



The FOAMLINE

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FISHING OUTFITTERS ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA

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LETTER TO FOAM GUIDE MEMBERS

from GARRETT MUNSON,

Guide-at-Large Board Member

Hello. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself, since the odds are pretty high that you don't know me. My name is Garrett Munson, and I am the new Guide-at-large Director on the FOAM board. My job on this board is to represent YOU and the other 240+ guide FOAM members across the state on the issues that come before the board. I am trying to get myself up to speed on exactly what these issues are right now so that I can best serve you.

I really need your help with this and would appreciate your input and ideas. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, contact me at: (406) 431-5089, or P.O. Box 236, Clancy, MT 59634, or gertymunson@hotmail.com.

One thing I've picked up on in the last couple months is this - the public's perception of guides and outfitters on the river is generally a negative one. We are often held responsible for things like overcrowding, littering, depletion of fish numbers, habitat destruction, etc. While all of us make mistakes (we certainly aren't perfect) and do things that, in retrospect, we wish we hadn't, I think that guides on the whole are much more a part of the solution than part of the problem. The real problem, though, is that it's the perception that counts, and so we need to work to change it.

As you head into this season on Montana's rivers, try to remember that each of you is a representative of all guides in the state. Whatever you do reflects on all of us. Be gracious. Respect the space of others, and try to understand when your space is infringed upon by people who may not know any better. Teach instead of preach. Don't lose your cool - it just reinforces the negative perception we're trying to leave behind. Be a role model for your clients and all river users. Most importantly, HAVE FUN, be safe, and leave a few for me. Thanks for your time. GARRETT MUNSON
(Garrett's comments can be found in a guide column in future newsletters.)

FOAM, MOGA MAY FIND SHARED INTERESTS

Kelly Flynn, new president of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association (MOGA), has some ambitious plans for their association, including forming new ties with FOAM. Kelly and several MOGA board members attended a March FOAM board meeting to outline their future plans and talk about how working with FOAM might fit into them. The FOAM board was cautiously optimistic, as was MOGA.

Since some MOGA members also operate (or are starting to operate) on rivers, they want to coordinate with FOAM on river recreation management. MOGA has some experience on the Smith river and participated in the Beaver-

head, Big Hole planning process. Currently, they're involved with BLM planning on the Wild and Scenic Missouri.

Among other interests for MOGA is the question of what the FOAM board termed "business models" for managing service providers, and there may be some controversy brewing. For many years, federal land management agencies have used allocation to distribute commercial or outfitter use via permits. This federal model is attractive to many hunting outfitters because allocation narrows competition. Plus, when they plan their retirement based on selling their business, the "license" or permit to operate on public ground increases that value. The closed, allocated system with transferability is familiar to MOGA, if only because their free-market opportunities were eliminated long ago.

This difference between MOGA's call for allocation and FOAM's user distribution may be a stalling point. As mentioned in previous FOAMLINe articles (see Winter, 2002 issue), in situations of proven crowding or conflict, the FOAM board has resolved to advocate for a free-market system based on distribution of recreational *users* rather than commercial *service providers* like outfitters. Users would be distributed via an alternating day-on, day-off rationing scheme, leaving outfitters to compete for the business needs of the rationed river users. Of course, if a managing agency adopted outfitter allocation as a solution, FOAM would demand transferability of any permits issued to the allocated businesses or outfitters.

The alternate business models - allocation or rationing of recreationists versus allocation of outfitters - are part of a BLM planning process on the Missouri. The agency is assessing a recreationist distribution plan they call "Freedom of Choice," so named because the recreationist who gets a permit has the "freedom to choose" whether they want to use an outfitter or not. The BLM may apply it to long-time scenic or canoe liveries on the Missouri.

MOGA is involved because they are trying to broaden their membership by soliciting rafting and tour-boat operators. Because of its history with the U.S. Forest Service and BLM, MOGA is advocating for a standard allocation and permit transfer system. While FOAM is not currently involved in the Missouri planning with the BLM, this could be a showdown of sorts and may be only the beginning of a rivalry over business models advocated by FOAM and MOGA. As Flynn noted, "While there must be room for honest disagreement, we can still talk about these issues."

The FOAM board noted several other less controversial topics FOAM members could share with MOGA: We could certainly work together on outfitter and guide public relations. Both FOAM and MOGA board members agreed

that outfitter PR is at an all-time low and needs a positive boost from both organizations. We are all tired of being called troublemakers, access-blockers, and river-crowders. MOGA understood FOAM's "prove it" stand regarding river management policy - we want proof that outfitters are a "problem" before any regulations are placed on our industry.

Granted, MOGA has more experience dealing with unhappy hunters on both public and private ground, but FOAM is keyed on public rivers, and we don't bear the brunt of access issues like MOGA does. To their credit, MOGA has an excellent traveling exhibit showing the history of outfitters in Montana in pictures, text, and lectures. The exhibit is targeted for local libraries and schools.

Todd Wester, FOAM board member, suggested that FOAM and MOGA put together a liason committee to explore shared interests, including PR, preferred business models under agency management schemes, and the viability of historical use as a yardstick for allocation. FOAM president Matt Greemore and Wester both pointed out to the MOGA representatives that the outfitter allocation model may not bring the results MOGA wants. If that model were based on historical use, the typical MOGA member's use would be eliminated or cut way back on most rivers where FOAM members have offered services for a decade or more.

FOAM, FUND WEBSITES UP AND RUNNING!

After lots of planning and detailed implementation, the FOAM and Fishing Outfitters Conservation Fund websites are now online at their respective addresses:

FOAM - www.foam-montana.org

FUND - www.montanafund.org

The FOAM site features a banner instructing prospective clients how to connect with members by using our interactive database. Listings of member names, businesses, and contact information are generated based on *areas* you work in, *keywords* (like 'flyfishing', 'driftboat', 'Yellowstone', etc.), or *selections* of services or waters. The list of name returned is randomized, not alphabetical, to keep 'A.Aaron' from trumping 'Z.Ziebarth' every time lists are shown.

Online membership services include FAQ's for new (or old) members and downloadable PDF editions of the FOAMLINE newsletter and archived past issues. The 'Currents' section presents FOAM editorials, updates on river management issues, and agency plans. There are also links that help find out who your legislators are and how to contact them. We'll be tracking legislative information during the sessions every other spring, and we're thinking about providing online membership applications and dues collection by

credit cards via a secure payment site.

Outfitters can find their individual listings by searching in the "Find an Outfitter" section - your business and services description is taken from your "blurb" on the written form you sent to FOAM.

An additional feature is the "Click here for details" page for every member's listing. Here you can add up to 1,500 words of extra text advertising your services and one logo or one picture. The logo or picture will be about the size of the "Proud member of FOAM" graphic that's there now, and the text will trace down the page on the left of the graphics.

If you want this extra listing opportunity, please send FOAM the text (either in an email ready to cut-and-paste or by regular mail) with or without a web-ready picture or logo in GIF or JPEG format. The images should be 200 pixels X 100 pixels and between 72 and 90 dots per inch so they will load quickly on any web browser. Send materials to: **info@foam-montana.org** or **FOAM, PO Box 67, Gallatin Gateway MT 59730.**

The website package also includes a free email mailbox for any FOAM member. Your address would be xxxx@foam-montana.org, filling in the x's with whatever you want, preferably something short. Like "Hotmail" or other webmail services, your mailbox is available through the web and needs no extra mail-handling program like Outlook Express or Eudora. Each webmail account also has an "auto-responder" feature you can set to automatically send a reply of up to 1024 characters to anyone who emails your account. Details are on the email system once you get an account. If you want a "webmail" account, contact FOAM at the addresses above and ask for a standard form, either paper and email, to fill out with name, address, etc.

The FUND site is very straight-forward, with a short overview of the FUND origin, make-up and philosophy, listings and brief biographies of board members and advisors, a summary of our successful projects to date, and a donations page.

Check out these websites and let FOAM know what you think, like or don't like via info@foam-montana.org. We welcome constructive suggestions. Here's hoping you like the various features available now.

INSURANCE HASSLES BUG FOAM MEMBERS, BUT HEALTH INSURANCE IS IN THE WORKS!

A variety of insurance changes since Sept. 11 have caused ripples throughout the industry, and some FOAM members have been plagued by increased rates, lack of coverage, and other glitches. Other members have been fined for not sending new insurance certificates to the MBO when

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renewing or face possible fines for letting their coverage lapse.

Rates for commercial auto coverage have nearly doubled in some cases, typically for members with newer cars or trucks. The insurance carrier, Safeco, was one of few companies interested in covering autos in Montana. After a little investigation, FOAM staff found another carrier, Progressive Insurance, who negotiated with FOAM's agent, Montana International Insurance, to offer new coverage with rates much lower in most cases than Safeco. If you're unhappy with your current commercial rates, with or without FOAM's coverage, check with MII at 800-823-5360 and ask for Karen Reinig (pronounced "Rhine-ig"). Remember, there is a difference between "business" and "commercial" auto coverage - FOAM's policy covers your clients when they're in your auto or truck; other "business" policies may not.

Several FOAM members are frustrated that the optional coverage for their boats, trailers, and gear has been lost. Interestingly, Safeco was the carrier for this extra coverage, and when MII added Progressive's policy for auto insurance, Safeco reacted by dropping new policy applicants (anyone who didn't have continuous coverage with Safeco) for the gear coverage. Fred Wardinsky and Karen Reinig are actively searching for another carrier on this gear coverage, but finding a replacement may take a while.

End-of-the-year mistakes also caught some FOAM outfitters in one of two situations: 1) They didn't send insurance certificates with their relicensing papers, expecting Montana International Insurance to send in certificates, found out too late to correct the situation before 12/31 and face late renewal penalties; or 2) They let their insurance lapse, renewed it late, and may face disciplinary action for failing to have continuous coverage, another MBO rule.

To help the first situation, FOAM is considering starting the renewal process in September, two months earlier, to give members more time to get renewed insurance. As for the second, FOAM has suggested to the MBO that failure to have insurance during the early months of the year when the typical fishing outfitter isn't serving clients deserves a lower penalty than those who actually serve clients without insurance coverage. We'll see if the current MBO members buy this argument, but it makes sense to some of them - the outfitter members, that is.

So, be forewarned - make your best effort to get new insurance before the end of the year, then send in your new certificate with your application. If you're running late, send in a copy of your current insurance, even if it expires on Dec. 31, then make sure you have new coverage effective Jan. 1 of the new year.

Now, the good news. FOAM's health insurance proposal was sent out to all our members, and 110 members were interested in coverage. These "affirmatives" will be offered three different policies with three different coverages and rates, broken out for individuals, individuals with spouses, and individuals with families. If we get 100 members to sign up for coverage at these competitive rates, we're under way! If you didn't reply among the 110, but are interested now, call Lori Fearon at 800-823-5360 to get a

questionnaire.

Payment of two month's premiums will bind the policy, then FOAM will set up automatic withdrawal accounts at members' banks to pay the premiums. However, members must remember that this insurance is like any other - if you miss a premium, you're out.

This is an excellent benefit that few other business associations offer. Thanks to those members willing to try a better health insurance deal and special thanks to Lori Fearon of MII for helping FOAM serve its members in new ways.

STATEWIDE RIVER RECREATION PLANNING COUNCIL STARTING UP, MAYBE . . .

More than a year ago, the FWP Commission requested support from the Governor's Office to start up a statewide river recreation council. Because of concern about the current Beaverhead, Big Hole rules barring outfitters and nonresidents from certain stretches of both rivers, the Governor didn't endorse the FWP council, but granted free rein for the FWP Commissioners to initiate a discussion with statewide river recreation stakeholders.

FOAM has long requested just such a council made up of recreationists, outfitters, conservation groups, landowners, FWP, the commissioners, etc., all as equal players. However, FWP and the commissioners seem resolved to call the group a "Citizen's Advisory Council" (CAC) that will merely discuss and recommend a process, policy, or plan for review by the commissioners and implementation by FWP.

FOAM, along with the Big Hole Foundation, the Blackfoot Challenge, and others, has endorsed a consensus-driven group facilitated by Matt McKinney of the Montana Consensus Council. However, the commissioners favor another facilitator, Virginia Tribe, to work with the group, saying they want "an objective third party" without ties to the Beaverhead, Big Hole process. One question: How did the Consensus Council fail in the BH2 process? Why should they be cut out now when their skills are really needed?

Fearing a repeat of the Beaverhead/Big Hole Citizen's Advisory Council disaster, FOAM is hoping to resolve the differences in perspective here while continuing to advocate for what McKinney calls a "transparent, open process" of decision-making and policy development, free of the typical top-down approach so familiar with state agencies. Add in federal management (BLM, USFS, etc.) with cross-currents of stated and legal authority and differing philosophies of management in relation to Montana, and the situation is even more interesting. Stay tuned, river recreation fans.

TOURISM CONFERENCE: MONTANANS NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS OF TOURISM

West Yellowstone welcomed some 250 representatives from Montana's tourism industry for a three-day conference on the benefits and hazards of tourism in Montana. An on-going survey of tourism businesses revealed that resident resistance to tourism is the biggest block to progress. More about that in a moment.

From FOAM's perspective, the wealth of data available at the conference proved that our industry can only

benefit from controlled tourism growth. For instance, 9.57 million nonresident visitors came to or through Montana in 2001, spending \$1.04 billion during their stay, an average of \$109.51 per group. Of that total income, 52% was from out-of-state vacationers, 21% from “passers through,” 15% from nonresidents visiting friends and family, 7% from business travelers, 1% from shoppers, and 4% others.

Other interesting facts: Some 28,000 service jobs are directly supported by nonresident travel. Over the last nine years, tourism has grown 15% from 8.73 million travelers to 9.57 million. Some 76% of visitors had been to Montana before. A majority (53%) of vacation planners use the internet for finding out about Montana as a destination. Women are typically the planners for family trips. Top priority target markets for Montana tourism include, geographically, the neighboring states of ND, SD, WY, UT, CO, ID, WA, and OR (followed by the Southwest and CA) and, demographically, families and couples age 35+ with incomes of \$40k+ and “active matures” age 55+ with incomes of \$50k+. The age 35+ group enjoys challenging experiences, including hiking, hunting, FISHING, rafting, and mountain biking. The active matures enjoy soft adventure, history/culture, guided tours, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, and dining. Finally, some 44% of vacationers said rivers and lakes were a summer attraction, while fishing came in at 22%.

All this doesn't mean much to the typical resident Montanan. According to an Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) survey, few residents are aware of the economic effects of tourism, with 10% saying they were exposed to “no info,” 30% saying “some,” and only 5% saying “a lot of info.” So, the primary goal of Montana's 2001-2003 Tourism & Recreation Strategic Plan is to “enhance awareness and support for tourism and recreation” among Montana's citizens and public officials. Part of this awareness campaign requires adequate surveys of the economic benefits tourism brings to the local level and active lobbying of our legislators to change their “closed door” attitudes toward Montana's #2 industry.

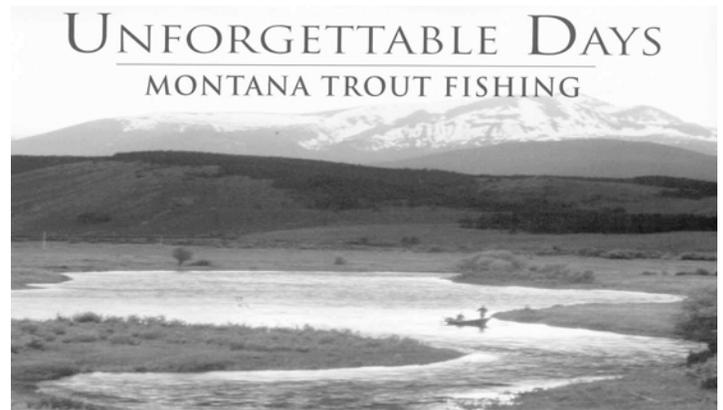
For more information, these reports are or will be available from the ITRR website (www.forestry.umt.edu/itr): Resident Attitudes in Montana, 2002 (coming soon); Economic Review of the Travel Industry in Montana, 2002 edition (coming soon); Employment & Wages, the Travel Industry in Montana; and Nonresident Travel in Montana - Putting the Numbers into Context (Technical Completion Report 98-2).

NEW PHOTO BOOK “UNFORGETTABLE DAYS: MONTANA TROUT FISHING” AVAILABLE

Riverbend Publishing of Helena has published a new book of spectacular photographs by such artists as Denver Bryan and Dale Spartas. It's a hardcover edition, but smaller than the standard “coffee table” book - it's being called an “end table” book.

Retail cost is \$14.95, but a series of discounts, depending on the volume of editions purchased, is available to FOAM members if you want to get copies for good clients, for the lodge, or for sale. Members must indicate their member-

ship in FOAM for these discounts. Contact: Chris Cauble, Riverbend Publishing, PO Box 5833, Helena, MT 59604. For pricing details and a list of discounts, call (406) 449-0200, fax (406) 449-0330, email ccauble@riverbendpublishing.com.



FOAM

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