



The newsletter of the  
Yaak Valley Forest Council

Issue Twenty Two

Spring 2012

*"Promoting wholeness in our forests and our community."*

**Our Mission** is to permanently protect the last remaining roadless cores in the Yaak Valley, to support the development of a sustainable local economy based increasingly on value added forest products and ecological restoration; and to maintain and restore the valley's ecological integrity by conserving and enhancing habitat for populations of sensitive species. We are dedicated to cultivating and encouraging meaningful dialogue between historically polarized groups; bringing these groups together to find common ground on ecologically sound, stewardship based forestry management practices.



## Notes from the Director.....

Dear Friends,

Spring in the Yaak this year brought a foot of new snow just after the spring equinox and as I'm writing this today, the snow is still falling. Even with this new layer of what might appear to be more winter, the signs of spring are here. The red osier dogwood in my garden glows a deep red against the white snow blanket with tiny buds beginning to pop out of its branches. The golden green branches of the willow are budding as well and the larch trees seem to be pulsating with the energy of spring—a golden color hard to describe. The seasonal wheel turns again in the Yaak, the landscape waking to its new potential. And as the landscape of our home turns, flows, buds, and opens, the YVFC staff plans, visions, connects and gets ready for another busy field season.

Our Headwaters Restoration Project will be involved with a major watershed restoration project this year in the north end of the valley close to the Canadian border. Our Forest Watch program will continue our on-the-ground conservation presence with pre and post harvest monitoring and will be initiating a wildlife habitat restoration working group to address the habitat needs of our sensitive and endangered species. Our Conservation Education program launches a new 2-week summer camp and, if we're success-

ful in a fruit tree grant we've applied for, will be planting a community orchard in Troy.

Our mission to protect and restore fragmented landscapes and watersheds creates opportunities for us to partner with our community not only on restoration workforce issues but also broader community development issues. This year we'll be participating in community leadership training and capacity building as well as planning and visioning processes.

Senator Tester continues to work to make the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act law. We commend him on his continued dedication to restoring our forests and protecting our backcountry. Our community development and restoration workforce endeavors are laying the ground work for the anticipated jobs that this historic bill will create.

2012 is going to be another banner year for the YVFC. Thank you all for continuing to support our work in the Yaak. You helped us keep our programs active and strong in a challenging funding year. Please help us make 2012 the best year ever for protecting and restoring the Yaak Valley by continuing to invest in our work.

Peace,  
Robyn King



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### Board and Staff

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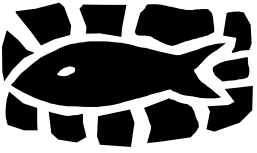
Executive Director—Robyn King

Headwaters Project- Pete Leusch

Forest Watch—Matt Bowser

Conservation Ed.-Shawna Kelsey

Office Manager—Lisa Mountain



# HEADWATERS RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP PROJECT by Pete Leusch, Project Coordinator *“Restoring fragmented landscapes.”*

As the Headwaters Partnership Project heads into its fourteenth year of field operations, we are excited about our continuing projects and some new ones for 2012. Much of our focus has been on native trout species, especially inland redband rainbow trout (IRRT) and westslope cutthroat trout (WSCT), and the vital habitat in the Yaak Valley that these fish rely on. We have been working closely with U. S. Forest Service and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks fisheries biologists on a new initiative to document and map IRRT distributions throughout the streams and rivers of the Yaak Valley. Knowing the limits of fish habitat, locations of pure genetic stock, and the natural and manmade barriers that prevent mingling and competition from non-native species are key factors in preserving and restoring streams.

One big problem has been the infiltration of eastern brook trout. Well meaning folks introduced brook trout to many streams decades ago, but these fish can thrive in a wider range of habitat conditions than our native trout and pose a serious threat to the long term viability of the native species. In some lakes and streams, biologists actually poison the brook trout in order to reintroduce native fish. This summer we will be documenting and mapping all the natural fish barriers in the Yaak that prevent fish migration. Using this information with our maps of fish distribution, we can plan future projects that will enhance our native species and prevent further degradation of their range.

Another important aspect of habitat health is water temperature. Trout need cold water to survive and Yaak Valley streams for the most part, run cold and clear year round. There is much debate about ideal temperatures and it varies by species and region, but it is generally accepted that water temperatures above 68 F are detrimental and potentially deadly to trout. We often find that fishing is poor in the lower parts of the Yaak River as summer sunshine heats the river to less than ideal temperatures. We will continue this summer with a long term monitoring project of water temperature in fifteen key streams. Collecting this valuable data will help biologists and land managers to see the trends in temperature and act accordingly.

As the Headwaters Partnership focus on fish and fish habitat continues, we also take new steps to expand and increase the effectiveness of the program. We are working to expand our efforts across the border into the British Columbia portion of the Yaak. The main stem of the river originates in Canada (as the Yahk River) and the West Fork starts in the U.S., flows into Canada and then flows south again across the border. Working with conservation groups and ministry

biologists north of the border has become a priority. We need to make sure that our efforts here are duplicated in Canada so that the whole of the river is preserved and restored for future generations. Needless to say, it is a complicated endeavor to bring so many different entities together. Last December we had a meeting in Troy that did just that, and are moving ahead with plans to make this international border as invisible as possible, at least to the fish.

In 2012, we will continue with several ongoing projects including Pacfish/Infish Biological Opinion Effectiveness Monitoring (PIBO). We will be revisiting sites in the Seventeen Mile Creek area that were catalogued several years ago. The PIBO protocol calls for resurvey of sites to see how the habitat is changed over time and in response to management activities and natural disturbances such as fire. So, it will be exciting to see how our sites have changed over the years, and as the program continues we will learn more and more about the health of these



vital streams. We will also continue our weed abatement program and are working with U.S. Forest Service specialists to prioritize our sites and make our efforts more effective. Spotted knapweed and hawkweed have become major problems in the Yaak and we are exploring different ways to control the infestations and return the vegetation to a natural balance.

The Headwaters Partnership works on many fronts: In the field, the agency offices, and across the border. This year we will also be launching a program to educate the public about aquatic invaders that threaten the health of our streams and lakes. With the help of the U.S. Forest Service and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks we will be distributing information to boaters, fishermen, and other recreationists about these new and very real threats. As we work to enhance and preserve the Yaak's precious aquatic resources, our partnership and cooperation with the agencies and the community grows stronger every year.

# FOREST WATCH by Matt Bowser, Project Coordinator

*“Protecting the last wild places in the Yaak.”*

As I came back on board with the Yaak Valley Forest Council after a brief winter hiatus, I was pleased to find the Kootenai National Forest Revised Draft Plan sitting on my desk. The plan has been ten years in the making and is finally available for public comment. My job was to put together a nation-wide letter writing campaign meant to empower citizens to effectively comment on the long-term management of the Kootenai National Forest, as well as stimulate local interests toward moving some critical pieces of habitat into the category of “Recommended Wilderness” – with Roderick, Northwest Peaks, Buckhorn, Mount Henry, Saddle, and Gold Hill West IRAs at the top of the list. Judging from the level of response that we received, the campaign has been very successful. Now that the dust is beginning to settle, I’m able to look back at the planning process and reflect upon what I learned.



to an ecosystem management approach where economic interests are balanced with ecological and social concerns. The new Planning Rule released by the USFS earlier this year along with the Draft KNF Plan attempts to balance socio-economic values by placing collaboration at the heart of public land management. Ever-decreasing federal budgets are also producing new federal funding mechanisms where collaboration is a must for adequate funding to be in place for project implementation to occur.

The system of the past was not appropriately geared to actively respond to the demands placed upon it by a diverse set of public interests. Now that a system is being constructed that more responsibly incorporates the public’s needs, we have to give it a chance to succeed. A collaborative approach to adaptive management is bound to be a bumpy ride into unfamiliar territory with a possible steep learning curve. But it is an opportunity worth exploring in order to collectively manage our public lands in the twenty-first century.

Of course we will have to wait for the Final Plan to be released to see how effective our efforts were, but for now I feel satisfied that the system of public involvement on federally managed lands is working. Before I began this job, my impression of public input on the decision-making process was comparable to that of the fictional conspiracy theorist Fox Mulder of X-File television show fame - not all too convinced that citizens have much power with their voice, however, “I Want To Believe.”

Change is often greeted with skepticism. To an extent, this is healthy. Yet too much doubt can lead to paralysis or even worse, abandonment of the participatory and collaborative process altogether

A broader misconception of the process is reflected when states like Idaho push for control of federal lands to be turned over to the state or county authority. Perhaps the reason for my confidence is rooted in the fact that there has been a recent dramatic shift in public land management that not everyone is aware of. We are certainly at a monumental turning point in the history of the management of our public lands - moving from a predominately extractive based system

I’m fortunate to occupy the post of Forest Watch for the YVFC where I’m afforded the time to research new policies and emerging national trends in forest management. The more that I learn, the more I’m convinced that we’re heading (for the most part) in the right direction on our public lands. Change is often slow to occur, especially here on the Kootenai, and I look forward to playing a very small role in how that change might one day be implemented. Please visit the Forest Watch page on our website for the status of on-going Forest Service’s projects in the Yaak and how you can contribute. Thanks.

## **YVFC Presented With Appreciation Award**

This past winter, the Troy Ranger District recognized the Yaak Valley Forest Council for our continued efforts and partnerships on the Kootenai National Forest. We were given a small token of appreciation along with a letter from the District Ranger, Linda Ellett-Fee, which stated, “Thank you for your efforts in helping on a variety of recreation projects and the survey work completed with the Headwaters program. We look forward to our continued cooperation and effort in making this a special place for recreationists and a great community to live in.”

It was a neighborly and gracious gesture from the Forest Service and the cake was good too!





# Neighbors working with Neighbors by Robyn King

The human heart is the first home of democracy. It is where we embrace our questions. Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinions. And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentlessly, without giving up—ever—trusting our fellow citizens to join with us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy?

—Terry Tempest Williams

Any effort to encourage the dialogue that results in community must begin as Williams suggests in the human heart. Our efforts to create community between the fragmented groups in the Yaak demanded we begin by examining our own hearts and asking are we prepared to open our hearts “relentlessly, without giving up – ever – trusting our fellow citizens to join us.” We are committed and dedicated to cultivating and encouraging meaningful dialog between historically polarized groups and bringing these groups to the table to find common ground on ecosystem-based forest management practices.

The Three Rivers Challenge, which has been included in the historic Forest Jobs and Recreation Act, is the culmination of our efforts over the past two decades to protect the last wild places in the Yaak and restore the fragmented landscape of the Kootenai National Forest and represents our belief and dedication to the collaboration process. When we began our work on the Three Rivers Challenge, we knew we agreed with our neighbors more than we disagreed with them and starting from that place of agreement, we were able to map an area of common ground in the Yaak that protects special places and communities and promotes stewardship-based forestry practices.

We continue our dedication to collaborative efforts through the Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition, a broad coalition of groups, including timber, mining, motorized recreation, conservationists, elected officials and more and the mission is to demonstrate the ability of a diverse group of stakeholders to define common ground by implementing projects on natural resource issues, including community protection,

forest and watershed restoration, public safety, forest health and community economic vitality. We believe that continued collaborative efforts like these will result in a protected and restored landscape that supports sustainable and long-lasting community and economic development.

Also as Williams implies above, collaboration is not for the faint of heart or the impatient. It’s not for folks who cling rigidly to firmly held ideological points of view. Collaborative efforts take an enormous amount of personal time and effort to build trust, let go of past prejudices and long-held beliefs about those who stand on the proverbial other side of the fence from you. You have to be willing to transparently put all the issues on the table and face the fact that there’s going to be some screaming and shouting before you can even begin to start making marks on a map. During our Three Rivers Challenge meetings, once the screaming and shouting was over, we found the common ground and we also found our neighbors and ultimately our community. We became friends – not necessarily agreeing on everything, not by a long shot - but certainly agreeing that working together was better than the community killing rhetoric of the past.

We discovered in our work on the Three Rivers Challenge and continue to discover in our work with the Stakeholders group that our community won’t survive if we don’t have the courage to reach across those fences, take the fences down and figure out how to get along with each other and share the landscape that supports us. Our strength is in our cooperation, our diversity and our willingness to listen, respect and work with each other. Finding, defining and mapping that middle-ground reflects the diversity of the values that define our community and demonstrates the resilience and community strength that working together can create. We are slowly learning that the diversity of our opinions is an asset we can all embrace rather than a liability to be overcome.

We’ll keep showing up and putting in the time to build the trust that allows us to discover those agreements that will sustain us in the future.



## Bear Corner

Kim Annis, Wildlife Management Specialist

As some of you might remember, last year was the Year of the Chicken...and bears. Many residents in the Yaak, and elsewhere in Lincoln County, had bears discover and kill their unsecured poultry; primarily chickens.

For anyone that has chickens, or any poultry, or if you are planning on getting chickens this spring, there is a very effective way to protect your investment, prevent your frustration, and at the same time prevent a bear from going down a path that ultimately leads to destruction.

The single most effective solution to bears and chickens is electric fencing. Let me help you make your life easier...I loan, for free, electric fencing. I can provide assistance to anyone that needs some creative ideas on how to make electric fencing work for them. There are many designs and materials that will work for just about any living situation, including residents that live off the grid.

There is also financial assistance available through a non-profit

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
406-293-4161, ext. 207, [kannis@mt.gov](mailto:kannis@mt.gov)

organization that is willing to pay up to 1/2 of your electric fencing expenses, be it for chickens, livestock, garbage, fruit trees, gardens, or your whole property. This same organization continues to pay for losses of chickens, and other livestock, that have been killed by a grizzly bear.

As April 1<sup>st</sup> approaches, and the first bears begin to wake, now is the time to look around your property and secure the items that may become a food source for a bear. Livestock feed, poultry, songbird feeders, pet food, garbage, gardens, compost, outdoor freezers and fruit trees are just some of the items that bears will find attractive. The most effective way to secure attractants is behind a closed solid door (i.e. shed, basement or outbuilding), behind electric fencing, or in a bear-resistant container. I have bear-resistant containers available to loan for free.

Give me a call. I happily work with residents on creative and affordable alternatives that are not only effective against bears, but will work for your personal situation.



# CONSERVATION EDUCATION by Shawna Kelsey

*“Educating ourselves and our community about the value of protected and restored landscapes.”*

This year began with the unfortunate passing of a man in the Troy community, Ralph Stever, who inspired many people to give of themselves to benefit the greater community. I had been working in partnership with him on a number of projects with the Conservation Education Program. He taught me to work passionately, to jump into projects if I believed in them, and to develop positive relationships with the kids of the Troy/Yaak community through my work.

With the loss of this important member of the school and broader community, many people have picked up the projects that he left behind. Of these projects, the Conservation Education Program is still working on the construction and completion of the outdoor classroom, “The Stever Center,” located on the grounds of the elementary school in Troy.

We are also working on an orchard grant that, if successful, will lead to the planting of a community orchard in Troy. The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation has selected our community as national finalists to participate in “Communities Take Root”. Starting April 16th thru August, the communities with the highest vote totals in four rounds of voting will be announced as winners. Please go to [www.comunitiestakeroot.com](http://www.comunitiestakeroot.com) and vote for **Troy Community Orchard** online. You can vote once a day.  
THE CHILDREN THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT !

In addition to these projects and the continued daily work in the school and school garden, we have some exciting projects lined up for students in the summer, including a two week environmental studies day camp for middle school students and the third season of the high school girls’ hikes. In order to make these projects possible, we have formed and maintained a variety of partnerships that are serving to strengthen and sustain our program and further tie us to the school and the students.

In this job, I am learning the importance of each individual to the health of our community and our place. Without these passionate people, willing to donate their time and energy, we could not maintain such a beautiful and wild landscape or a healthy and connected community.



Children pose on potential Troy Community Orchard site

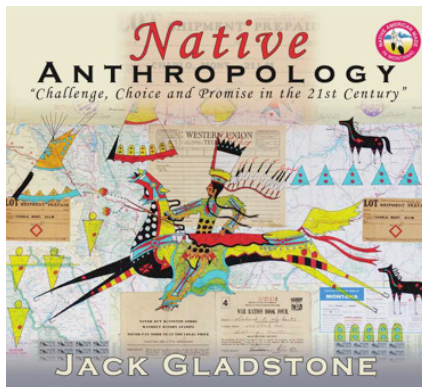
## A Wilderness Celebration Weekend

Please join us for a weekend event in the Yaak to celebrate Wilderness and take a walk on the *wild* side! The YVFC’s Annual Meeting will take place on **Saturday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>** at the Historic Upper Ford Ranger Station, followed on **Sunday, June 24<sup>th</sup>** with our annual Wilderness Walk.

This year’s Annual Meeting will again be a relaxed open house format that invites supporters to meet our staff and learn first-hand about the programs YVFC has to offer. Joanne Linehan will cater appetizers and refreshments while visitors take in knowledge and share in the fun.

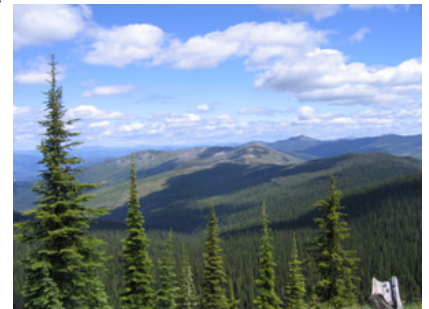
The local bear specialist with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Kim Annis, will be on hand to provide information on how to live safely in bear country.

And we’re very excited this year to host **Jack Gladstone**, “Montana’s Blackfeet Troubadour”, to perform an acoustic set of music.



Regarded as a cultural bridge builder, he delivers programs nationally on American Indian myth, legend and history.

**The open house is Saturday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> from 3-7 PM with the music starting at 5:30 PM.** Contact [info@yaakvalley.org](mailto:info@yaakvalley.org) or 406-295-9736 for additional information.



The Celebration Weekend continues with this year’s **Wilderness Walk on Sunday, June 24<sup>th</sup>.**

We’ll be heading back up to the top of Pink Mountain located in the heart of the Zulu Inventoried Roadless Area.

The ridge-walk offers amazing views of the surrounding Purcell Range, including the proposed Roderick Wilderness, and is a great representation of “the Yaak.” With this moderate hike, be prepared for some elevation gain and a round-trip of 7 miles.

We have to limit this hike to 10-12 participants, so if you’re interested please sign up with Matt at [leave.earth@gmail.com](mailto:leave.earth@gmail.com) or 406-295-9736 by June 15<sup>th</sup>.

# Help us help the Yaak

By Rick Bass



I'm writing to you today to enthusiastically encourage you to give and give generously to the YVFC in support of our work in the Yaak Valley. I have never known another grassroots (or any other kind) of organization that leverages the creative imagination with the sheer grind-it-out frontlines work of showing up for work every hour of every day of every week in the year.

Their work is their home. They don't commute to an office miles from their living quarters; instead, they step out of their cabins and into the war, every day. In my opinion they are to be supported with every available resource we can share. Like no other group I know of, there is no on-and-off switch in their lives. This is taxing, but it also is why they have been so extraordinarily effective: day and night, they are living the change they hope to see on the Kootenai National Forest, once the most contentious and polarized community in Montana and much of the West.

It is not all peaceable yet, but they have made great strides in detoxifying one of the most important words

in conservation, to my mind, wilderness. They have done so with spunk and imagination and dignity and courage. Their work is taught now in local schools, they are trusted to secure stewardship and restoration contracts for local loggers, and their word on conservation matters has come to be known as the gold standard, locally. They can be trusted to work toward consensus but can be trusted also to hold their ground when that line must be held. Both of these qualities give their integrity a currency that even their enemies must respect.

If you have supported them in the past, thank you – they are still alive in the world and doing great work in an isolated, ecologically vital – magical— valley on the Canadian line. If you have not yet supported them, please do; their work, like the Yaak Valley itself, needs your help more than ever.

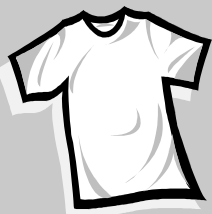
Thank you,  
Rick Bass

## PLEASE HELP BY YOUR PARTICIPATION!

THE FRUIT TREE PLANTING FOUNDATION has selected our community to participate in "Communities Take Root". Starting April 16th thru August, please go to [www.comunitiestakeroot.com](http://www.comunitiestakeroot.com) and vote for **Troy Community Orchard** online. You can vote once a day. THE CHILDREN THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

### Yaak Valley Forest Council

#### T-Shirts



100% Organic  
Cotton - so soft  
**\$18**

Sm— XLg Lots of colors

Original artwork of banjo-playing porcupine!!

#### Books

### Archipelago: Notes From An Inland Island

Stories of the Yaak by Local Authors - \$15

### The Roadless Yaak

Reflections & Observations  
About one of Our Last Great Wild Places  
by Nationally Known Authors - \$15

### Why I Came West

A Memoir by Rick Bass - \$20



If you're interested in hosting *Outdoor Educational Workshops* on your private land, please contact:

Brian Baxter, Instructor  
Silver Cloud Assoc., LLC.  
[b\\_baxter53@yahoo.com](mailto:b_baxter53@yahoo.com)  
406-293-6500

**GET INVOLVED  
BECOME A SUPPORTER  
OF YVFC**

The YVFC greatly appreciates and values your interest in our work. Over the years, we've found that our supporters contribute the necessary input and feedback that enable our programs to thrive. We would be thrilled to include you in our efforts to protect the Yaak Valley's wild places and call you a supporter.



There are **no membership dues to pay**, however should you choose to get more involved, we can provide you with the information that matters regarding future timber sales and other projects in our forest.

**Your tax deductible donations are greatly appreciated** and your dollars well spent. Please feel free to use the form below or go online at [www.yaakvalley.org](http://www.yaakvalley.org) to donate.

**WE APPRECIATE  
YOUR SUPPORT !**

**Special thanks** to individual donors and to the following foundations that have provided funding over the past years to aid the YVFC with our projects.

Bullitt Foundation, Patagonia,  
Brainerd Foundation,  
Resources for Community Collaboration,  
Ferguson Foundation,  
Cinnabar Foundation, Peradam Foundation,  
Claiborne/Ortenberg, Kongsgaard Goldman,  
Cadeau Foundation, Ben & Jerry's Foundation,  
Maki Foundation, New Land Foundation,  
Campion Foundation, Y2Y Initiative, NEST,  
Montana Arts Council, Arthur B Schultz Foundation,  
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444S, Nasaw Family Foundation,  
Jerry Metcalf Foundation, Conservation Alliance,  
Montana Wildlife Federation, SHARE, Engelhard Foundation,  
Bunting Family Foundation, Charlotte Y. Martin Foundation  
The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation  
Norcross, Wilburforce, and TREC.

**HEADWATERS PROJECT:**

American Fisheries- Montana Chapter,  
Claiborne/Ortenberg,  
National Forest Foundation,  
Trout and Salmon Foundation, Trout Unlimited—Flathead Chapter,  
Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks—Future Fisheries Project,  
Lincoln County Resource Advisory Council, MT Chapter Sierra Club,  
Kootenai Valley Trout Club, Idaho Panhandle Trout Unlimited

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*"Who built the West as a living-place, a frugal, hard, gloriously satisfying civilization scrabbling for its existence against the forces of weather and a land as fragile as it is demanding, was not rugged individuals but cooperators." -Wallace Stegner*

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Note: Donors of \$25 or more may receive a copy of one of our books. Donors of \$50 or more may receive two books. Please check your preferences.

*Archipelago: Notes from an Inland Island, an anthology of Yaak Valley essays written by local authors.*

*The Roadless Yaak: Reflections & Observations About One of Our Last Great Wild Places—written by well known authors.*

**You may also donate through our website at [www.yaakvalley.org](http://www.yaakvalley.org) using Paypal.**

## *Archipelago*

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Troy, Montana 59935

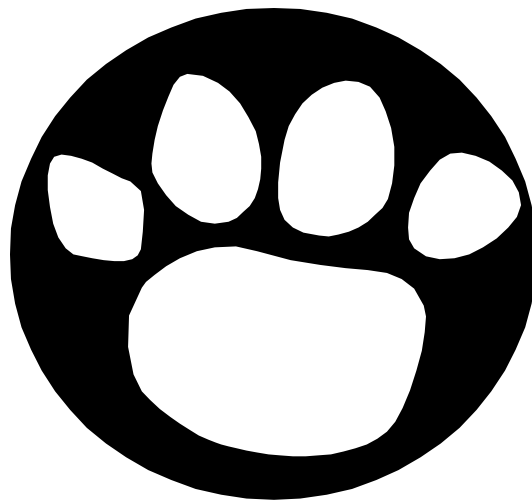
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