

Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument *Newsletter*

Protecting and preserving the UMRBNM through **advocacy, education and stewardship.**

Winter 2021/2022

A Year of Celebration: 20 Years of FMB and the UMRBNM

Reflections on the 20th Anniversary of the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

In case you didn't hear the news, 2021 marked the 20th anniversary of both the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument and the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument. Although we faced another challenging year due to COVID-19, we at the Friends were determined to celebrate this major milestone throughout the year by highlighting everything that makes the UMRBNM the treasure that it is. We think we did a pretty great job.

While the effort to create the monument was not embraced by all, President Bill Clinton's proclamation left

no doubt that the more than 375,000 acres of public land within its boundaries deserved the designation as a national monument and all of the special protections that come with it.

From the Nez Perce National Historic Trail to the mighty cottonwood galleries along the banks of the Wild and Scenic Missouri River, to the abundant wildlife and unique geologic features, the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument is a dynamic landscape that holds boundless opportunities for adventure and discovery.



There may be no more iconic place to view the Breaks than from the top of the Hole in the Wall feature in the White Cliffs section of the monument.

This spectacular overlook connects river with sky and leaves onlookers in awe of the endless expanse of horizon around them.



Summer intern Nora Harper writes down observations about past cottonwood plantings at Eagle Creek Campground.



MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks fisheries biologist Luke Holmquist holding a pallid sturgeon in the Missouri River. Luke was our 10th and final Tune In Tuesday presenter in December.

A Year in Numbers

We had a busy and productive year at the Friends, and a lot of hard work and fantastic people made it all possible. Here's a look at FMB's 2021 in numbers (in no particular order).

1 unbelievable summer Conservation Intern named Nora Harper. Nora joined the Friends in May for her 3-month MCC term of service and immediately made herself an indispensable part of the FMB team. She helped organize and implement almost all of our stewardship events and generally kept FMB running like a well-oiled machine. Thanks again, Nora!

9 volunteer and stewardship events. This year we were unbelievably fortunate to be able to hold nine outdoor volunteer events on the monument. These events included our cottonwood planting, National Trails Day, the Confluence Campout, the Boats in the Breaks canoe and kayak race, WSA monitoring hikes and floats, and the collaborative Bashin' Trash river cleanup.

38 Boats in the Breaks canoe and kayak race competitors. This year we held our first-ever Boats in the Breaks race from Fort Benton to Wood Bottom. The course took competitors over 20 miles of the Wild and Scenic Missouri River and brought participants from all over the state and nation. We had a great time hosting this race as part of the daylong Boats, Brews & Blues event in partnership with our friends at ChoCo Fun, who held a brewfest, live music and kids' activities along Fort Benton's historic Front Street.

95 volunteers. Wow. We will say it again. 95 volunteers. Battling another difficult year with COVID-19, relentless wildfires and searing heat, we still had 95 remarkable individuals join us during our nine volunteer events and multiple weeks of cottonwood watering for a total of **554** hours of work. Without these helping hands, none of the work we did this year would have been possible. Thank you all for your dedication.

10 Tune In Tuesday virtual education events. To help highlight all that the monument has to offer, we introduced our Tune In Tuesday online education series. We brought in speakers from a variety of fields to present on topics including the creation of the monument and the Friends, hunting in the Breaks, cottonwood ecology and grassroots conservation.

- ◆ **254** people tuned in to watch and listen live over the course of the year, and more than **475** people have viewed the recordings on our YouTube channel.

118 cottonwoods were planted to help us continue our work to restore diminishing cottonwood groves along the Missouri River.

215 miles of Missouri River paddled. Over the course of the year our staff paddled just over 215 miles within the monument during volunteer events, the canoe and kayak race, and our cottonwood monitoring and maintenance floats. Each trip down the river offers a brand new experience and is definitely the best part of our summers.



Photo credit: Rod Benson

Check out all of the Tune In Tuesday videos on our YouTube channel. Our most heartfelt thank you to all of our amazing speakers for sharing their time and expertise with us.

New Additions

Board member,

Scott Heidebrink

We are thrilled to announce the addition of our newest board member, Scott Heidebrink. Scott was unanimously voted onto the Friends' board of directors this fall and has jumped into his new role with both feet. A long-time volunteer and supporter of the Friends, Scott has already contributed an incredible amount to our organization, and we look forward to working with him in this new capacity.

Scott was born and raised in Iowa but came out to Montana after college and fell in love with the state's eastern prairies. He soon took a position with American Prairie, and since then has become their bison restoration manager and a senior member of their staff. Scott spends an immense amount of time out on the landscape and brings with him a wealth of knowledge about the Breaks and the animals, plants and people that make it what it is.

We hope you will all join us in welcoming Scott to the FMB family.

If you are interested in applying to become a member of our board of directors or would like more information about the role of a board member, please email info@missouribreaks.org to inquire.



2022's Big Sky Watershed Corps Member, *Ethan Weisgerber*

FMB has proudly partnered with Americorps through Montana Conservation Corps for many years to host Conservation Interns, to work with MCC crews, and to host Big Sky Watershed Corps members (BSWC).

Our BSWC members increase our organization's capacity exponentially both in the office and out in the field. This program provides an excellent opportunity for burgeoning young professionals to experience working in the conservation profession while providing host sites with a knowledgeable service member.

This year we welcome Ethan Weisgerber to the FMB team. Ethan developed a deep passion for the outdoors and wildlife conservation while growing up on his family's hunting/farm land in Indiana. This passion led him to pursue a BS in biology with a focus in wildlife ecology from Marian University in Indianapolis.

Upon graduation, Ethan entered the conservation field by taking a crew position in California, assisting the BLM and Joshua Tree National Park with ecological restoration. He then followed his dream of moving to Montana, where he served an MCC term with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks on its first-ever AIS-Herpetology team.

He said he is "excited to join the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument and continue on with the great work they are doing, as well as learn more about the conservation practices pertaining to the watersheds of Montana."

When he's not working, you can find Ethan hunting, fly fishing, rafting, or hiking.

Make sure to sign up for our volunteer events this year and help us welcome Ethan to the Breaks!



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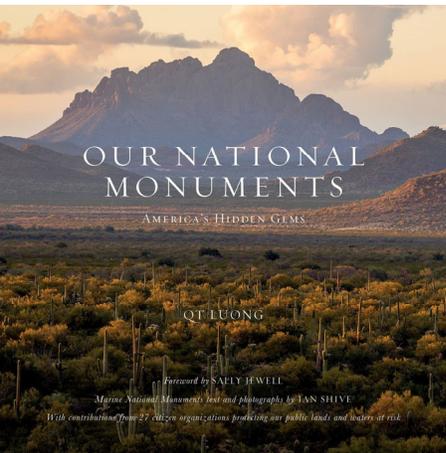


AmeriCorps



“As we passed on, it seemed those scenes of visionary enchantment would never have an end.”

-Meriwether Lewis



Make sure to check out the feature on the UMRBNM in this new book about our national monuments by author QT Luong.



Ring in a New Year, Looking Ahead in 2022

While looking back on another successful year of work on the UMRBNM is a great way to celebrate our triumphs, as always we are already looking forward to this year's possibilities.

2022 will see the Friends continuing to expand our work on the monument and our partnerships throughout the region. Working hand in hand with our local and national partners, we will remain steadfast in our mission to advocate for fortified environmental protections and responsible land management.

We look forward to once again hosting our annual cottonwood planting and working with our amazing volunteers to complete a variety of stewardship projects in the Breaks. We also will bring back our Tune In Tuesday events for special presentations throughout the year.

FMB is excited to announce that we are hosting a Big Sky Watershed Corps member in 2022. Ethan Weisgerber recently began work with the Friends, and we enthusiastically welcome him to our team. Ethan joined us after a summer position with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in Missoula, where his work focused on aquatic invasive species. He is excited to work on a new landscape during his BSWC term of service. Welcome aboard, Ethan!

2022 is certain to be another year of adaptation for all of us, and FMB is ready to meet the challenge. With a renewed focus, a robust board of directors, dedicated staff and, of course, you, the Friends are ready to begin 2022 with a bang.



Join the Friends

Twenty years are officially in the books, and we are getting started on another great year here at the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument!

Please consider becoming a member today and help us continue our work on and for the monument by visiting our website at

missouribreaks.org/donate.

Protecting and preserving the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument through advocacy, education and stewardship.

Thank you to our partners and sponsors

2021

Tune In Tuesday

A special thank you to our presenters

- Zane Fulbright, Bureau of Land Management
- Andres Esparza, Conservation Lands Foundation
- Tim Davis, Friends of the Owyhee
- Jesse Hankins, Bureau of Land Management
- Bonny Richard, Bureau of Land Management
- Dennis Tighe, Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument
- Dave Mari, Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument
- Alison Williams, Bureau of Land Management
- Marcus Strange, Montana Wildlife Federation
- Will Glenny, Montana State University
- Thomas J. Elpel, author of "Five Months on the Missouri River: Paddling a Dugout Canoe"
- Luke Holmquist, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

