

# HIGHLANDER

*Monthly*

*(c) Diane Bergstrom*

A black and white photograph of a bird, possibly a crow or raven, perched on a gnarled, leafless branch. The bird is facing right, with its head slightly turned. The background is a plain, light color, making the dark silhouette of the bird and branch stand out. The branch is thick and has several smaller, thinner branches extending from it.

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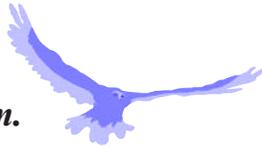
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# CONTENTS Pages

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*Jeffrey McEnroe/U.S. Dept. of Interior*  
*Andrew W. Smith*  
*Valerie Wedel*  
*Frosty Wooldridge*  
*Anita Wilks*

<b>Issues -</b>	Park Fees Explained, Or Not....	5, 6, 7
<b>Issues -</b>	Tax Bill Pits Rich Against Poor	8, 9
<b>Letters -</b>	Wild Mustangs - Dam Survey - Intro	10, 11
<b>History -</b>	Will You Be My Valentine?	12, 13
<b>Sports -</b>	Two Wheeled Tourist	15,16,17
<b>Tips -</b>	Checklist For Renting A Car	20
<b>Opinion -</b>	Fly Fishing Conversations	21, 22
<b>Wildlife -</b>	Love is in the Air	23
<b>Movie Review -</b>	The Post - A Rocket Ride	24, 25
<b>Wildlife -</b>	Update BuffaloFieldCampaign.org	26
<b>Inner View -</b>	Creating Solitude for Spiritual Bliss	27
<b>Book Review -</b>	What <b>Desert Solitaire</b> Means	28, 29
<b>Issues -</b>	Hemp replaces uranium in W. Colo.	30, 31
<b>Observation -</b>	Ripples	32

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<b>REGULAR FEATURES</b>	
<b>Animals &amp; Their Companions</b>	18, 19
<b>Ad Index &amp; Telephone #'s</b>	34

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# Park Fees Explained, Or Not...

Article and Photographs by Diane Bergstrom

At the time of writing this, the National Park is wading through 65,000 public comments before enacting the fee increases at 17 national parks. It's not a done deal. The public comment period originally was to close in November and, under pressure, was postponed to December 22nd. U.S. Representative Jared Polis (RMNP is in his district) said in a statement, "The proposed fee increase is outrageous and is a back door effort to cut us off from our public lands...our parks belong to each and every one of us, and we—as members of the public—deserve a say." The National Park Service has a backlog of deferred maintenance and improvement projects amounting to over \$12 billion. The NPS estimates that the combined fee increases would generate \$70 million annually for the whole NPS system. RMNP, the fourth most visited national park, has deferred costs around \$75 million, spanning everything

I'm sitting in front of my laptop, sipping hot echinacea tea to ward off the winter viruses, watching and listening to the occasional flock of geese aviate, and pondering how to explain the to-be-or-not-to-be fee increase at Rocky Mountain National Park. Wait, there's a group of 16 geese now, flying haphazardly in groups of twos and threes. Ok, I'm back. I have been tapped in the past by various friends or group representatives to write whatever piece is required, with an off the cuff remark, "You're a writer; it's easy for you." My quick consistent response suggests meeting deadlines is often akin to pulling out my own molars. And this month? Trying to make sense of the potential triple increase in daily park fees during the peak summer/fall season? Then offer recommendations? If I had dental tools in front of me instead of a laptop, maybe I'd accept the trade. Here we go.



from road repairs to replacing (Continued on next page.)

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## Highlander Issues

deteriorating water lines. Estes Park Mayor Todd Jirsa, doing the math, pointed out that the collection would be a fraction of the needed revenue while severely damaging the economic health of the surrounding communities. Nick Coltrain, reporting in *The Coloradoan*, linked an



Associated Press article that reported ten State Attorney Generals (not ours) and from the District of Columbia, sent letters to the NPS Director. The AP reported, “The AGs say the increase is inconsistent with the laws governing the park system because the administration did not provide an economic analysis to support its claims that raising fees would increase revenue. The AGs say the increase actually could reduce the number of visitors and revenue.” They questioned the rationale of increases while Trump has proposed reducing the overall NPS budget. In their letter to the NPS Director, the AGs write, “We cannot let the most popular and awe-inspiring national parks become places only for the wealthy.”

The majority of sites targeted for fee increases are western national parks where entrance fees are charged. They include: Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Grand

Canyon, Grand Tetons, Yellowstone, Zion, and Rocky. These park designations were justified by citations of high visitation numbers and high maintenance backlogs. That doesn’t make water tight sense; the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, with the highest visitation at 11 million people a year, doesn’t even charge entrance fees, and to change that would take an act by the Tennessee Legislature. Somewhere in Tennessee, there’s a mic dropping. Or 11 million.

During the winter/spring months, about 75% of RMNP’s visitors are local Coloradoans. That statistic flips in the summer/fall peak season when 75% of the visitors come from outside of Colorado. The fee increase for RMNP would run from June 1 to October 31 every year and the proposal removes day passes, exchanging them for seven day passes. The price of a private vehicle pass would rise from \$20 to \$70. Motorcycles would rise to \$50, and pedestrians/cyclists will pay \$30. Commercial use tour vehicles would also see a huge jump in costs; the previous range from \$25 to \$200 increases to \$160 to \$900, depending on the size of vehicles. At these

prices, tour operators could be priced out of business and day visitors could be priced out of nature. All fees collected from tour operators stay in the collecting park, at this time. (Please mentally add, “at this time” to the end of every fee statement, as everything is subject to change.)

It is very important to follow the money when making your pass choices. The percentage of pass money allowed to stay local and directly address the needs of RMNP varies depending on the type of pass you purchase and where you buy it. The annual RMNP pass would increase from \$60 to \$75. If RMNP is your usual destination throughout the year, I suggest you buy your annual pass now, before the rates possibly go up. Buying it now will help you avoid delays in line during the busy season and the card can be magnetically swiped at marked entrance stations for faster access. Buying day, week, or annual passes provides fee

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money directly to RMNP, in addition to funding the park shuttle system which was used by 700,000 visitors last year. If you intend to visit numerous national parks and federal recreation lands, the annual America The Beautiful pass will still cost \$80. I recommend you buy it in person at RMNP, instead of online, because then 80% of the funds stay at Rocky, with 20% going to the National Park general fund which is disbursed at the discretion of the Department of the Interior. If you buy the pass online, none of the funds stay at Rocky. Also of note: the shuttle program only receives support from Rocky specific passes and receives nothing from the sale of America The Beautiful passes.

**The lifetime senior pass already increased to \$80 and currently held passes will not be changed or affected. The annual senior pass is \$20.**

Remember if you have a fourth grader, you can still get a free family pass at [www.everykidinapark.gov](http://www.everykidinapark.gov). It will be valid through August. Active military personnel can get a free annual pass and the disabled can get a free lifetime pass. Both require specific documentation. Please consult [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) for the details.

The usual ten free national park/federal lands days have been dropped to four and the remaining three are: April 21, for National Park Week; September 22 for National Public Lands Day; and November 11 for Veterans Day. If you want to make **summer campground reservations**, do so now. You can reserve sites up to 6 months in advance and they are going quickly. Go online at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or call 877-444-6777. Limited loops of Moraine Park campground are currently open and until May 23rd, sites are available on a first come, first served basis. Pit toilets are open, dump stations are not, and hookups are not available. If you want to reserve wilderness sites, mark your calendar for 8 am, March 1st. That's when the



Backcountry Office will begin taking reservations but ONLY online or in person. Wonder if it will be like Black Friday. Do not call, email, mail or fax.

**Here's your tip: online, go to [www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit](http://www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit) and click on the picture of a couple facing a lake, with the heading "Wilderness Camping," at 8am on March 1st, and follow the prompts.**

Now it's wait and see about the fees. In any case, you have more park tips to act on now, including how to save money while directing your fees through an annual pass before this proposal is enacted. It's a great time to be in the park. The last time I exited Beaver Meadows entrance station, a full moon was rising over an elk jam of 70 elk cows, calves, and teenage "spikes" quietly grazing in the meadow. These are the moments the locals embrace.

My content gratitude goes out to *Nick Coltrain, The Coloradoan, The Associated Press, and Kyle Patterson, Public Affairs Officer of RMNP.*

My hope and gratitude go out to the Colorado representatives who are trying to keep our public lands open and accessible to all.

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# Tax Bill Pits Rich Against Poor

Ruxandra Guidi Perspective Jan. 4, 2018

**We are witnessing a government restructuring and a cultural divide widening.**

California is often the first state in the West to test new solutions to social and environmental problems. These days, the state is at the fore of a much more ambitious challenge, as it finds its progressive ideals — and its increasingly diverse citizenry — in frequent opposition to the policies of President Donald Trump. Every month, in the *Letter from California*, we chronicle efforts in the state to grapple with its role in the changing, modern West. “Don’t blame Wall Street, don’t blame the big banks” if you’re unemployed and poor, Herman Cain, a Republican presidential candidate and Tea Party favorite, told the *Wall Street Journal* back in 2011.

As protests against bank bailouts erupted across the country, Cain showed little empathy for the millions of people losing their jobs and homes. The Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, Cain declared, struck him as “anti-capitalism.”

His words came to mind recently when President Donald Trump signed the final version of a Republican tax bill that will not only cut taxes for large corporations and America’s wealthiest, but do so primarily by slashing trillions of dollars over the next decade from programs that serve low-income and middle-class families. The law puts at risk Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security, income assistance and nutrition assistance programs, college tuition and job-training aid, and environmental protections. If Occupy Wall Street was considered anti-capitalist, then the new tax

law is a love song to social Darwinism in its purest form, shamelessly pitting the 1 percent against the 99 percent.

*Delmi Ruiz, 41, who is five months pregnant, works in the*



*kitchen area of her RV parked in front of an apartment building, where the monthly rent for a one-bedroom unit is more than \$3000, in Mountain View, California. Ruiz and her husband, who works as a landscaper earning minimum wage, have been living in the RV for more than two years with their four children after they could no longer afford the rent. California has some of the most expensive housing markets in the country as well as the highest poverty rate.*

*Jae C. Hong/AP Photo*

In California, the divide is particularly stark. The state is home to Silicon Valley with its huge tech fortunes, and it boasts some of the nation’s most expensive housing markets. And yet, once the cost of living is factored in, it also has the highest poverty rate — at 20.6 percent. In Los



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Angeles alone, nearly 60,000 people live in makeshift camps or inside their cars on the streets and under the overpasses. The state's rich-poor gap affects all of us, particularly people like Vickie Cobbin. Many supporters of the tax bill would caricature the Los Angeles native as someone who refuses to work in order to cash in on welfare benefits and food stamps. A few weeks ago, I heard Cobbin speak inside a church in downtown Los Angeles. A crowd of at least 100 people had gathered there as part of the **Poor People's Campaign**, an economic and social justice movement originally led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and recently revived by Rev. William J. Barber II, a Protestant minister from North Carolina.

A tall and elegantly dressed black woman in her 50s, Cobbin started by saying she felt nervous speaking in public about personal matters, such as her past dependence on welfare. "Politicians make it sound like welfare recipients are lazy," said Cobbin. "But I never sat around waiting for help. I just couldn't come up with enough income to support us."

Her worries reflect a common reality: During the tax debate in early December, Utah Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch said the government couldn't come up with the funds to support the popular and essential Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), a 20-year-old federal-state program that provides health care for children in low-income families. Hatch claimed people were trying to game the system. "I have a rough time wanting to spend billions and billions and trillions of dollars to help people who won't help themselves, who won't lift a finger, and expect the federal government to do everything," Hatch said.

But Cobbin, like many who rely on assistance to get by, has always done all she could to help herself. She raised three daughters completely on her own; the youngest of them, she told the crowd, just finished her graduate degree, following in her older sisters' footsteps. Today, Cobbin no longer depends on government assistance or temporary minimum wage jobs. She works with **Hunger Action LA** to address hunger and poor nutrition among Los Angeles' low-income residents. But she fears that the funding for

programs like **CalFresh** and food stamps — \$1.9 billion during the last fiscal year, almost half of which comes from the federal government — could disappear along with Medicare and Medicaid as a result of tax reform.

On April 4, 1967, exactly a year before his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. said, "**We as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. ... True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.**" Today, we are witnessing how the government is indeed restructuring — but by robbing the poor in order to pay the rich, taking policy steps that will only deepen poverty and hunger across the country. Dr. King's cautionary words have become painfully relevant once again.

Ten years after the financial crisis, Hatch and Cain's sentiments are widely echoed by conservative lawmakers. What's worse, I fear — as I look around my middle-class Los Angeles neighborhood, where people who are exhausted, anxious and broke after the holidays escape by binge-watching Netflix — too many of the rest of us have also accepted the politicians' judgment. If the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, that is simply the price of living in a capitalist society.

*Contributing High Country News editor Ruxandra Guidi writes from Los Angeles, California.*



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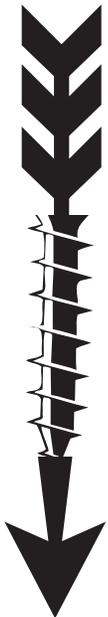
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## **Mustangs - Survey - Intro**

**Dear Friends of Wild Horses,**

Of course there are not seventy-three thousand federally protected wild horses roaming the American West. That's the new "number" the Bureau of Land Management pulled out of a hat to fear-monger elected officials in Congress. Why? They want Congress to give them more tax dollars to fund their broken Wild Horse and Burro Program.

How are they going to make Congress give them money when the public is against roundups and animal cruelty? The BLM will concoct a crisis. The current fake crisis is called overpopulation.

Always remember that the National Academy of Sciences reported that "there is no evidence of overpopulation." period.

Demand a head count now! Call, visit, write your senators and congressman/woman to politely demand a head count. Use the Change.org petition <https://www.change.org/p/u-s-senate-investigate-the-wild-horse-burro-count-in-captivity-and-freedom/u/22264997> for your talking points.

All the information is there. Go for it! Together we can turn this around! For the Wild Ones, Anne Novak Executive Director

<http://www.ProtectMustangs.org>

[Contact@ProtectMustangs.org](mailto:Contact@ProtectMustangs.org)

*(Next page - Wild Horse Photo by Sonny Corsello.)*

**Dear Editor,**

Denver Water sent out survey forms for the Gross Reservoir Expansion project.

Each form has a code number at the bottom of the last page. It is the same as the code number just below our mailing address on the envelope the form was sent in.

That means they can tell from their computer records where the form had been sent. Why did they do that, and then say...."All responses are confidential...?" (From the middle of the cover letter.) "...you will not be personally associated with your answers." (From the top of page 6.)

The code number is just below the address line – where it does not belong. Coal Creek is not a recognized city. (We should require care and accuracy in an organization that is going to build a dam.)

The cover letter gets returned with the survey – so we tend to have no record of it. The first sentence assumes the job will be done. We are essentially being asked what color trucks we prefer.

**NOTE:** As Editor and known to be high profile opposition to the Moffat Project I did not receive the survey, go figure. It was sent to 2,400 residents according to sources and to addresses – not individuals. I have



conservation would keep the Colorado River from being drained into reservoirs that will allow much of the additional water in an expanded Gross reservoir from evaporating. Anyone stating they have read both the DEIS and the EIS would know these facts and that both of those documents were over 3,000 pages each, which is against the law as NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) states Environmental Impact Statements must be of a length that the average citizen can read and understand them.

Plus, the folks creating the impact studies are the ones who stand to benefit from a permitted project, ahh isn't that a conflict of interest. As the writer of the questions about the survey stated,

“we should require care and accuracy in an organization that is going to build a dam” - complete opposite of who the Board of Directors of Denver Water are, **not the lay people working for them...** (*there is a difference*). Editor

corroborated what the survey said and the person who sent this letter is accurate in their comments here. It is Highlander Policy to not print anonymous letters, please sign anything you send, *use an alias if you must*.

Since 2003 the propaganda coming from Denver Water and any and all the consulting firms they hire have stuck with this agenda: The Project is a Done Deal. Many a shady project has gone through with this type of hype, it is probably a centuries old tactic used by numerous entities to squash opposition to things that a majority don't want or need in the name of greed. Money talks and now this private utility that brags about not needing or taking any public funds wants to drain the Colorado River by storing water in reservoirs on the east side of the Divide so they can charge to keep lawns green while money grubbing counties wallow in the additional revenues from unchecked development. **(i.e. The Moffat Project and Windy Gap.)**

As one resident has said about them, “smoke and mirrors” and an apt description of all of their efforts; fixing local roads after the flood, haul route studies with video from helicopters, survey's and purported monetary payouts to the most affected along the haul routes....the list is endless. Makes one wonder if our local county commission is on their payroll too.

**The bottom line is that this project is NOT a done deal** – they are still working to get it permitted and only FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Comm.) or Boulder County Commission can kill the project by not permitting new hydro electric in the dam or saying no to Denver Water with Article 8 of the County Land Use Code (the 1041 permit). Our local environmental group TEG and Save the Colorado probably have to file lawsuits to get our local politicians to stand up to Denver Water, we may have to go en masse to public hearings again to scare them into it **....but we must do whatever we have to do - not give up!**

No one ever quotes or notes the fact that **60% of the water Denver Water has and wants goes to keep lawns green in the Metro Area.** The reality is that real

**Dear Readers,**

My husband, Jay and our son, Louie and I have lived in Coal Creek Canyon for over five years. We love the change of seasons and the solitude, yet we are close to Boulder and Denver.

One of my favorite things is managing our short-term rentals. We have a condo in Gunbarrel that we purchased after the historic flood of 2013. In the past, we booked vacations through Airbnb and Homeaway and decided to give that a try, since we had already furnished the condo.

We stick to monthly rentals and find that folks have a variety of reasons for booking monthly. Often guests are visiting adult children and want their own space, or they are remodeling a home, or they are new to the area. I love meeting new people and hosting folks from all over the U.S. and the world.

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# Will You Be My Valentine?

Article and Artwork by Valerie Wedel

On or near February 14, we collectively go slightly nuts. Many of us wear red clothing. We enjoy heart shaped sweets. We give and receive flowers, gifts and cards. Or... we try to pretend none of this is happening, on occasions where we have no one to make a fuss with or over!

Did you ever wonder where Valentine's Day comes from? Why cupids, lace, ribbons, the color red, and all the rest are linked with this day? Why Valentine's Day happens on February 14th?

Valentine's Day seems to have originated in ancient Rome, over 2000 years ago. In ancient Rome, February 15 was the first day of spring. This was celebrated with a massive festival called Lupercalia, in honor of the god Lupercus who protected flocks and crops. On the eve of Lupercalia, that is on February 14, young women in each community would drop their names written on slips of

paper into an urn. Young men would each draw a name from the urn. In this way young couples partnered for the duration of the Lupercalia dances and other festivities, and sometimes also married.

As Rome became Christianized there were several priests of historical record named Valentine. Two in particular are associated with St Valentine's Day. During the reign of Claudius II, also called Claudius the Cruel, Christian marriage was forbidden. Claudius thought marriage made men less warlike, and he wanted to wage war. A Christian priest named Valentine secretly married many couples before being caught, imprisoned, and killed. According to some accounts this Valentine was canonized by the early church, and Lupercalia was renamed St. Valentine's Day after him.

Another Valentine story is often mentioned. This is probably a different Valentine. This second Valentine refused to worship the pagan gods of the day. Emperor Claudius II had him imprisoned and executed. While he was in prison he befriended one of his jailors, who had a blind daughter. The story goes that before Valentine was beheaded he sent a written message to the blind daughter. When she received it, she read. Miraculously her sight was restored. This note is rumored to have said "from your Valentine." In some stories this is the Valentine who was canonized by the early church, and for which St. Valentine's Day is named.

Lupercalia was associated with renewal of life, the end of winter and return of spring. The partners formed by lot sometimes married after the festival. St Valentine's Day was associated with love, marriage and miracles. The same holiday seems to have been adopted, renamed, and continued on to this very day with dances, games, gifts, and feasting!

Celebration of Valentine's Day traveled with roman troops throughout the ancient world. The first written valentine was attributed to the Duke of Orleans, in the 14th century. While he was imprisoned in England he wrote love letters to his wife in France. Many of his letters mention St. Valentine. Here is a translation from one of his letters:

*Wilt thou be mine? Dear love, reply,  
Sweetly consent or else deny;  
Whisper softly, none shall know,  
Wilt thou be mine, love? Ay or no?  
— excerpt from Bulla, 1965*

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The Duke of Orleans is credited with inspiring other lovers. By the 1400's valentines were very popular. The British Museum actually has a valentine card dated from 1415. Those early cards were sometimes Rebus cards, which told a message with symbols. For example a picture of an eye would stand for "I." Another type was a Puzzik card. Puzzik cards were made from folded paper and had to be unfolded in the correct order to read a message written in the folds.

Today, cupids, hearts, doves, roses, lovebirds, lace and ribbons on heart shaped cards, and the color red are common symbols. These all are centuries and even millenia old.

Cupid was a mischevious god of romantic love in ancient Rome. He had golden arrows to shoot people's hearts with, which made them fall in love. Hearts were seen as our source of feelings, and associated with love.

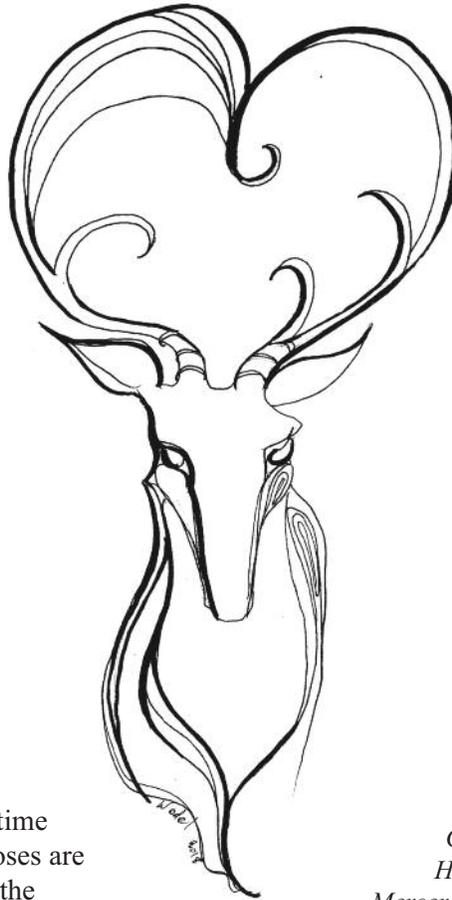
Doves were an ancient goddess symbol of peace and love, adopted by Christians. Love birds were believed to choose their lifelong mates on February 14, which made Valentine's Day a good time for people to choose sweethearts. Red roses are an ancient symbol of love and beauty of the goddess, also later adopted by Christians. During the middle ages, red roses came to be associated with love, yellow with friendship, and white with purity.

Paper valentines made with lace and ribbons became very popular in the 18th century. The word lace comes from a latin word meaning "net," as in to net someone's heart. Ribbons are a symbol from the middle ages, representing a lady's favor, given to her knight as a symbol of devotion.

Queen Victoria enjoyed Valentine's Day. Celebrating with cards and gifts became hugely popular in Victorian England. Victorian Valentines are now collectibles. Some examples of these Valentines live in the British Museum. A popular type of Victorian Valentine is called Acrostic. An Acrostic card uses the letters of a sweetheart's name as the first letter of each line in a poem or rhyme.

Valentines Day is celebrated internationally today. In Wales, people

may carve wooden "love spoons" decorated with flowers and hearts, for family and friends. In Denmark people may give each other Snowdrop flowers, white blossoms that grow in the far North.



Valentines arrived in America in the mid-1700's, with European immigrants. They were sometimes used as marriage proposals. Handmade cards were the norm until mid-1800's. The "True Love Knot" and "Endless Love Knot" were cards with mazes drawn in the shapes of hearts, with messages along the pathways. The Pinprick style used sewing needles to prick fancy borders along edges of paper. A third popular type was the Acrostic, as in earlier centuries.

Today, 2000 + years later, across time, across cultures and oceans, we are still dancing, feasting, and giving gifts on February 14. To love, and to celebrating renewal of life - Happy St. Valentine's Day!

*References (and some beautiful books for the young reader):*

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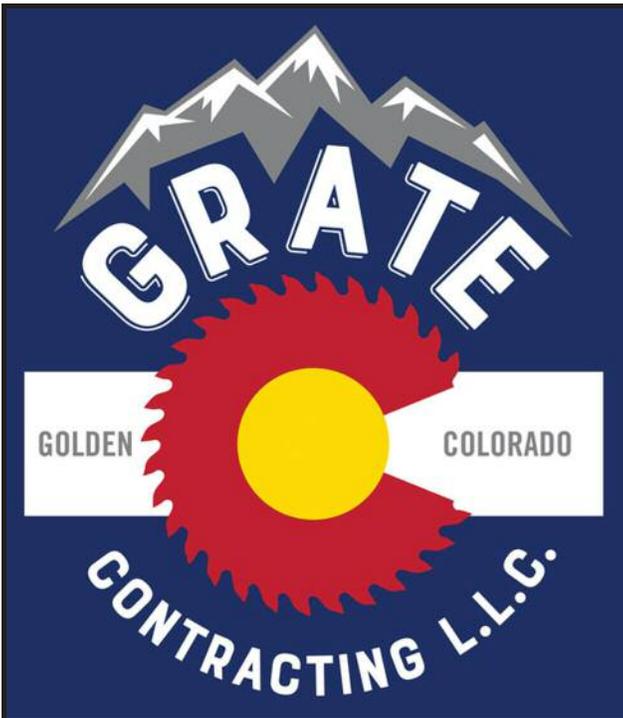


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## Two Wheeled Tourist

By Micah Drew/Seeley Swan Pathfinder

This story is part of The Montana Gap project, produced in partnership with the Solutions Journalism Network.

Leigh Ann Valiton watched a customer meander the aisles of the Blackfoot Commercial Co. in Ovando, MT. Valiton's store, and attached inn, is open until seven every evening, but it was 10 p.m. and she showed no sign of leaving. The customer, Faye Cunningham from New Zealand, filled her basket with frozen burritos, energy bars, chips and a Mountain Dew.

Cunningham was competing in the Tour Divide Race, a 2,735-mile long mountain bike race that stretches from Banff, Canada, to the Mexican border. The route enters Montana in Glacier National Park and meanders south, paralleling the Continental Divide.

Ovando sits at mile 550 and has become a staple stop for riders. "You always hear about the accommodations. It's certainly known," says Cunningham as she finished filling her basket. "It's totally cool to come here."

For the last five years, Ovando has become known by the cycling community around the world as a place to stop and sleep, refuel and chat with the locals. "I've been a groupie (of Tour Divide) for years so it's cool to see the places I've read about — Richmond Ridge, Holland Lake, here," she continued.

Cunningham had ridden for 16 hours and wanted to make it to Ovando before she stopped for the night. Currently every room in Valiton's inn was booked and a rider was sleeping on a mattress in the living room. Outside a cyclist was crashing in an old sheep wagon. Another was passed out in a teepee. The only open sheltered place left for Cunningham to rest was an old jail house that was restored for just that purpose. As Valiton scanned her purchases, she paused and looked up. "Wait, I'll put a bed in the kitchen and you can sleep there." After making sure her last guest was settled in, Valiton finally left for the night. Most of the riders would be up before dawn to get back on the trail. "Our goal is to be as accommodating as possible," said Valiton as she turned off the lights. "But that's Ovando in general."

"Years ago if I went to Missoula, no one knew where Ovando was," said Kathy Schoendoerfer, the owner of the Blackfoot Angler and Ovando's unofficial "Organizer of Frivolous Affairs."

Now, nearly a thousand cyclists from around the world pass through the town of 50 residents every year. In addition to being a waypoint for the Tour Divide Race, the town on Highway 200 sits at the intersection of two popular cross country cycling routes. Schoendoerfer recalled the first time the community banded together to support bicyclists. It was in 2012, when a TDR rider, Tracy, was inbound to Ovando. *Continued next page.*



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## Highlander Sports

Someone phoned ahead, letting the town know Tracy was having a rough go of it. Only the sheep wagon existed back then, but the townsfolk put out a sign telling Tracy to rest up and left food, drink and moral support. Since then, the town has actively courted the two-wheeled tourists. One small corner of Schoendoerfer's fishing shop is dedicated to cycling gear — tires, tubes, lube, pedals, the essentials. The Ovando Community Fund was started from donations and provided money for the teepee, jailhouse and outdoor shower system riders can use.

*Kathy Schoendoerfer and Randy Neil chat in front of the Schoendoerfer's store, Blackfoot Angler.*

*Neil is riding in his third Tour Divide. Micah Drew/Seeley Swan Pathfinder*

Each year riders donate around \$500, Schoendoerfer said. Sometimes it's change (Canadian), sometimes it's a can of beans if that's all they have. It's enough for the town to know they're having an impact on their visitors.

That impact goes both ways. According to a 2014 study by the University of Montana, cycling tourism has a substantial impact on the state. The study, conducted by the University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation

Research looked at the effect of bicycle tourism statewide. It found that the industry contributed nearly \$377 million annually to Montana's economy. Of the nearly half million bicycle tourists who visited the state, the average cyclist spent around \$75 a day and stayed for at least a week.

For rural communities, that kind of expenditure can greatly increase viability and towns are learning how to capitalize on it. A hundred and fifty miles south of Ovando, another small

Montana town shows up on cycling maps, at the intersection of the Lewis & Clark and the TransAmerica Trails. Twin Bridges is home to almost 400 residents and the nation's first ever **Bike Camp**. **Bike Camp** sits in Jessen Park, on the edge of town. It's a simple wooden building complete with a shower, toilets, tables and chairs, a sink and grill and plenty of space outside to pitch a tent — but only for visitors arriving on two wheels.

After spending two years watching cyclists passing through, resident Bill White decided the time and need was right to do something to engage the Lycra-clad tourists. "All the bike riders passing through were like gold going



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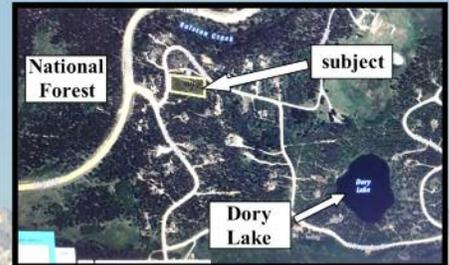
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by in a river,” he said in an interview for *Montana Quarterly*. “I started thinking about how to make Twin Bridges more than just a place to get a cup of coffee.” White developed a proposal for *Bike Camp*, got a building permit and raised \$9,000 for materials. The town broke ground in April of 2009 and the camp was ready by June. In the first year, around 300 riders used the camp. White said that by July of the second year, the number of visitors was already up by more than 50.

Those early cyclists left feedback for Twin Bridges (and enough donations to cover the cost of building *Bike Camp*), and the town found that the average expenditure per night per visitor was \$24.92. In a small community like Twin Bridges, the economy is a closed loop, amplifying any expenditures. Overall it was determined that the cyclists brought at least \$10,000 into the local economy

That figure is lower than the UM study estimate, but regardless, “it’s good for the local economy,” White said. “Especially the grocery store, the ice cream shop, the restaurant and the laundromats.”

It’s personal interactions and community attitudes like those in Twin Bridges and Ovando, more than any university study, that excite proponents of cycling tourism. “There’s increasingly more stories coming out about how bike touring and bike travel can benefit rural communities,” said Laura Crawford of Missoula-based Adventure Cycling. “There’s maybe not an attraction that would pull people off the freeway, but if you’re going through by bike, you kind of rely on those communities as a place to stop for the night, stock up on food or grab coffee.”

Adventure Cycling is a national cycling advocacy group (“America’s Bicycle Travel Experts”) that boasts 53,000 members. The company organizes guided bike tours and maps out the more than 46,000 miles of cycling networks in the country. A portion of their work is teaching communities how to become bike friendly, and its website offers pages of resources. Crawford has spent years investigating how cycling can save rural economics. In addition to her work for Adventure Cycling, she founded the travel website The Path Less Pedaled. She makes a comparison between a cyclist and a road tripper and the impact they have on communities during a trip. Using a 200-mile stretch of road as an example — roughly the distance between Whitefish and Helena — Crawford breaks down the differences.

For a vehicle, that trip is a mere afternoon’s travel. A road tripper’s itinerary traveling city to city might only include a stop at a gas station or a lunch break in the middle and skip

most of the small towns in between.

On the two-wheeled side, biking 50 miles a day requires a huge influx of calories, prompting the need for a dozen meals or snacks during that same trip. Due to the restrictions of carrying that much food on a bike, cyclists are more likely to stop in any town with a restaurant or market. They also need places to sleep, preferably with hot water to shower and potentially a place to do laundry.



“The Cyclists riding the Continental Divide trail wash off their bikes outside a motel. Micah Drew/Seeley Swan Pathfinder

“Bill persevered ... because he knew it would benefit the community,” Crawford said. “It gives tourists a reason to stop and stay and leave a few dollars behind that wouldn’t otherwise trickle into the town. And that idea is really fundamental to how bike tourism works in small communities. “It’s not a get-rich-quick sort of scheme, but a long-term, sustainable investment.”

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*This Page top: Chino with Mary the Farrier.  
Left: Dog sleeping on top of truck, from Diane.  
Right: Bridger & Merle from Jan.*

*Next Page:*

*Left: John & Sieanna from Jan.  
Right: Dawson & Elise.  
Bottom: Ayla & Chanel from Jan.*



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# Checklist For Renting A Car

From Jim Plane – State Farm Insurance

Price is an important factor when choosing a rental car but it's not the only one. Knowing precisely what you need when you go to the rental agency can help you find a temporary vehicle that's ready for safe, comfortable travels.

## Check the safety ratings

Before committing to a car, request the specific make and model information and research it. Find safety ratings online from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

## Select the right size

How many people are traveling with you, and how much luggage room will you need? You'll want to have enough space to see clearly out of each window and to keep passengers comfortable.

Remember, middle seats are often small for adults, but typically fine for children. If you need room for more than four adults, pick a vehicle with a third row.

## Request additional accessories

Many rental companies offer add-ons such as child safety seats, GPS systems, disability products, roadside assistance, and electronic toll payment devices. Because these extras can be pricey, pack your own if you have them. You might also consider requesting a vehicle with electronic access for added convenience.

## Inspect your car

Give the car a once-over before driving off. Don't miss checking these essentials:

- **Tire pressure and condition**
  - Brakes
  - Seat belts
  - Lights
- **Climate control (if you're travelling in extreme cold or heat)**
- **Windshield wiper condition and wiper fluid level**

Also double-check that the car is equipped with important safety features, and verify that the add-ons you agreed to are accounted for and functioning appropriately.

## Make sure you're protected

Car companies typically offer the option to purchase rental insurance, but your personal auto policy may cover it. Determine whether your situation merits additional coverage.

### Editor's Note:

I recently had my vehicle in for a day's worth of repairs/maintenance so rented a car to do errands and not be stranded at the mechanic's. The rental agency did not stand by their policy to allow me to pick a car and instead gave me what was available. Since it was brand new I agreed, but it was an on the spot change from my reservation-FYI.

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# Fly Fishing Conversations

By Michael Baughman Opinion Jan. 11, 2018

## In 1972, a guide tries to help a pompous client hook a steelhead.

In the summer of 1972, my wife, Hilde, and I worked at a North Umpqua River fishing lodge in Oregon that was owned by close friends. The lodge attracted guests from across the country to fly-fish for seagoing rainbow trout called steelhead that ranged from five to 15 pounds. The North Umpqua is such a challenging stream that it's often called the graduate school of steelhead fly-fishing, and one of my jobs was to take guests out and do what I could to help them hook and land a fish.

Now, 45 years later, though I never caught his name, or wanted to, I have vivid memories of one of the guests I dealt with. He was a real estate developer from New York City with reddish-blond hair and a bland face with a single distinctive characteristic: a protruding mouth that resembled that of a fish, which made it look as though he could have picked objects off a tabletop using only his lips. The developer wasn't impressed with the lodge. In the dining room at lunchtime when we made our fishing plans, he showed me a photo of the opulent interior of his

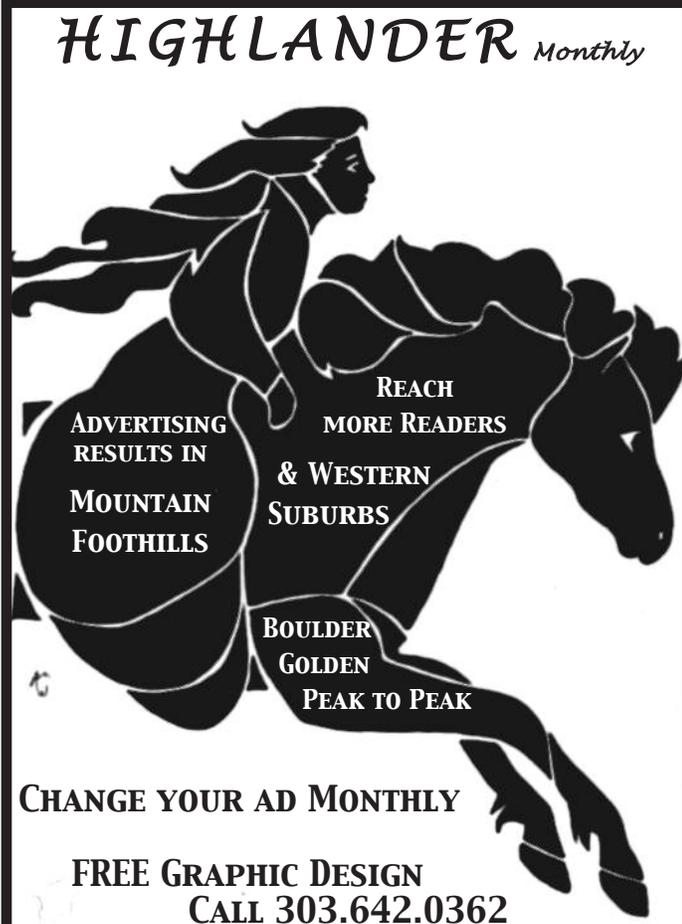
Manhattan home. That evening, as we left the lodge in my car, he began bragging about huge fish he had caught in other places.

"All I need here's one big steelhead, on a picture. I got pictures of damn near everything I ever killed. And, believe me, I'm a good fisherman. Very good! You'll see. Very very good!"

When I tried to explain some of the basics of fishing the North Umpqua, he cut me off: "If I toss a fly in the river I don't see why a steelhead won't eat my damn fly as fast as anybody else's, right? It's mostly luck, right? Well I'm lucky! Smart, too! Hey! That blonde who helps serve meals is a gorgeous broad!"

"Yes, she is," I agreed. "You made a move on her yet?"  
"She's my wife." "You might be lucky I'm leaving tomorrow. Got to get back to work on my deals, big deals. Believe me, you are lucky. Very, very lucky."

*Michael Baughman is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News. He writes in Oregon and cautions that any resemblance in this piece to modern-day politicians is purely coincidental. (Continued next page.)*



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## Highlander Opinion

*Two fly fishermen on the North Umpqua River in Oregon.*  
Jeffrey McEnroe/U.S. Department of Interior

I changed the subject by asking if he'd ever fished for steelhead before.

"Once. Tried that Klamath River right down south in California. The thing I couldn't understand was, the place we fished was 200 miles from the ocean, and my guide tells me there aren't any dams from where we were all the way to the ocean. What the hell's that all about? All that good water going to waste! Yeah, and talk about waste! Look around here! How come there's nothing anywhere? Develop! That's exactly what I do in New York. Ever been to New York? Manhattan, I mean."  
"I worked in Macy's shoe department once." "In Manhattan?" "Yes." "What'd you do at Macy's?" "I was in the stock room."

"And look at you now, stuck out here in the boondocks. Should've got an education maybe, huh?" At the time I was an assistant professor at Southern Oregon University, but I kept it to myself.

The first spot we tried was a relatively easy one, where an angler could stand high on a streamside boulder with a



clear back-cast, and the steelhead, if any happened to be holding in the pool, would be about 10 feet out and 30 feet downstream. I helped the developer up onto the boulder – he nearly fell twice — and gave him directions. "See the underwater rock?" I pointed.

"Yeah, yeah." "Just try to bring your fly across right behind the rock."

As a fly-angler, on a scale of 1 to 10, the developer was a minus 2 or 3. I drove him from pool to pool until dark without a result. Given his skill level, and if he was as lucky as he claimed to be, it would likely have taken him a month or more of hard fishing to hook a steelhead. He cursed the river, and me, all the way back to the lodge. The last time I saw him was the following morning. Hilde and I watched from a kitchen window while he had his picture taken, posing with a 10-pound steelhead that another guest had caught and stored in the cooler. After his photo shoot, the developer drove away alone in an expensive car, while the gorgeous broad and I went back to work.



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# Love Is In The Air

By Ingrid Winter

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about a bird  
who has been  
hanging out  
in a parking lot  
for four days  
and  
seems to be unable to fly.

When I get  
to the place  
there he is-  
a sparrow  
hopping  
around on the ground  
and lying up to a parked car  
where he perches  
on the rearview mirror  
singing his song.

As I try to get closer  
he flies off  
but not very far  
and returns to the mirror  
again and again  
This goes on for a while-  
me approaching  
and him flying off  
and returning  
until he takes off  
and lands in a tall tree

So-the bird obviously can fly  
and he seems uninjured his wings parallel  
his feathers perfectly aligned



his body compact and well fed  
his reactions quick and  
coordinated  
And when he lands  
on the mirror again  
turning his head  
in all directions  
uttering sweet chirps  
It finally dawns on me-  
he is in love with the bird  
in the mirror  
whom he considers  
a potential mate  
And here is the tragic part,  
that bird in the mirror  
is a flirt- she responds  
to her suitor's advances

by imitating his gestures  
but never reciprocates  
And our poor Romeo is faced with a  
cold metal surface each time he tries  
to touch her-  
His beloved forever close  
forever unattainable forever as elusive  
as a dream.  
P.S. And, in case you are smiling feeling superior to  
this poor bird consider this:  
the Greek myth of Narcissus -the guy  
who fell in love with his own image  
reflected in water and drowned-  
is about humans not birds!

Photo Courtesy Alexa Boyes. Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center  
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# The Post - A Rocket Ride Down Memory Lane

Steven Spielberg directs Meryl Streep and Tom Hanks in *The Post*, a thrilling drama about the unlikely partnership between The Washington Post's Katharine Graham (Streep), the first female publisher of a major American newspaper, and editor Ben Bradlee (Hanks), as they race to catch up with The New York Times to expose a massive cover-up of government secrets that spanned three decades and four U.S. Presidents.

The two must overcome their differences as they risk their careers – and their very freedom – to help bring long-buried truths to light. marks the first time Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg have collaborated on a project. In addition to directing, Spielberg produces along with Amy Pascal and Kristie Macosko Krieger.



The film was supposed to have taken six more months to shoot and produce, but for some reason they sped up production and it is now in theatres. This is a fast paced race down historical byways that most folks haven't heard of before, unless you are a bit older than the average movie goer and lived through the days of Nixon's reign of terror. History isn't usually a cliffhanger such as this, well except maybe the movie with Robert Redford and *All the President's Men* that happened on the heels of the events in *The Post*.

It is difficult for generations not threatened by a draft to truly understand the ramifications of the moral to this movie. I had friends and family in Viet Nam and once you understand the Pentagon Papers' findings, which this movie exposes, you'll just get an inkling of the hell we all went through. Not nearly as much as families that lost loved ones, but you'll feel fortunate that serving in a military branch now is voluntary.

Streep brings Graham to life in a way that would have made the publisher very happy if she were alive now. Her portrayal sheds a light on the difficulties of being in charge of a daily newspaper that most of us would never imagine. The decisions sometimes made in mere moments had constitutional and cultural fallout for a society on the brink of failure by its topmost leaders. This is the stuff that makes or breaks a society, much less a democracy.

Graham rarely received accolades for her courage under fire and then as now had to fight for equality amongst even her employees and board members. Streep gives those

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place to make or break history.

moments regarding the Pentagon Papers the angst they deserved and exposes the fragile nature of anyone deciding to do the 'right thing' when everything is at stake. They say brave is simply those with the clearest vision of what is before them, but even with vision it takes knowing the difference between right and wrong and choosing right over wrong.

Hanks gives Bradlee just the hint of humor in his portrayal of the driven editor, a comic relief in the face of danger – both professional and personal. He supports Streep's character while still being chauvinistic – true to the times of 1971 before any attempts at embracing feminism. So many male characters front and center throughout the scenes: smoking, drinking, and blatantly ignoring all the women in dresses, skirts and high heels barely in the backgrounds.

A scant few other women characters get lines: an editorial employee in the Post's newsroom, the wife of Bradlee and a board member stand out simply because there were so few actual female players in the day of these historical events. I suppose it gives all the more credence to Katherine Graham's actions and how those actions changed history. Now we must ask ourselves the question, did it change history or is history repeating itself? I love a good movie, with great actors and what I love even more is if it makes us think. And I can't remember the last time I saw a movie in a theatre where all the audience applauded at the end of the movie. Thought provoking drama that is historical in my book is all too rare, especially when we are facing times that future generations may look back on and say: Oh, that is what happened. Now we are the ones in the



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# Buffalo Field Campaign-[buffalofieldcampaign.org](http://buffalofieldcampaign.org)

Gardiner Basin, Montana: Fifty-two bison have escaped a recently converted quarantine facility inside Yellowstone National Park's Stephens Creek bison trap. News articles about the escaped buffalo started appearing recently.

Even though Yellowstone's proposed fifty-year quarantine plan has not yet been approved, Yellowstone initiated capture for quarantine beginning in 2016, at their Stephens Creek trap. The first group of 24 buffalo have been in the quarantine pens since March 2016, while the other group of 28 buffalo have been held there since March 2017. All of the female buffalo who had been part of that capture-for-quarantine were shipped to slaughter last year when Yellowstone opened the trap to begin slaughter operations. All of the buffalo who remained in the then-unapproved quarantine facility were bulls. Seven of these bulls have been shipped to slaughter or have died due to human handling.

"I think that this provides proof that we as a Tribe could do a better job at managing these bison than the state [of Montana] and Park Service," said Fort Peck Tribal Chairman Floyd Azure.

Interior Secretary Zinke claims that Yellowstone was just "days away" from sending these buffalo — all bulls — to the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes. However, none of the news stories that have been released include commentary from the affected Tribes. During a phone conversation, Fort Peck Tribal Chairman Floyd Azure told Buffalo Field Campaign that the Interior Secretary Zinke's disclosure that "we were within days of actually moving

the buffalo" was news to him. Yellowstone contradicts themselves in another quote stating the buffalo were being held for "possible quarantine." No quarantine plan has yet been approved, however, last year, after promises by state

and federal agencies that Fort Peck could quarantine buffalo on their reservation, they built a half million dollar facility. The Montana Dept. of Livestock and USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service then went back on their word to the Tribes telling them they could not receive buffalo for quarantine because their reservation is outside of Montana's brucellosis Designated Surveillance Area.

During another phone

conversation Buffalo Field Campaign had with Tom McDonald, the Division Manager for the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes' Fish, Wildlife, Recreation and Conservation Division, who also is a decision-maker within the Interagency Bison Management Plan, was also unaware of Yellowstone's claim that these buffalo were about to go to Fort Peck.

"That's all news to me," McDonald said. "I didn't know that they were getting ready, and obviously, Fort Peck didn't either," said Tom McDonald, Division Manager for the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes' Fish, Wildlife, Recreation, and Parks Division.

James Holt, Nez Perce Tribal member who also serves on Buffalo Field Campaign's Board of Directors said, "Buffalo Field Campaign does not support the deviation from adopted protocols by federal officials in the IBMP process. It is the policy of BFC to support treaty tribes and their reserved hunting rights. Based on the statements by the Secretary, we believe it is time for meaningful consultation with treaty tribes regarding this new development in quarantine use at the trap, and the potential impacts to treaty resources. BFC and our supporters also seek clarity on the statements made by the Secretary on the disposition of Yellowstone's Stephens Creek trap as it relates to wild bison. BFC's primary concern has always been protecting wild, migratory buffalo on the landscape. The destruction of the trap fence only highlights the deadlock inherent in the current IBMP priorities. It is time to embrace a renewed focus on wild bison as our national mammal, while honoring treaty-reserved hunting rights." **TAKE ACTION - Call Montana Governor Steve Bullock # 406-444-3111 / 855-318-1330 (toll free) Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Director Martha Williams # 406-444-3186 to voice your opposition in killing these last wild bison.**



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# Creating Solitude For Your Spiritual Bliss

By Frosty Wooldridge

Americans living in big cities race through their days with gridlocked traffic, honking horns, cheeky taxi drivers, police sirens and jostling pedestrians racing toward their destinations. At work, they juggle temperamental co-employees, deadlines and ashes-in-the-mouth bosses.

*(A sunset over Tuscany in Italy creates spiritual bliss of quietness. Reflection and meditative thought.)* Photography by Frosty Wooldridge

Once finished with work, they race home to spouses, kids and dinner preparations. The working groove consumes them while their responsibilities for daily living press their emotions to the wall. With all the automobiles, appliances and conveniences in America—we oftentimes lack peace and quiet in our lives. As we race through our metropolitan arenas, even optimists admit that science will be hard pressed to replace this precious spiritual commodity: solitude.

How can we step back to an oft forgotten pleasure in our lives, in our hearts and in our minds? How can we refresh our spirits? John Stuart Mill in 1848 when cities remained smaller, less hurried and enjoyed more community among their residents said, “It is not good for man to be kept at all times in the presence of his species. A world from which solitude is extirpated, is a very poor ideal.

Solitude, in the sense of being often alone, is essential to any depth of meditation or of character; and solitude in the presence of natural beauty and grandeur, is the cradle of thoughts and aspiration which society could do ill without.”

If you feel the same way in your journey, the quest for solitude grows as you add birthday candles. A certain spiritual bliss accompanies your advancing years. Solitude brings divine calm and intellectual clarity. To abridge your life creates more simplicity in your daily rigor. Once mastered, you will enjoy an inner peace and an outer enjoyable countenance.

How does anyone move his-her body, mind and soul into solitude? Take a daily walk in the nearest park in your city. Sit under a tree. Sit by a pond. Stare into a patch of flowers. Pull up a long stalk of grass and stick it into your mouth. Suck the green insides of the stalk of grass to feel the heartbeat of the universe pulsing over your tongue.

When you reach a stretch of grass or forest; take off your shoes and socks. Stab your feet into deep grass or sand. Let your body reconnect with the vibrations of the Earth to re-harmonize your entire body’s vibrations with our planet. Many call it “grounding” and it works profoundly to refresh your spirit.

Choose the best time of day for your “solitude”

moments. It may be early before work as you sit by a river, stream or on the beach. It could be a stroll along a quiet walk at dusk where the sun’s final glory mesmerizes your spirit. While solitude means being alone in the “moment,” you might be one who loves solitude with another who shares your “heart strings” about life. By all means, make your “solitude moments” a couple-thing if that works for

you. The point of solitude means to be luxuriously immersed in the quiet moments of your own choices. You become fully aware of being alive without being ushered into the scurry of daily living.

In my own hiking times through the woods in acceptance of solitude, I feel the “sweet spot” of temperature playing upon my skin. I feel the essence of light shining through my eyes. Once I reconnect with every blood cell charging through my body, I churn with delight.

Therefore, walk into the woods, the park, along the river or by a pond to discover solitude. You will enjoy renewed strength to relish your days.





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# What Desert Solitaire Means Today

By John Buckley

A view from the Kayenta Trail in Zion National Park.

## What Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* means in these trying times

The book turns 50 this year, and is more relevant now than ever.

Fifty years ago, Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* was published to decent reviews but little fanfare. "Another book dropped down the bottomless well. Into oblivion," wrote a disheartened Abbey in his journal Feb. 6, 1968. Yet it has remained in print for a half-century

and created a devoted following. As President Donald Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke carved 2 million acres out of Bears Ears and Grand-Staircase-Escalante national monuments, both in the heart of "Abbey Country," *Desert Solitaire* remains more relevant today than ever.

An account of Abbey's time as a ranger in what is now Arches National Park, *Desert Solitaire* is both memoir and



Al\_HikesAZ/Flickr

a passionate defense of our nation's last unspoiled land. In spirit, though, his book resembles a 1960s nonfiction novel. Sometimes howlingly funny, it compresses the two postwar decades Abbey spent in Utah and Arizona into a single "season in the wilderness."

"Do not jump in your automobile next June and rush out to the canyon country hoping to see some of that which I have attempted to evoke in these pages," he famously wrote. "In the first place, you can't see anything from a car; you've got to get out of the goddamned contraption and walk, better yet crawl, on hands and knees, over the sandstone and through the thornbush and cactus. When traces of blood begin to mark your trail, you'll see something, maybe. Probably not. In the second place most of what I write about in this book is already gone or going under fast. This is not a travel guide but an elegy."

By the time Abbey wrote that, his beloved Glen Canyon was "going under fast," gurgling beneath Lake Powell as the Glen Canyon Dam plugged the Colorado River's flow.

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The fact that Arches and Canyonlands national monuments would later become national parks was of little comfort to Abbey, who in *Desert Solitaire* bemoans what he termed the “industrial tourism” that revolves around the automobile.

Compared to Abbey’s fierce opposition to modern capitalism, Bernie Sanders comes off as comparatively milquetoast. Above all, Abbey was an opponent of “that cloud on my horizon” he defined as progress. This wasn’t Luddism so much as a deep need to preserve a small portion of America as wilderness, kept forever free from development, beginning with precisely those areas of southern Utah attacked by Trump and Zinke.

*Desert Solitaire* was published four years after the Wilderness Act was signed into law. Even as the United States’ economy boomed, in 1964 Congress sanctified areas where “the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” Abbey fought to preserve such land for the rest of his life.

“Wilderness complements and completes civilization,” he wrote in the 1980s. “I might say that the existence of wilderness is a compliment to civilization. Any society that feels itself too poor to afford the preservation of wilderness is not worthy of the name of civilization.”

As Trump and Zinke reclaim for extractive industry much of the land that had been protected through the Antiquities Act by Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, Abbey’s spirit infuses the opposition. More than a few dog-eared and well-thumbed paperback copies of his book were probably in the backpacks of the thousands protesting Trump on Dec. 4, when he arrived in Salt Lake City to announce his land grab.

But Abbey, who died in 1989, wouldn’t be surprised by Trump and Zinke’s attitudes. He’d instantly spot them as more of the know-nothing exploiters he’d always railed against. It also wouldn’t surprise him that drilling in the Alaska National Wilderness Refuge was the price the GOP paid to secure Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski’s vote for tax reform. Having called the cattlemen whose herds graze on public land “welfare queens,” he’d appreciate being

vindicated by Cliven Bundy, recently on trial in Nevada for crimes that began with his refusal to pay his federal grazing fees.

He’d probably also say, “What else did you expect?” after learning that so many tourists in cars are entering Arches, Grand Teton, Bryce and Zion national parks that buses and reservation systems have begun or are in the works. And I think he’d be saddened that, 50 years after the publication of *Desert Solitaire*, the assault on public lands — our lands — remains such a fact of American life.

*Note: the opinions expressed in this column are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of High Country News, its board or staff.*

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# Hemp Replaces Uranium In Western Colorado

By Richard Linnett

When locals in western Colorado's old uranium mining towns of Naturita and Nucla get word that a journalist is coming to town, they reach for their guns. Not to shoot the "fake news" media. No, they dust off their firearms as props for photo ops. Ever since Nucla passed a law in 2013 requiring every household to own a gun, the story has drawn the press like flies on fresh roadkill.

This area was once a uranium mining and milling hub for the Atomic Energy Commission's Manhattan Project, and later for nuclear power. As cheaper sources of the ore emerged, the industry tanked. There was a brief jolt of optimism in 2007, when Energy Fuels announced plans to build a new uranium mill in Paradox Valley, just down the road from Nucla and Naturita. Depressed uranium prices and opposition soon scuttled that project.

To outsiders, what's called the West End of Montrose County has long been a poster child for white poverty and ignorance, a hotbed of hardcore, uranium-clinging yahoos. It was the subject of a patronizing documentary, *Uranium Drive-In*, and recently was featured in a bleak article in *The Guardian*, with photos that look like full-color versions of Walker Evans' famous casualties of the Great Depression.

"Same old story," says my neighbor, Dianna Reams, a local business and community booster whose family goes back generations. When she was interviewed by the *Guardian*, the reporter asked to bring out her gun for a

photo op. "It's predictable," she said. "They think we're a bunch of hillbillies living in a kill zone, and they're smarter than we are."

Fortunately, a new story has come to town. It's still badass, in keeping with our popular image. And that's weed — cannabis, or more precisely, hemp. Thanks to new legislation and good growing conditions (lots of sun and water and dirt), the region has become a magnet for hemp farming. More recently processing has also begun, in a startup based in Nucla's old elementary schoolhouse. The facility is run by Paradox Ventures, owned by Republican state Sen. Don Coram.

Historically a conservative mining region, the West End has enthusiastically embraced a trade usually associated with illegal grows and "hippies." Yet everyone here, from miners to cattle ranchers, seems to be trying to get a piece of the action, much the way Coram is. His partners, Reams Construction and its subsidiary Tomcat Mining, all sponsor the nonprofit West End Economic Development Corporation, which works to promote the hemp economy. This summer, Paradox Ventures planted a hemp field on some of Reams property next door to my house. A small team of farmers sprayed the crop by hand with natural pesticide, walking the crop rows wearing wide-brimmed hats in the sun. They looked like Vietnamese rice farmers.

Now, you can feel a growing sense of optimism in the area, despite some continuing challenges. This time, in contrast to the uranium boom, the hope is not based on a



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Richard Linnett is a contributor to *Writers on the Range*, the opinion service of *High Country News* ([hcn.org](http://hcn.org)).

He is a writer who lives in Naturita and commutes to work in California.

single industry. Telemarketing and recreation projects are also in the works, along with hemp farming.

“It’s the first thing that’s attracting our young people,” said Deanna Sheriff, the economic recovery coordinator for the West End Economic Development Corporation. “For whatever reason, we can hold onto our young people who have been leaving, and get them into agriculture — get them to grow hemp. There’s been nothing else here to attract their attention.”

Uranium still may return, but it will never dominate the region the way it once did. There’s far too much of it available in other places around the world. Vanadium, which also occurs in the region within uranium deposits, holds promise as an alternative to lithium batteries for large-scale energy storage. But at the moment, the story here is hemp, and it’s spreading across the West, especially where mining has died and fertile fields remain. In fact, the development corporation is collaborating with a consortium of hemp growers in other counties outside Montrose, such as neighboring Delta and Mesa, to smooth the path for people to enter into the industry and help them distribute their products.

“The hemp deal is the wild, wild West,” said Sheriff. “Everybody’s looking at it as a great new way to make some money, and that’s not the case. It’s still a very fragile industry. But it’s the first thing that’s come along that’s really positive in a long time. So, I’m looking at it cautiously, with optimism, and also realizing that it’s got about five more years of development.”

So now when the press comes to town, as the Denver Post did recently, filing a positive story for once, we no longer draw our pistols. Instead, we reach for our hemp oils and cannabis dog treats.

*(Photo of Hemp field B. Alagar.)*



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# Ripples

By Andrew W. Smith

Once again, I found myself fuming in a rant, like a crock-pot set on high, lid rattling; some pending environmental issue on the tv news. Maybe some of you can vividly picture this scenario. But this time, I'd had it. I throttled the squawking propaganda box and sat down at the computer. It was surprisingly relaxing and empowering once I took that initial step. I tried to breathe slowly and regain perspective. Remember: You don't want to be one of those rude, illogical, name-calling letter writers we've all come to abhor and mistrust, I told myself. I logged into the local newspaper internet site and easily found an icon for Letters to the Editor.

Calmly (I swear), I followed the simple instructions for submitting my opinion, and sort of idyllically grooved on the notion that my idea(s), my voice, might actually be heard. At least ONE other person would hear me; presumably, the Editor. Composing and submitting my rant was therapeutic in itself. The anticipation of publication was downright intoxicating. I was almost giddy.

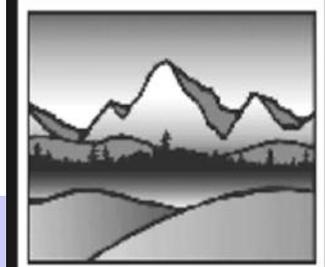
My letter was published. I received personal thank you cards (and a few threats). How many others had

wanted to speak out on just this one issue? How many others had read the letter I published? More importantly, how many would find the courage to write their own letter and be heard?

Our actions often have far-reaching, unknowable, exponential effects that we can not even begin to fathom. One voice may lend courage to many other voices. Plop your pebble of a voice into the pool of hope and watch the ripples radiate.



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The **HIGHLANDER Monthly** has original reporting and writing from journalists, writers and photographers not seen or printed anywhere else. Also syndicated to reprint High Country News articles - the 'WatchDog' of the West that has factual informational writing and reporting surpassing all other news outlets regionally and nationwide. So if you wish **your Advertising to reflect Quality, Integrity and Positive News** - this is the place.

# HIGHLANDER Monthly

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# Highlander Ad Index & Business Telephone Numbers

## ADVERTISING

Graphics Galore 303.642.0362  
 Highlander Monthly pg 21, 33 303.642.0362

## ANIMAL CARE

Angels w/Paws-Cat Rescue pg 5 303.274.2264  
 Mtn Dog Whisperer pg 18 303.447.0275  
 Cheshire Cat - Catio 303.642.0362  
 Hands, Hoofs & Paws pg 29 303.503.6068  
 Vet Tech Pet Sitting pg 30 303.642.0477

## ART

The Silver Horse - pg 17 303.279.6313  
 The Rustic Moose - pg 17 303.258.3225

## AUTOMOBILE

Carl's Corner pg 24 303.642.7144  
 Kysar's Place Inc. pg 31 303.582.3566  
 Mountain Muffler pg 23 303.278.2043

## BUILDING/CONSTRUCTION

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 24 303.258.3132  
 Arrow Drilling-pg 10 303.421.8766  
 Caribou Painting pg 25 303.641.7964  
 Grate Contracting pg 14 303.579.9519  
 Keating Pipeworks, Inc. pg 18 720.974.0023  
 Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393  
 Peter Palombo, Surveyor-pg 6 720.849.7509  
 RedPoint Construction pg 7 303.642.3691  
 Steel Structures America ins cov 970.420.7100

## BUSINESS SERVICES

APT Accounting pg 9 303.642.1040  
 Graphics Galore 303.642.0362  
 Michelle Marciniak, CPA pg 6 303.642.7371  
 Wondervu Consulting Serv. pg 32 303.642.0433

## CHIMNEY SWEEPS

MidTown Chimney pg 8 303.670.7785

## CLOTHING

Mountain Man Store pg 27 303.258.3295  
 The Rustic Moose - pg 17 303.258.3225

## COMPUTER SERVICE & REPAIR

Wondervu Consulting Serv. pg 32 303.642.0433

## ELECTRIC

United Power - Inside back Cover 303.642.7921

## ENTERTAINMENT

Jaime Mezo - Cozumel Scuba Diving pg 23  
 KGNU Radio pg 31 303.449.4885

## ENVIRONMENTAL

The Environmental Group - tegcolorado.org

## EXCAVATING

Silver Eagle Excavating pg 9 303.642.7464

## FARRIER

Forbes Farrier Service pg 25 303.642.7437

## FIREWOOD & FOREST MANAGEMENT

High Timber Mtn Tree Serv. pg 25 303.258.7942  
 Lumber Jacks - pg 7 720.212.1875  
 Red-Tailed Tree Service pg 22 941.879.3942  
 Pruins Pruning/Tree Care pg 28 303.653.7967

## GIFTS

The Silver Horse - pg 17 303.279.6313  
 The Rustic Moose - pg 17 303.258.3225  
 Nature Photography Notecards pg 18

## GROCERIES

B & F Moutain Market pg 12 303.258.3105

## HEALTH & FITNESS

Hands, Hoofs & Paws pg 29 303.503.6068  
 Nederdance pg 5 303.258.9427

## HOME IMPROVEMENT

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 24 303.258.3132  
 Caribou Painting pg 25 303.641.7964  
 Colorado Water Wizard pg 20 303.447.0789  
 Grate Contracting pg 14 303.579.9519  
 Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393  
 Red-Tailed Tree Service pg 22 941.879.3942  
 Pruins Pruning/Tree Care pg 28 303.653.7967  
 Redpoint Construction pg 7 303.642.3691

## HORSE BOARDING

Rudolph Ranch, Inc. pg 19 303.582.5230

## INSURANCE

Jim Plane-State Farm- pg 21 720.890.5916

## LIQUOR

Mid-County Liquors pg 8 3093.642.7686  
 Underground Liquor pg 30 303.582.6034

## MUSIC LESSONS

Piano Lessons in CCC pg 20 303.642.8423

## PLUMBING

Keating Pipeworks, Inc. pg 18 720.974.0023

## PROPANE

Peak to Peak Propane ins cov 970.454.4081  
 Carl's Corner pg 24 303.642.7144

## REAL ESTATE

Byers-Sellers Mtn Properties pg 16 303.642.7951  
 Century 21 Golden West pg 19 720.434.2600  
 Mock Realty-Kathy Keating -Back cov 303.642.1133  
 Summit Up Property Mgt. pg 8 303.618.8266

## RESTAURANTS

Last Stand Tavern pg 13 303.642.3180

## RETAIL

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 24 303.258.3132  
 B & F Moutain Market pg 12 303.258.3105  
 Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393  
 Mountain Man Store pg 27 303.258.3295  
 The Silver Horse - pg 17 303.279.6313  
 The Rustic Moose - pg 17 303.258.3225

## REVERSE MORTGAGES

Universal Lending Corp. pg 22 303.791.4786

## ROOFING

Independence Roofing pg 3 720.399.0355

## SNOW PLOWING

Bill Hutchison pg 3 720.352.9310

## STEEL STRUCTURES

Steel Structures America ins cov 970.420.7100

## TAXES

APT Accounting pg 9 303.642.1040  
 Michelle Marciniak, CPA pg 6 303.642.7371

## VACATION & Executive RENTALS

Cindy Cabrales pg 11 303.552.8023

## WATER & WELL

Arrow Drilling pg 10 303.421.8766  
 Colorado Water Wizard pg 20 303.447.0789  
 Doctor Water Well pg 12 303.438.6669

FEBRUARY  
2018

# POWER UPDATE



## 2018 Annual Meeting & Director Election

Wednesday,  
**APRIL 18**

Adam's County Fairgrounds  
9755 Henderson Road • Brighton

Dinner, Director Election  
& Business Meeting

Registration and Dinner Service  
begins at 4:30 p.m.

Meeting begins at 6:30 p.m.

*More information at  
[www.unitedpower.com](http://www.unitedpower.com).*

**UNITED  
POWER**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Annual Director Election

Four positions on United Power's eleven member board are up for election at **the 2018 Annual Meeting which is scheduled for Wednesday, April 18, 2018** at the Adams County Fairgrounds in Brighton. One seat in the Mountain, West, East and South districts will be up for a three-year term.

To be eligible to become or remain a director, a person must be a United Power member and receive electric service from United Power at the member's primary residence in the district he or she represents. United Power's bylaws (available at [www.unitedpower.com](http://www.unitedpower.com), at any of our offices, or through the mail) provide in-depth information on director districts, qualifications, terms, elections, meetings and officers.

Members can determine which district they live in by finding the information in the upper right hand corner of their monthly United Power statement. Nominations by written petition must state the name and district of the nominee, must be signed by 15 or more United Power members, and be filed with the Board no less than 60 days prior to the Annual Meeting.

**The deadline for nominations by petition is 4 p.m. on Friday, February 16, 2018.**

Petitions are available at United Power's headquarters office in Brighton at 500 Cooperative Way. Additional information can be obtained by calling United Power's executive department at 303-659-0551 or by visiting our website at [www.unitedpower.com](http://www.unitedpower.com).

## Candidate Forums



United Power will host the following Meet the Candidate Forums where members can learn more about each of the candidates vying to serve on the Board of Directors. The following events are free to members. Light refreshments will be served. RSVPs are not required.

### Monday, March 19, 2018

6:30 p.m.  
Adams County Fairgrounds  
Waymire Dome  
9755 Henderson Road  
Brighton, CO 80601

### Tuesday, March 20, 2018

7:30 a.m.  
Fort Lupton Recreation Center  
Multi-Purpose Room 3  
203 S. Harrison Ave.  
Fort Lupton, CO 80621

### Thursday, March 22, 2018

7:30 a.m.  
Coal Creek Canyon Community Center  
31528 Highway 72  
Golden, CO 80403

### Friday, March 23, 2018

7:30 a.m.  
E.L.F. Grill  
102 8th Street  
Dacono, CO 80514

Dates and locations may be subject to change.

Customer Service: 303-637-1300

Coal Creek Office: 303-642-7921

[www.unitedpower.com](http://www.unitedpower.com)

# Pancake Breakfast Feb 10th 7am - 11am

## Chili Challenge Feb 24th 11am - 2pm

### CCCIA Hall : 31258 Coal Creek Canyon



**Views**  
**941 Indian Peak Road**  
 Fabulous Mtn Retreat w/5 Car Garage  
 5 BD/ 3 BA 1.09 Acres **\$745,000**



**Under Contract**  
**15 Debra Ann**  
 Beautiful-Raised Ranch w/Private Pond  
 4 BD / 3 BA .8 Acre **\$522,000**



**Under Contract**  
**33848 Ave De Pines**  
 Fantastic Mtn Home w/City Views  
 4 BD/ 3 BA RV Garage **\$484,000**



**Under Contract**  
**29845 Spruce Canyon**  
 Amazing Updated Mtn Hm w/VIEWS  
 3 BD/ 3 BA 2.37 Acres **\$499,000**



**Under Contract**  
**29373 Spruce Canyon**  
 VIEWS - Remodeled - Over 3 Acres  
 3 BD / 3 BA **\$564,000**



**Under Contract**  
**722 8th Ave., Longmont**  
 Circa 1910 Old Town Charmer!  
 2 BD/ 2 BA Oversized Garage **\$349,000**



**Under Contract**  
**91 Wagon Wheel**  
 Privacy w/Lots of Potential - Well  
 800 sq.ft. Cabin 1.45 Acres **\$84,000**



**Under Contract**  
**11536 Coal Creek Heights Drive**  
 Panoramic Divide/City Views!!  
 3 BD/ 3 BA 3.3 Acres **\$599,900**



**New Listing**  
**7592 Nikau Drive**  
 Nicely Remodeled Niwot Home  
 4 BD/ 3 BA 2,096 sq ft **\$519,000**



**SOLD!**  
**10827 Brook Road**  
 Sunny & Bright! Separate Cabin Included!  
 3 BD/ 2 BA 0.8 Acre **\$379,000**



**SOLD!**  
**174 Aspen Meadow**  
 Spectacular Hm, Golden GT ST Park  
 4 BD / 3 BA 2.5 Acres **\$525,000**



**SOLD!**  
**32596 W. Inspiration Road**  
 Complete Remodel w/ Views + Office!  
 3 BD/ 2 BA 1.18 Acres **\$349,900**



**SOLD!**  
**194 Wonder Trail**  
 Charming Cottage w/Super Views!  
 1 BD / 1 BA **\$249,900**



**SOLD!**  
**702 Copperdale Lane**  
 Sweet Ranch Style Home w/ Office  
 2 BD / 2 BA 1.05 Acres **\$349,900**



**SOLD!**  
**249 Rudi Lane**  
 Post & Beam Constr. - Passive Solar  
 2 BD / 3 BA **\$399,900**



**BUY OR SELL A HOME WITH Kathy Keating or Susan Peterson and USE the moving truck for FREE**

For additional information and photos:  
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[kathykeating@mockrealty.com](mailto:kathykeating@mockrealty.com)  
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