

A Conservation History of Montana's Rocky Mountain Front

1913- The Montana state legislature takes the first step in protecting the wildlife habitat of the Rocky Mountain Front by designating the Sun River Game Preserve.

1928- Bob Marshall takes his first hike into the wild country which will later bear his name, starting in the Swan Range at Jewel Basin and walking over 100 miles to Holland Lake.

1940- Secretary of Agriculture H.A. Wallace signs an order uniting three Forest Service "primitive areas" and additional lands into the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area.

1947- The Sun River Game Range, first of five state and private wildlife reserves, is established on the Rocky Mountain Front. Choteau rancher Carl Malone put up the money for the purchase, until the state Fish and Game Department could raise funds.

1950s- Hunters and ranchers fended off Bureau of Reclamation proposals for the Sun Butte Dam, which would have flooded a vast portion of the upper Sun River.

1953- Flathead sportsmen initiate campaign to add portions of the Swan Range, Spotted Bear, and upper Middle Fork Flathead River to the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

1972- Conservationists persuade Congress to add the Lincoln-Scapegoat area to the Bob Marshall Wilderness. This was the first citizen-established wilderness in the country.

1973- Blackfeet Tribal Council passes resolution declaring the entire Badger-Two Medicine area of the Rocky Mountain Front as "sacred ground."

1978- The Great Bear Wilderness is designated, and a portion of the Teton-Birch Creek area of the Rocky Mountain Front is added to the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

1983- At the urging of Rep. Pat Williams, the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee orders an emergency withdrawal of the Bob Marshall Wilderness from oil and gas leasing.

1984-1994- in ten separate bills Congress adds lands to the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex.

June 1993- Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt establishes a moratorium on oil and gas development within the Badger-Two Medicine area. Later extended to 1996.

May 1994- The U.S. House of Representatives passes HR 2473 which includes additions to the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex, wilderness study area designation for the Badger-Two Medicine, and mineral withdrawal of lands near Gibson Reservoir.

February 1997- Montana's Senate Natural Resources Committee rejects an industry resolution urging extensive leasing of public lands within the Rocky Mountain Front.

September 1997- Lewis and Clark National Forest Supervisor Gloria Flora issues a historic decision to remove all national forest lands within the Rocky Mountain Front from further oil and gas leasing for the next 10 to 15 years.

January 2001- All national forest land in the Rocky Mountain Front is withdrawn from mineral entry to hard rock mining for 20 years.

May 2001- The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upholds Flora's 1997 decision to ban new oil and gas leases in the Rocky Mountain Front (the decision had been appealed by industry).