



GLACIER-  
TWO MEDICINE  
ALLIANCE

April 2024

## SPRING NEWSLETTER & 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Hikers in the Badger-Two Medicine, Photo: Steph Legault

### GREETINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

#### *What Lies Ahead for Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance*

In the weeks and months following the exciting announcement that the last oil and gas lease in the Badger-Two Medicine had finally been retired, I repeatedly fielded three questions:

**"Are you out of a job?"** Uh, no.

**"Now that you've accomplished your mission, is GTMA done?"**

No, far from it.

**"What's next for GTMA?"** Ahh, I'm glad you asked. Let me tell you.

First, a word about our mission. As big a deal as the last lease retirement was, our mission is way bigger than just stopping oil and gas. In fact, it is bigger than the Badger-Two Medicine landscape. We are the *Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance* after all.

Our mission is the protection, stewardship, and shared enjoyment of the Badger-Two Medicine and "its interconnected ecosystems," which we have defined as portions of the Rocky Mountain Front, Blackfoot Reservation, Glacier National Park, the Middle Fork Flathead river basin and the Great Bear Wilderness (see map on next page). This is the headwaters of North America and the eastern core of what conservationists call the Crown of the Continent ecosystem, one of the largest, most intact temperate ecosystems

on the continent. Our goals are to keep this region wild, intact, and connected; to recover native species including fish, wildlife, and plants; to enhance the ecological integrity and resilience of natural systems; and, to inspire and mobilize people and communities to know, to enjoy, and to care for these special, wild places in a responsible and meaningful way.

For us, this work takes various forms, including local grassroots advocacy, community education and outreach, on-the-ground stewardship work, and collaborative partnerships, including with federal, state, or tribal managers, other conservation organizations, community groups or individuals. Our approach also includes a strong commitment to support Indigenous-led efforts, especially by the Amskapi Piikuni (Blackfeet), to strengthen their stewardship of traditional lands and resources, or to rejuvenate their cultural relationships to them.

So, then what's next for Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance? Our top priority remains protecting the heart of our mission area - the Badger-Two Medicine - from development or mismanagement as well as identifying opportunities to bolster protection or expand

Blackfeet stewardship of these wild and sacred lands. You can read more about this work on page 3. As capacity allows, or the urgency of the issue demands, we will also engage other critical threats and management issues facing public lands and waters in our mission area, or provide support as requested for Blackfeet efforts to conserve tribal lands and resources.

The protection and recovery of native fish and wildlife species, like grizzly bears, lynx, and westslope cutthroat trout in our mission area, long a central concern of Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance, will be an increasing focus of our work. We are currently taking steps to increase our capacity to effectively tackle key fish and wildlife conservation challenges. This work will continue to include watchdogging land management activities to safeguard habitat as well as advocating for science-based policies and population management. Another emphasis will be improving landscape connectivity and reducing barriers to wildlife movement and migration, such as poorly situated fences or death and deterrence caused by roads and railways like the Highway 2 / BNSF rail corridor separating Glacier National Park from the Badger-Two Medicine and the Flathead National Forest. We will also continue to support Blackfeet Nation efforts to restore wild bison to appropriate tribal and public lands in the region as best we can.

Another key priority will continue to be fostering a more engaged, informed, and inclusive community of conservation champions for the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Badger-Two Medicine and across the eastern Crown of the Continent ecosystem. Volunteer-

driven stewardship projects like weed pulls, trail clearing, or wildlife monitoring aim to help people experience and give back to the land in a meaningful way. Through our free, educational activities, like our Two Medicine Voices Speaker Series, films, or outings with local experts, people can learn about natural history, science, policy, Blackfeet cultural perspectives, or conservation issues. In conjunction with various community partners and schools, we are working to improve access to the outdoors, especially for youth or other people who may not have the capability to recreate outdoors, or for other reasons may not feel welcome or comfortable doing so.

So yes, the last lease retirement was a HUGE accomplishment, but it was by no means the end of the trail for Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance. There are way too many pressing issues facing the lands, waters and wildlife in the Badger-Two Medicine and across the eastern Crown of the Continent ecosystem, with more emerging all the time. There is also so much good work to be done to engage, inspire, and mobilize communities in our mission area to be a strong voice for wild nature. Thanks to your past and on-going support, we know we can help build a brighter future for wild places, wildlife, and communities in this region of Montana. Thank you for standing with us.



*Peter Metcalf*  
Peter Metcalf  
Executive Director



## OUR MISSION

The Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance is dedicated to the protection, stewardship, and shared enjoyment of the culturally- and ecologically-irreplaceable wild lands of the Badger-Two Medicine and its interconnected ecosystems.

## OUR VISION

A child of future generations will recognize and can experience the same cultural and ecological richness that we find in the wild lands of the Badger-Two Medicine today.





Photo: Steph Legault

## VICTORY FOR THE BADGER-TWO MEDICINE! LAST OIL AND GAS LEASE RETIRED

*And Other Highlights from an Amazing Year: 2023 Annual Report*

The best news arrived early on Sept. 1st, 2023: Solenex had signed the settlement agreements to voluntarily relinquish the last federal oil and gas lease in the Badger-Two Medicine! For nearly 40 years, Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance, Blackfeet tribal leaders, and other conservation organizations fought tirelessly to eliminate all 47 leases issued in this area for \$1/ acre in the early 1980s. Oil and gas development would have devastated this spectacularly scenic place where the prairies crash into the mountains, where wildlife like grizzly bears, wolves, and moose roam in relative abundance, and where Blackfeet people continue to practice ceremony and culture as they have since time immemorial. Finally, this land is free.

A victory this big required a big celebration! Some 200 people gathered under bluebird skies for our Fall Gathering to share stories, food, and laughter. The Rawhide Singers sang the late Chief Earl Old Person's "Badger-Two Medicine Song" as John Murray, Blackfeet Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and key leader in this struggle,

danced and burned the lease. We then joined in, throwing replica survey stakes on the pyre. The next day, about 20 people hiked to the drill site to share more stories, and listen to Jack Gladstone sing in a new era of healing for the land.



Jack Gladstone, at the former proposed drill site near Hall Creek  
Photo: April Espinoza





John Murray, Blackfeet Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and key leader in the fight to eliminate the leases. Photo: April Espinoza

Another focus of ours this past year was defending grizzly bears from efforts to rollback protections. We pushed back hard on a politically-driven draft Statewide Management Plan that minimizes science-based management in favor of more aggressive, lethal measures to limit grizzly bear populations, even in core areas, and inhibit biologically vital connectivity, as well as weighed in on a review by the US Fish and Wildlife Service about whether to delist the great bear. Along with other partners, we fought to kill a state bill to create a permit system that allows livestock owners to kill a grizzly bear they judge as threatening their livestock, even on public lands. Although the bill passed, our coalition succeeded in securing requirements that livestock owners must attempt verified non-lethal deterrents before applying for a permit-to-kill a grizzly bear on public lands. We also secured a regulation prohibiting grizzly bear hunting for at least 5-years should bears be delisted from the Endangered Species Act.

In addition to our policy work, we hosted educational sessions, bear spray trainings, and provided resources to help local residents, visitors, and recreationists prevent potential conflicts and better share the land with grizzly and black bears. We also distributed over 65 bear sprays turned in at airports or local businesses by tourists to tribal hunters, youth leaders, and other people in our community with need.

Our advocacy helped improve the design of a native trout conservation project in Glacier National Park's Gunsight Lake, as well as reinforce strong safeguards to protect the Wilderness characteristics of Glacier's backcountry during project implementation.

Our programs to connect people to the land and inspire them to care for it experienced several noteworthy accomplishments. This year we were able to sponsor two hitches by the Piikuni Lands Crew, a Blackfeet young-adult conservation crew, to fight weeds and clear trails in the Badger-Two Medicine. Ten students from Browning High School and Buffalo Hide Academy participated in a three-day camping trip in the Badger-Two Medicine, highlighted by a traditional camas bake led by Mariah Gladstone.



High school students from Browning High and Buffalo Hide Academy. Photo: Jordyn Steele

Dozens more enjoyed field trips or participated in service projects in the Badger-Two Medicine. More than 35 volunteers turned out to spray or pull weeds at one of our two service projects this summer. We also released more than 9,500 weevils to slowly chomp away at knapweed. Nearly 140 people joined us on a free, educational outing, like a ski or hike, to gain confidence in their outdoor skills, or learn about the ecology, natural history, or cultural heritage, or management of an area. These fun outings are just one of the ways we help improve opportunity for people to experience public lands, as well as build a stronger community of champions for their conservation. Finally, we hosted a fabulous 5-part speaker series on climate change and resilience in the eastern Crown of the Continent.

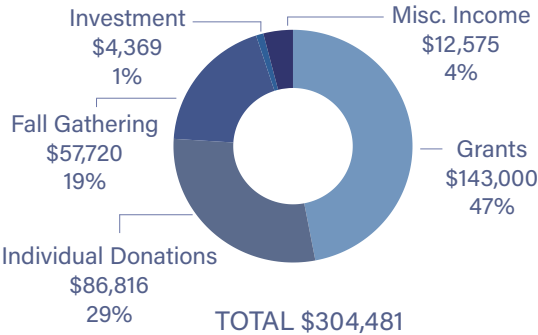
None of this work would have been possible without the financial or other forms of support you provided last year. Nor would the lease have been retired without the dedication and commitment of so many people.

To all of you, our most heartfelt gratitude for all you've done, and will continue to do, to keep this incredible corner of Montana wild, connected, and intact!

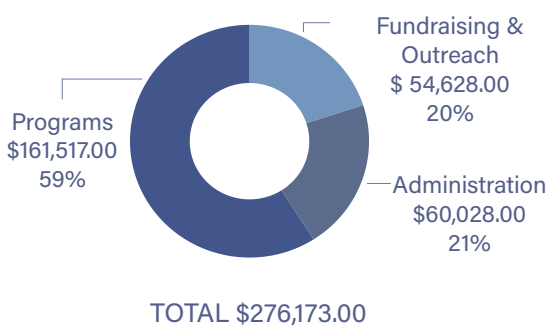


# 2023 BY THE NUMBERS

## INCOME



## EXPENSES



**1 lease**  
(the LAST one!) federal  
oil and gas leases  
retired in Badger-Two  
Medicine

**2 hitches**  
of the Piikani  
Lands Crew  
sponsored

**9,555**  
knapweed  
weevils  
released

**148 people**  
joined one of 13  
summer hikes or  
winter outings

**81 volunteers**  
gave back to the  
Badger-Two  
Medicine

**67 bear sprays**  
re-sourced to  
people in the  
community

**58 pages** of  
comments on 9  
different Forest Service,  
Park Service, or state of  
Montana projects or  
policies

**29 bags**  
of knapweed  
pulled by hand

**15 student**  
field trips or  
classroom visits;  
279 students  
reached

**9 miles**  
of trail brushed or  
cleared by  
volunteers and the  
Piikani Lands Crew

**9 community**  
education  
presentations  
hosted; 339  
people attended



THANK YOU to the incredible people and organizations who supported  
our mission with financials gifts in 2023

261 Individual Donors, including 13 members of the Badger-Two Medicine Defenders Circle (monthly donors)  
and 11 Foundations or Organizations

We especially would like to acknowledge the following tribute gifts provided this year.

### IN MEMORY OF

- Bob Quam, from Peter Olsen
- Corrinne Austein, from John Floridis and, separately, from an anonymous friend
- Harold Gray (Long Standing Bear Chief), from Linda Reeves
- Jim Posewitz, from Gayle Joslin
- Nathan, from Peter Bergeron
- Pat McClelland, from Rick Yates
- Rick Lancer, from Doug and Kathy Metcalf
- Terry Sherburne, from Joel Peterson

### IN HONOR OF

- Bob Yetter, from Keith Schlultz
- Lou Bruno, from (separately) Christine Kaufmann, Charlie Knell, John Vollertsen,
- Kendall Flint, from his family for his birthday





GTMA co-founder Lou Bruno burns his replica survey stake from the proposed drill site at Hall Creek as part of the celebratory ceremony marking the successful elimination of the last oil and gas lease. Photo: Gene Sentz

## REFLECTIONS ON AN INCREDIBLE GIFT: A LEASE-FREE BADGER-TWO MEDICINE

*By Lou Bruno*

Just before last year's GTMA Annual Fall Gathering, we received news of an incredible gift to all of us. After nearly four decades of threat, the wild and sacred peaks, wildlife and forests of the Badger-Two Medicine are finally safe from oil and gas development. The last existing lease remaining on the Rocky Mountain Front is now permanently retired. This is an incredible hard-won victory, not just for members of the Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance but the Blackfeet, the people of Montana, and all Americans who value wildlands and the creatures that inhabit them.

For many of us, this has been the battle of a lifetime. For me, personally, it has taken me from youth, (I was 39 years old when the lease was issued), to old age, (I am currently approaching my 79th birthday). I still vividly remember that cold November night when the Forest Service presented us with plans to drill for oil and gas in the very same forest and mountains where we hunted, fished,

hiked, rode horses and picked huckleberries. Many of us gathered that night decided we had to do something to stop it, even though some of our neighbors told us it was useless to try to fight it. In the Spring, they said the company would build the access road and drill the Hall Creek well.

Undeterred, a small group of us, Blackfeet and non-Blackfeet residents of East Glacier, formed the Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance and embarked on a campaign to stop the drilling and prevent development. We had the drive, but we had no clue what to do about it. None of us had any involvement in the environmental movement or any connection with our leaders in Congress. We had no knowledge of how to form an environmental group, how to write an op-ed in a paper, how to write comment letters to the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management, or how to get the word out to the public. To complicate matters, many locals, tribal and



otherwise, perceived us as radicals who were against prosperity and growth. In retrospect, I think our biggest strength was our naivety and our belief that we could actually stop this heinous act against this incredibly beautiful and culturally and ecologically valuable part of our mother earth. There were lots of stumbling blocks and setbacks along the way. But we never wavered in the belief that we would eventually succeed.

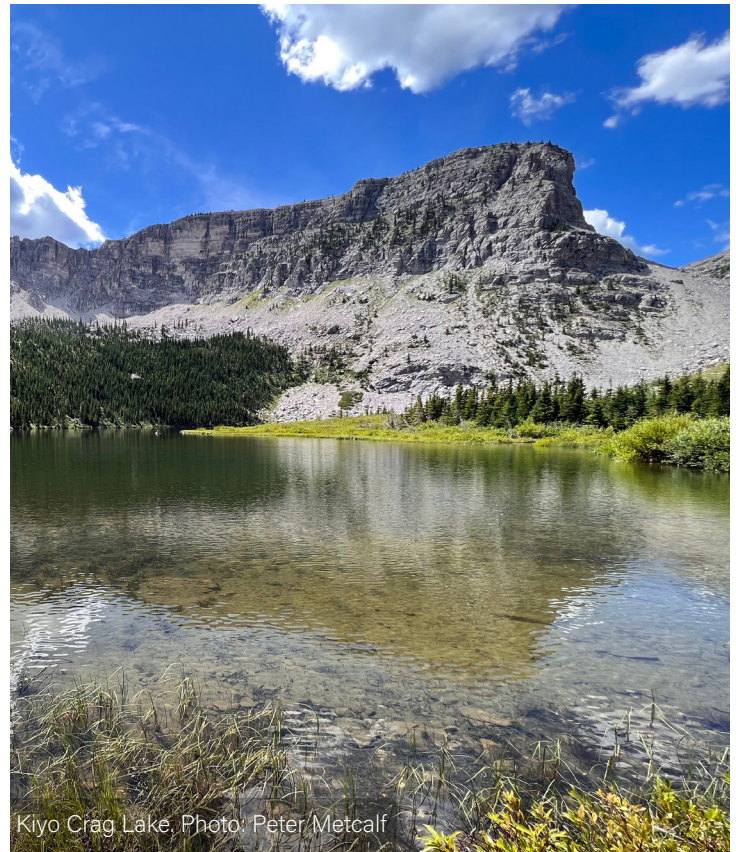
Help came from many sources. Chester-based attorney Don Marble advised us on early legal strategy. Montana Wilderness Association (now Wild Montana) taught us how to mobilize people to act. Students like Bob Yetter and Mike Bader from the University of Montana's Wilderness and Civilization program formed a student chapter of Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance whose activism helped bring greater state-wide attention. Blackfeet tribal leaders like Buster Yellow Kidney, George Kicking Woman, GG and Woody Kipp, Chief Earl Old Person, John Murray, Harry Barnes and Tyson Runningwolf (to name but a few) focused our attention on the cultural importance

"No, our work will never be done. Few things worth doing ever are."

of the Badger-Two Medicine and matters of tribal sovereignty. National organizations like The Wilderness Society, Earthjustice, or National Parks Conservation Association became tremendous allies who brought vital resources and expertise. This victory would not have happened without the contributions of so many people, including, sadly, too many who did not live to share with us in this remarkable accomplishment.



Original founders of the Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance, Harriet Marble, John Schmid, Ed DesRosier, Lou Bruno, Joe Jessepe, and Elaine Sedlack. Photo: April Espinoza



Kiyo Crag Lake. Photo: Peter Metcalf

As incredible a victory as this is for the land, wildlife and people of this region, it is not the end of the story. Even here in one of the most intact ecosystems in the United States, our wild places and wild creatures continually face threats to their existence. In the Badger-Two Medicine, which is still not permanently protected, there are a number of challenges associated with illegal motorized use, weeds, grazing, and wildfire / fuels treatment that require attention. Traffic and development in the Highway 2 / BNSF rail corridor pose a growing impediment to wildlife movement. An increased emphasis on fuels reduction and rapidly changing recreational use of national forest lands pose a threat to wildlife habitat security and the integrity of natural systems if not carefully managed. There is a great need to connect youth and other people to the value of wild places, and to inspire new, and younger, conservation champions.

No, our work will never be done. Few things worth doing ever are. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. Even at 79, this work continues to invigorate my heart and my soul, as I am confident it does yours. I invite you continue to join with us as we work to safeguard the wild places and wildlife that mean so much to us all.



Lou Bruno is co-founder and current Vice-President of Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance. He lives in East Glacier Park, Montana





Kiyo Crag, Photo: Peter Metcalf

## OUR WORK TO SAFEGUARD THE BADGER-TWO MEDICINE CONTINUES

Although the threat of oil and gas development in the Badger-Two Medicine area has finally been eliminated once and for all (!), other threats to the area's outstanding fish and wildlife habitat, clean water, and wild character remain, with new ones certain to emerge in the future. This 130,000-acre stretch of national forest land that connects Glacier National Park to the Bob Marshall Wilderness also still lacks any permanent protection from other sources of development like roads, utility corridors, commercial logging, or dams. Thus, important work remains to keep this wildlife corridor and ecologically rich transition zone between the mountains and the prairies wild and connected, to prevent future development, and to ensure management reflects and honors the land's cultural significance to the Blackfeet Nation.

### CONFRONTING CURRENT CHALLENGES

Three key management issues face the Badger-Two Medicine that we are presently working to address.

1. Fire and Vegetation Management: The Forest Service has proposed to significantly increase pre-scribed fire, with site preparation by mechanical thinning or hand tools, to try to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire to both forests and communities, to restore ecologically beneficial fire patterns, and to improve vegetative diversity across the majority of

the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, including in the Badger-Two Medicine. While we support many of the goals of the project, including returning more low-intensity fire to the landscape and protecting communities from catastrophic wildfire, we have concerns about the scope of the authorization, the lack of clear, substantive guidelines for how projects will be selected and implemented, and the lack of monitoring or other accountability mechanisms. We and our partners are pressing the Forest Service to address so that this program does not become yet another way to log in the name of "forest health" or the "wildfire crisis."

2. Invasive Species: Invasive plants, especially noxious weeds like spotted knapweed, yellow and orange hawkweed, and yellow toadflax, pose a significant and growing threat to many native plants, including culturally significant ones, and the quality fish and wildlife habitat they support in the Badger-Two Medicine. Although not always exciting or glamorous, stopping the spread of noxious weeds is absolutely vital to protect and restore the ecological integrity of this landscape. Reducing the effects of weeds benefits cultural and recreational users as well. To that end, we are increasing public and agency attention to weed mitigation, monitoring weeds to aid early detection and coordinate responses to new and existing infestations. We also



mobilize volunteers or the Piikani Lands Crew to help stop the spread through herbicidal, mechanical, or biological control treatments.

3. Illegal Motorized Use: Although the 2009 Travel Plan closed the Badger-Two Medicine to motorized recreation to protect fish and wildlife habitat, to respect Blackfeet cultural values and practices, and to provide opportunities for quiet, non-motorized recreation, some people continue to illegally ride ATVs (mostly in the Little Badger Creek drainage) and snowmobiles (mostly originating from the Skyland / Challenge snowmobile area) in the area. This disrespectful use damages resources, disturbs wildlife, and degrades the values of the area. We are attempting to reduce illegal use by reporting observations and common egress locations, and pressing for greater enforcement. We are also engaged in shaping the Flathead National Forest's proposed revisions to the boundaries and management of the Skyland / Challenge snowmobile area, a proposal we expect released for public comment soon.

"We work to safeguard the Badger-Two Medicine and its interconnected ecosystems, and inspire people to be respectful stewards of wild nature."

#### SECURING THE AREA'S LONG-TERM FUTURE

The elimination of the last oil and gas lease has sparked renewed interest from many different people about a possible protected-area designation for the Badger-Two Medicine. However, a wide diversity of perspectives still exists about what, if any, designation would best protect the area's unique combination of ecological and cultural values, advance Blackfeet rights and interest in greater stewardship of the area, and ensure continued public access and enjoyment. Finding a politically-viable arrangement that works for the land, the Blackfeet Nation, and the broader public interest will undoubtedly take time. While Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance and other interests have key rolls to play, Blackfeet leadership is essential to the process and outcome. We will continue to explore possible designations and management arrangements with tribal leaders and others for however long it takes to find a solution that will permanently safeguard the area from inappropriate development so future generations do not have to face a fight like the one we just endured over oil and gas drilling.



Bison near Chief Mountain released in June 2023, as part of Blackfeet Nation's bison restoration. Photo: Peter Metcalf



Join our 5K fundraiser and hike, walk, run, ski, bike or clean up an area for Earth Week! Sign up as an individual participant or add a fundraising team and become a Badger Protector. All donations will help support our outdoor youth and community education programs.

Learn more at: [glaciertwomedicine.org/events/earthweek](https://glaciertwomedicine.org/events/earthweek)



**Anywhere - April 20-26**  
**East Glacier - April 21**





## UPCOMING EVENTS & ADVENTURES

Join us for a fun and rewarding speakers, wildlife documentary films, service projects, or outdoor adventures. For the most up-to-date information, visit



[www.GlacierTwoMedicine.org/events-calendar](http://www.GlacierTwoMedicine.org/events-calendar)



### TWO MEDICINE VOICES SPEAKER SERIES

PROTECTING & RESTORING WILDLIFE ALONG THE FRONT

**Educational Presentations:**  
 May 22: My Relatives - Bison with Helen Augare-Carlson  
 June 12: Moose Population Studies with Landon Magee  
 July 17: Native Fish Conservation in GNP with Chris Downs  
*...more to come!*



### VOLUNTEER ADULT TRAILS TRIP

More information and registration / waitlist at  
 Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation  
<https://www.bmwf.org/2024-adventures>  
 Trip #21

**August 1-6**





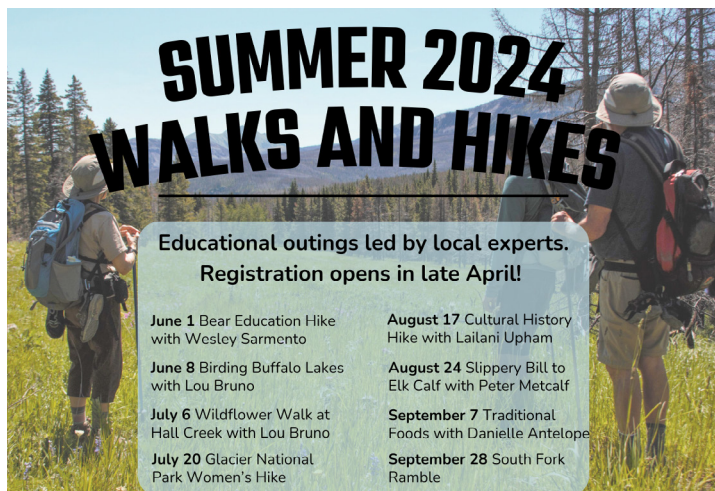

### WEED PULL DAY

Community service & education in the Badger-Two Medicine  
**Saturday, July 27 - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**  
 Sign up at [glaciertwomedicine.org/events](http://glaciertwomedicine.org/events)




### FALL GATHERING 2024


*Save the Date*  
**September 13-15, 2024**  
 East Glacier Park, Montana



### SUMMER 2024 WALKS AND HIKEs

Educational outings led by local experts.  
 Registration opens in late April!

<b>June 1</b> Bear Education Hike with Wesley Sarmiento	<b>August 17</b> Cultural History Hike with Lailani Upham
<b>June 8</b> Birding Buffalo Lakes with Lou Bruno	<b>August 24</b> Slippery Bill to Elk Calf with Peter Metcalf
<b>July 6</b> Wildflower Walk at Hall Creek with Lou Bruno	<b>September 7</b> Traditional Foods with Danielle Antelope
<b>July 20</b> Glacier National Park Women's Hike	<b>September 28</b> South Fork Ramble



### GreatNonprofits

REVIEWS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Tell the world what you think of Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance! Your review will help us build more support for our mission to protect and steward the Badger-Two Medicine and adjacent areas in the eastern Crown of the Continent ecosystem. It only takes 3 minutes and will help us make an even bigger difference for the wild places and wildlife you cherish! Thank you!





Fall Gathering hikers enjoying time together. Photo: Jordyn Steele

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## DONATE

*Join or renew your support for Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance*

Help keep the Badger-Two Medicine and adjacent areas wild and connected!

Complete, clip and mail to PO Box 181, East Glacier Park, MT 59434

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Payment Method: Check enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card \_\_\_\_\_  
 Credit Card number: \_\_\_\_\_ Ex. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Sec. Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Donate online! [GlacierTwoMedicine.org/Donate](https://GlacierTwoMedicine.org/Donate)