

FRIENDS OF SCOTCHMAN PEAKS WILDERNESS 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



FRIENDS OF
SCOTCHMAN PEAKS
WILDERNESS

Photo by Gwen le Tutour on Scotchman Peak Trail

WE NEED THE UNKNOWN

Executive Director's Outlook

What defines wilderness for many people is the unknown. Early sailors thought of the horizon as an edge because they could not see beyond it. When they sailed out of sight and did not fall off into an abyss, we came to realize the earth is a sphere. Mapmakers marked distant places as "there be monsters." Travelers who braved the would-be monsters came back with inspiring tales of new lands and seas. What laid beyond was a wilderness, yet to be explored. And it kept drawing people forward.

GPS mapping has removed most blank spots on the map. Or, at least, it has filled them in with contour lines. Even GPS can't take away the mystery. There are contour lines that need to be experienced. Peaks and places with no name, including some in the Scotchmans. There are remote ridgelines, high basins, hidden waterfalls, dense alder patches, and hidden groves of cedar - all inviting individual exploration.

We must enjoy Wilderness on its own terms. Not knowing where the wild critters roam adds to our excitement. Ever alert, we are in awe when we see a bear, Grizzly or Black. We stop and listen when we hear the howl of a lone wolf or pack of coyotes. We take pause at the paw prints of a cougar. Perched on a high ridge, we can only wonder whether that was a wolverine waddling around down below. The unknown propels us forward, the mystery invites us in and keeps us wanting to come back for more.

Edward Abbey may have summed it up best: *"Wilderness is not a luxury, but a necessity of the human spirit."*

Our goal is to make sure we pass on this opportunity to our kids and grandkids. They need to encounter the mysteries of the unknown that only wilderness can provide, so their spirits may rise and shine on.



Phil Hough
FSPW Executive Director

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THANK YOU FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE 2023!

109

**DAYS
ON THE
GROUND**

hiking, educating, clearing trails, & building community.



2,046

**VOLUNTEER
HOURS**

spent by
volunteers
building
trails &
educating
hikers.



VOLUNTEERS 142

52

**MILES OF
TRAIL**

Built, cleared, & restored.



31

HIKES

led by
volunteer
leaders all year
long



298
HIKERS

participated in our
guided hikes.



955

**PEOPLE
EDUCATED ON
SCOTCHMAN PEAK**

about keeping goats safe & wild.

OUTREACH

Our goal is to bring people together through a shared love for our wild backyard - the Scotchman Peaks. We want everyone to have the chance to explore the wonders of the Scotchmans.

Photo by Sandy Compton



Happy hikers summiting Star Peak

HIKES

We offer free group hikes in and around the Scotchmans all winter and summer long for a range of abilities - from accessible family hikes to off-trail bushwhack adventures. All hikes are led by volunteers.

In 2023, FSPW led 31 hikes (nearly twice as many as in 2022). These guided hikes brought out 298 folks into the Scotchmans to experience the magic of our wild backyard.

Last year, we offered many educational and interpretive hikes including wildlife tracking and identification, foraging, birding, and hiking with kids.

HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

For over a decade, FSPW has asked local high school seniors to flex their creativity by writing an essay sharing their love for exploring our wild lands. Scholarships are awarded to students in Lincoln, Sanders, and Bonner Counties with the most awe-inspiring tales of connection to the outdoors. You can find their stories among our Voices in the Wilderness series and in Your Wild Place podcast episodes.

EVENTS

Farmer's markets, health fairs, job fairs, Fourth of July events, the Huckleberry Festival, 7B Community Days, Harvest Festival, and the Forest Fair are just a few of the many events in 2023 where one might have found a friendly FSPW face ready to pore over a map of the Scotchman Peaks proposed Wilderness area with you and suggest a fun, engaging volunteer opportunity to join in.

Board member, Chris Compton, hosted the annual State of the Scotchmans party at Blue C Ranch in Heron, MT, where we had the opportunity to mingle with our supporters, give out special volunteer awards, and update attendees on programming and progress toward designation.



Rose Olson, FSPW Comms Manager, & Jason Welker, POP Executive Director, chat about trails on the KRFY morning show

VOICES FOR WILDERNESS

MARK COCHRAN, SANDPOINT

"I love the Scotchmans! I've traveled this nation and the world, and The Scotchmans are among the most stunning landscapes I've ever seen.

I've been an active volunteer with Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness for over 15 years, and a board member for 4 years so I can do all I can to help achieve Wilderness designation to provide the greatest level of protection possible."



EMILY ERICKSON, SANDPOINT

"There are a few things that never get old; never lose their magic or whimsy, no matter how many times I see them. The white tufts of beargrass, the streak of a shooting star, bright orange leaves in the middle of fall, and these trees — branches shaped by wind and snow and ice to create something altogether new. Like guardians of the mountain-top world, where blue sky crashes into the hard line of a bright white ridge, these trees feel like play. And play we did."



CAROLYN GLEASON, SANDPOINT

"I grew up in Hope and went to Clark fork high school. I love these mountains and believe they should be Wilderness. I want these lakes and these mountains to be the same as what I grew up in."




STEWARDSHIP

Trail Builders

Every year, we partner with the Forest Service in both the Kootenai and Panhandle National Forests to organize groups of trail work volunteers to build and restore trails. We were able to work on 52 miles of trails across 17 days in the Scotchmans last summer. This work was done using traditional trail building tools, crosscut saws, pulaskis, hand saws, and loppers.

Our most active volunteers, Ed Vorwerk and Ella Beck logged 13 trail days between them. Overall, we had 90 volunteers spend 821 hours making the trails in the Scotchmans more accessible in 2023.

A woman wearing a green t-shirt, a black baseball cap, sunglasses, and green gloves is standing on a dirt trail. She is holding a pulaski (a trail building tool) vertically in front of her. She has a red backpack on. The background shows a large lake, forested hills, and mountains under a clear blue sky.

"Last summer, I volunteered on a trail work day on Star Peak. This was my first volunteer event with FSPW and it was an amazing experience. After spending many years hiking and exploring the West, it felt really great to have an opportunity to give back, if only for a quick day. More than anything, my day with the trail crew motivated me to reach out to others and bring them along for more trail days next summer. I believe that trail stewardship is a great way to connect with the land and with the people who care for it."

-Leah Opitz, Trail Volunteer

Leah Opitz takes a quick break on a trail project on Star Peak

EDUCATION

FSPW offers many free outdoor education opportunities for youth and adults through educational hikes, citizen science opportunities, and other programming pillars like our Trail Ambassador and Winter Tracks programs.

WINTER TRACKS

In 2023, we saw great success with the ninth season of our Winter Tracks program in Bonner, Sanders, and Lincoln counties. Winter Tracks runs from January through March each year, offering an outdoor field trip to area students where they learn about their natural environment. Topics covered range from tree identification, wildlife identification and tracking, outdoor gear, leave no trace principles, bear safety & bear spray practice, fire starting, ice fishing, shelter building, and even how to run in snowshoes! The success of this program is thanks to the extremely knowledgeable volunteers who come out to teach each module year after year. These volunteers are experts in their field and through Winter Tracks, can impart their experience to younger generations, strengthening the bonds of our community and the outdoors.

We have recently expanded our educational outreach efforts to include Winter Tracks for Teens. We are now offering our Winter Tracks curriculum to high school natural resource and science classrooms and hosting them at outdoor venues.



Thompson Falls students learn how to build shelter in the wild



Winter Tracks students practice with inert bear spray

ADVOCACY

Community building and collaboration

Photo by Rose Olson

We are uniting thousands of people from Idaho and Montana to support designation of the Scotchman Peaks as Wilderness.

Join us on a hike or trail project or attend one of our events. Look around and you will likely see someone you know, a friend or neighbor. Our volunteers, supporters, and donors come from all walks of life, all backgrounds and experiences. Our community is bound together by a common interest – keeping the Scotchmans wild – and it brings folks together.

We are active members in both the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition in Montana and the Panhandle Forest Collaborative in Idaho. These collaborative groups have been instrumental in working with other stakeholders to provide consensus recommendations on projects and forest plans addressing our shared goals.

We believe in the power of communication and connectivity when everyone has a seat at the table.



Ed & Kendra Scotchman Peak

Through community building & collaboration, we believe we will find a pathway that will designate wilderness for the Scotchman Peaks and improve management of public lands in many other ways.



YOUR WILD PLACE PODCAST

We launched the Your Wild Place Podcast in 2021 as a way to connect from afar. The podcast seeks to inspire adventure and exploration right here in our backyard. We were able to use our podcast to reach supporters when in-person events weren't an option. The episodes feature storytelling, interviews with community members and reflections on living in wild places.

Check it out on FSPW's website, or wherever you listen to podcasts.

STEWARDSHIP

Trail Ambassadors

The summer of 2023 marked our eighth year in partnership with Idaho Fish & Game (IDFG), and the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) for our Scotchman Peak Trail Ambassador program. Volunteer Trail Ambassadors hike Scotchman Peak trail #65 during the summer and early fall to talk with folks about safety in mountain goat habitat. Keeping a distance (100' or more) from the fluffy critters is not just to keep people safe, it's to keep the goats safe too. Becoming dependent on humans for salt can hurt their ability to survive in their natural habitat. If they become too aggressive, desperate measures may be needed.

In 2023, our Trail Ambassadors chatted with over 955 hikers on Scotchman Peak about best practices to ensure there were no negative interactions between goats and humans - keeping hikers safe, goats wild, and trails open.



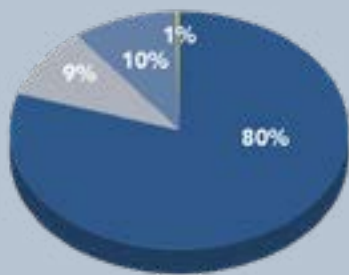


Volunteer trail crew - Ross Creek Cedars

FINANCIALS

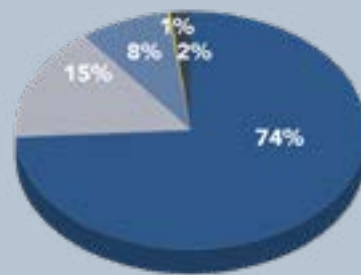
Fiscal Year 2023

Expenses



■ Programs
 ■ Fundraising
 ■ Admin
 ■ Merch

Revenue



■ Grants
 ■ Donations
 ■ Events
 ■ Merch
 ■ USFS Cost Share

Donations were received from 230 households over the course of the fiscal year. *Thank you!* As FSPW continues to diversify funding sources, your commitment to saving the wild Scotchmans is as important as ever.

ENDOWMENT

Leaving a legacy for the land you love

Photo by Rose Olson

A Scotchman Peaks Wilderness will provide an enduring legacy for our children, grandchildren, and generations to come. Our work to make that happen must take the long view. Congressional designation will take time. Stewardship work, education, and community building will all need to continue well past Congressional action.

***Your contribution
to the endowment
will create a
perpetual ripple.***

An endowment fund is a key part of a strategy to sustain the work that a legacy of wilderness requires. Together, we can build this permanently endowed fund. One that will provide the steady resources needed to protect the Scotchmans into the future.

As Mark Cochran, FSPW Board Chair, puts it: "Your contribution will create a perpetual ripple". Imagine, if you are joined by your friends, and others who add to your effort.

Those ripples then merge into waves and the impact is magnified!

Thanks to generous contributions from a number of supporters, we are close to the level needed to formally launch funds at both the Idaho Community Foundation as well as the Montana Community Foundation! Your contribution will put us over the top.

This is just the beginning. You can help leave a lasting legacy of Wilderness by including the Scotchman Peaks as you consider your estate plans. If we all left just five percent for wilderness, the lasting impact could be enormous! Your contribution will ensure a wild Scotchman Peaks area forever - for our communities, kids, and grandkids.

Find out more about how you can be part of this effort on our website at www.scotchmanpeaks.org/endowment/



STAFF UPDATES

Our staff continues to evolve to meet our growing programs. We were excited to welcome Rose Olson last February as our Communications & Engagement Manager.

Looking forward, we are excited to be offering two exciting summer seasonal opportunities for 2024 - our Backcountry Ranger Intern and a seasonal Trail Stewardship Coordinator.



OUR MISSION:

TO PASS ON A SCOTCHMAN PEAKS
WILDERNESS FOR OUR CHILDREN
AND GRANDCHILDREN

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2024)

Chair, Dr. Mark Cochran — Sandpoint, ID
Treasurer, Brad Williams — Sandpoint, ID
Secretary, Megan Leach — Libby, MT
Rebecca Sanchez — Hope, ID
Chris Compton — Heron, MT
Ed Robinson — Sandpoint, ID (2023)

STAFF (2024)

Phil Hough — Executive Director
Brooke Bolin — Northwest Montana Outreach Coordinator
Rose Olson — Communications & Engagement Manager
Juli Thurston — Sanders County Activities Coordinator
Cameron Rasmusson — Communications Specialist
Ella Beck — Backcountry Ranger Intern (2023)

*The Scotchman Peaks are the ancestral lands of the Ktunaxa, Kalispel,
Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla peoples*

CONTACT

Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, Inc.
PO Box 2061, Sandpoint, ID 83864

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WILDERNESS

Photo by Laura Shields