

## Maxville on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

July 18-20

Our Maxville trip over the weekend of July 18-20 produced some great four wheeling and a very informal and productive meeting with the Philipsburg District Ranger and the Law Enforcement Officer.

On Friday morning Larry, Bruce, Willie, Ron Mac and our Spokane buddy, Marc Quinn, met with Charlene F. Bucha Gentry, District Ranger of the Pintler Ranger District, and Adam Dale, the Law Enforcement Officer for the Pintler Ranger District. This was a very informal meeting to discuss the possibilities of opening up the trail over Game Pass as well as several other issues.

The trail over Game Pass most likely will never be reopened due to a lack of a formal right of way easement by the private property owners on the Gold Creek Lakes side. The trail to Thompson Lake most likely will always be kept open as far as the lower portion of the lake. Unfortunately, the trail to the top of the hill is officially closed. This is kind of a bummer as the over view was spectacular from this higher vantage point and the potential for camping at the lake itself is very limited. We asked Charlene what it would take to open the trail another 1/4 mile and her reply was nothing less than a Forest Plan Amendment to change the Forest Plan Management Allocation for the area to allow motorized use. This lengthy process would be open to full public comment and review as well as detailed environmental analysis.

As to getting the short section of Road 1500 that is now closed permanently changed to a seasonally open basis, she said that she would look in to it and it was very much a possibility. Making the trail into Meadow Lakes came under the same situation as the Thompson Lake trail. It just isn't going to happen.

We did discuss several other issues such as ATV damage from what Adam referred to as "pioneer trails," how to prevent future damage, what our role could be in restoring damaged areas, and the possibility of developing a true challenge trail in the area. I took several pictures of the user-generated trails that I will send to Charlene.



I think that all of us came away feeling that both of them really listened to us, and not only did we "get a foot in the door but were actually sitting down on the couch and talking".

Adam joined us for the rest of the day riding his quad. We stopped and walked the Cow Camp Meadows area. It had pretty much healed itself from the damage that was done by some renegade four wheelers a couple of years ago, and no restoration work was needed.



The Meadow Lakes area is a different story, and numerous user-generated or "Pioneer trails" need to be addressed before permanent damage is done to the area. Adam said that he would take our offer to "fix" the area back to Charlene for further discussion. We ate lunch at the Rock Creek crossing and talked with Adam some more about just what type of trails we were interested in. While there, a large group of ATV riders came through. It was pretty interesting to see their faces when they discovered that there was a law enforcement officer with us!

We made it to Thompson Lake without any problem, and Adam posted the trail past the lake as closed!

The weather was close to perfect and the wildflowers spectacular, especially in the meadow areas which were filled with yellow buttercups and magenta shooting stars (as well as ferocious mosquitoes!).



On Saturday, Curtis Evelo, his wife and four kids in their black special ops Suburban, Derek and dad Steve in his military accessorized Toyota, Steve Schardt in his pretty green Jeep and guests Cameron Lloyd and John Westby in a Ford Ranger joined us as well. Willie and Jeanne left the group at Cow Camp Meadows and headed out to explore another trail while Jeff led the group headed up to Thompson Lake. Curtis got so concentrating on keeping a limb from scratching his paint that he completely forgot about the tree in front of him, and score one for the tree with a dented bumper, broken grill and an indent in the front of the fender.



Derek discovered that he didn't have enough gear but was overall happy with how his new 33 inch tires worked and his dad, Steve, is now enthused about getting his Toyota finished up and on the trail.

Steve Schardt now has no doubts that a V8 will be going in his Jeep over this next winter to replace the four-cylinder. Cameron had the highest sitting vehicle in the group but somehow managed to do the most body damage, with big dents in both sides on the lower part of his box. Maybe it had something to do with his "take no prisoners driving style". The group didn't make it back to camp until about 5 pm, tired but all with big grins on their faces and lots of great stories. Willie and Jeanne found a great trail to the Ivanhoe mine that is not marked on the forest service map; at 8400 or so feet in elevation it offers a great view into the Gold Creek Basin. They also found a little-used trail that follows Royal Gold creek that they had never run before.

For those that missed this trip, there will be another one in the near future to the same area but different trails will be run.