to ask for support in Sanders and Lincoln counties. "The more personal the letter the better," he offered. "We've always said we would be asking you to lend your support," he continued, "well now's the time."

Ferrell singled out a number of other supporters of the effort including Mark and Karen Sheets of Thompson Falls, Andrew Klaus and Ernie Scherzer.

The event drew about 100 supporters.



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BILL MARTIN AND DOUG FERRELL shared news about the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness proposal at the Sunday picnic celebration.