



## Affiliate Corner

### **Libby Rod and Gun Club**

Libby Rod and Gun Club is MWF's most northwest affiliate. Located in the lowest elevation in the state on one of the three largest Montana rivers, the Kootenai, Libby has a unique character. Along with the heavy evergreen forests, cascading streams choked with devil's-club thorns, Libby supports a strong industry base of miners and foresters, and some strong conservation-minded individuals. True to the character of the area, LR&GC membership can be described as - diverse.

When the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness approached LR&GC late last year to enlist their support for the big "W" – a wilderness designation for Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Study Area, the club began its lengthy decision making process reflective of a strong respect for their membership diversity. Whenever a subject is deemed as controversial, determined by majority vote at any general meeting, then any deciding vote must be deferred for one month in order to allow all members to digest the facts.

The Friends presented a pro-wilderness presentation exhibiting the degrading impact that motorized sports are having on this lofty landscape. The local snowmobile club, consisting of both supporters and detractors, were given a platform to express their objections to any further "W" designation. In short, anyone with an opinion either way was given an opportunity to weigh in.

Finally, after several months, FWP biologist Gayle Joslin gave a compelling presentation on the life history of mountain goats and their physiological response in stressful situations while highlighting other wildlife habitat values of the Scotchman's.

Mountain goats are endemic to Scotchman Peaks in the Kootenai National Forest, which coincides with its allure for snowmobilers. Forest regulations have curtailed entry on some traditionally-used trails, yet helicopter overflights reveal "sled" tracks all through the snow on the slopes of the Scotchman's; the practice of highmarking, or making tracks as high as possible on the steepest slopes is evidently hard to resist for some.

Her impassioned plea probably was the final straw within the club's decision making process.

Scotchman Peaks had been included in the congressionally approved 1988 Montana Wilderness Bill and would already have wilderness protection had the bill not been the only wilderness bill vetoed in history.

LR&GC recently completed their evaluation and voting protocols making a strong commitment to supporting wilderness designation for the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Study Area.

Other work by club members has included frequent travel to Helena to support conservative, self-sustaining mountain lion quotas often conflicting with commercial outfitters in the Libby area. LR&GC along with MWF affiliate, Bitterroot Valley Houndsmen, solidly supported progressive mountain lion seasons with permits rather than quotas to ensure stable and sustainable populations of healthy mountain lions. As a result of their persistence, Region 1 became the successful trial run for lion permits; the permit system was extended to most of Region 2 for the 2008/2009 season.

LR&GC is completing their new clubhouse/public facility on their shooting range, leased from the Kootenai NF by Lincoln County. All events are open to the public. For more information call Don Clark at 1-406-293-7659 or email [donmon@libby.org](mailto:donmon@libby.org). Meetings are on the third Tuesday of each month at 7PM at the First National Bank.