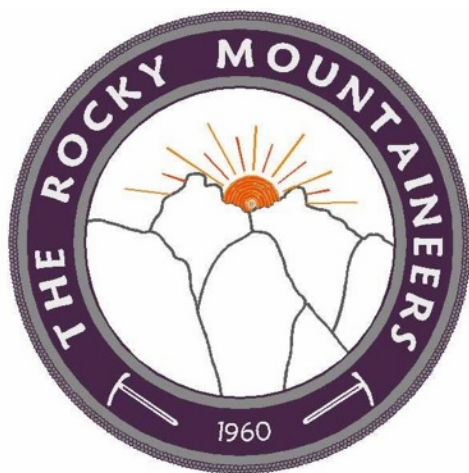


OCTOBER 2015

THE MOUNTAIN EAR



The Monthly Newsletter of the Rocky Mountaineers



Climb. Hike. Ski. Bike. Paddle. Dedicated to the Enjoyment and Promotion of Responsible Outdoor Adventure.

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The Mountain Ear is the club newsletter of The Rocky Mountaineers and is published at the end of every month. Anyone wishing to contribute articles of interest are encouraged to do so - contact the editor. The membership application can be found at the end of the newsletter.

ABOUT THE CLUB:

Mission Statement:

The Rocky Mountaineers is a non-profit club dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of responsible outdoor adventures.

Meetings and Presentations: Meetings are held the second Tuesday, September through May, at 6:00 PM at the Trail Head. Each meeting is followed by a featured presentation or speaker at 7:00 PM.

Please be sure to check out our **Facebook group** to receive the latest up-to-date news and post short-notice trip proposals:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/rockymountaineers/>

*Cover Photo: Michael Halm (left) and Norman Singley (right) lounge on the gloriously sunny southern slopes of the Shard (9,883'), third highest peak in the Bitterroots, on the last day of Indian Summer.
Photo by Dan Saxton.*

TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, October 3, 2015 - Little Saint Joe Cabin Work Party

We had a good hike up to the cabin in slightly rainy but nice fall weather. Due to last winter's weird weather the cabin hadn't seen much use and no new firewood needed to be cut. We did take care of a few minor maintenance issues, took notes for future projects, and packed out a lot of garbage. Joining me were Jesse, Karmen, Lindsey and Jake. Afterwards we had the usual BBQ/potluck at the trail head and were joined by Lois, Steve S., Michael, Julie, and Dave.

The cabin and the trail to it are all in good shape for the winter at this point - so get ready!
Paul Jensen

Sunday, October 4, 2015 - Saint Regis Pass



Photo by Julia Kahl.

When it was just Lois Crepeau and I on the Sunday trip, we opted to return to St. Regis Pass, instead of hiking Deer Creek. Some background: this is part of an ongoing project to track down and photograph sections of the old Mullan Road (1860) as it looks today. I knew this section where the road went through the area of today's Lookout Pass on I-90 would be

a puzzling one, partly because of the maze of old highways - Hwy 10, the 1920's Yellowstone Trail Motor Road, Lookout Pass Ski area, and some local roads - passing through this area and because it was over 100 miles away, making any trip over an all-day affair. I knew that the Mullan Rd. did not go through Lookout Pass. On Thursday, Sept. 24th, Steve Schombel went with Lois and I to drive the Camel's Hump section of the road, just outside of St. Regis and check out Mullan Pass, the next pass across the MT-ID border north of Lookout Pass. We had several maps along, and Lois had an old FS Lolo Forest Map. One map showed that the old Yellowstone Trail had gone through Mullan Pass, and today it is the route of the Bonneville Power Line. At the pass we found maps that showed the winter snowmobile trails, but nothing mentioning the Mullan Rd. We followed it down into Mullan, ID anyway, and came home. That night, as I was scanning Lois' old map I noticed in nice red lettering that the Mullan Rd. had gone south of Lookout Pass through St. Regis (old name Sohan) Pass. This note was not on any of our newer maps. It appeared that it had gone up a Willow Creek drainage just SW of Mullan. Last Thursday, Oct. 1st, Lois and I went back and first checked out the Willow Creek side coming to what showed as a trailhead on the maps to find an intersection of four roads and two trails with very few signs to tell us which road was which. One road that was an access road for old railroad lines had an orange diamond; it seemed like this trailhead was a major snowmobile parking area. Then we went back to the Lookout Pass Ski area and followed an old paved road down to the St. Regis River on the Montana side, pored over maps and found what appeared to be the route of the Mullan Rd. about one mile below St. Regis Pass. It wasn't a road we wanted to drive on, and it was too late in the day - we just came back home.



A view along the road. Photo by Julia Kahl.

On Sunday, Oct. 4th we went back to this same spot and proceeded to hike up this road, going through a treed area with obvious camping spots, then ran into like a 20-foot bank going up to a wide gravel road that came down from the ski area and goes across the St. Regis River and through passes on its south ridges. Here were more orange diamonds. Just to our right was the continuation of the road we were on; the GPS showed it as the road to St. Regis Pass. It showed another road coming in from the right about 1/4 mi up, and this turned out to be a ski lift on the Montana side of the Lookout Pass Ski Area. The road we were following seemed to be the X-C ski trail that runs around the bottom of the ski area. Just beyond the ski lift was a route for X-C skiers and snowmobiles to take around the ski lift area, presumably going down to the gravel road. Here the GPS batteries gave out. I usually carry backups and looked in my pack but couldn't find them. We went on using the maps, Lois' altimeter, and what I could remember from the GPS maps that showed a spaghetti configurations of roads above us. The next intersection we came to, after about another 1/4 mile, had a small sign on a tree reminding us that this was also the trail to the St. Regis Lakes - it went left and the Mullan Rd. went right. Now, the road deteriorated significantly and became steeper. We found orange flags in the trees with reconstruction information on them. We only found the start of one very overgrown road in this section. Then we came to a kinda flat spot, where a road came in from the right, like a loop road around the pass summit should do. Staying to the left was supposed to be the shorter route to the summit, and we stayed left, very shortly running into a X-C ski trail also coming from the right. Still, we kept to the left, the road getting more steep, rough, and no longer having any reconstruction flags. Eventually our instincts and Lois' altimeter said we had gone too far. We sat down to eat lunch and I took most of the stuff out of my pack to find my batteries and put them in the GPS.

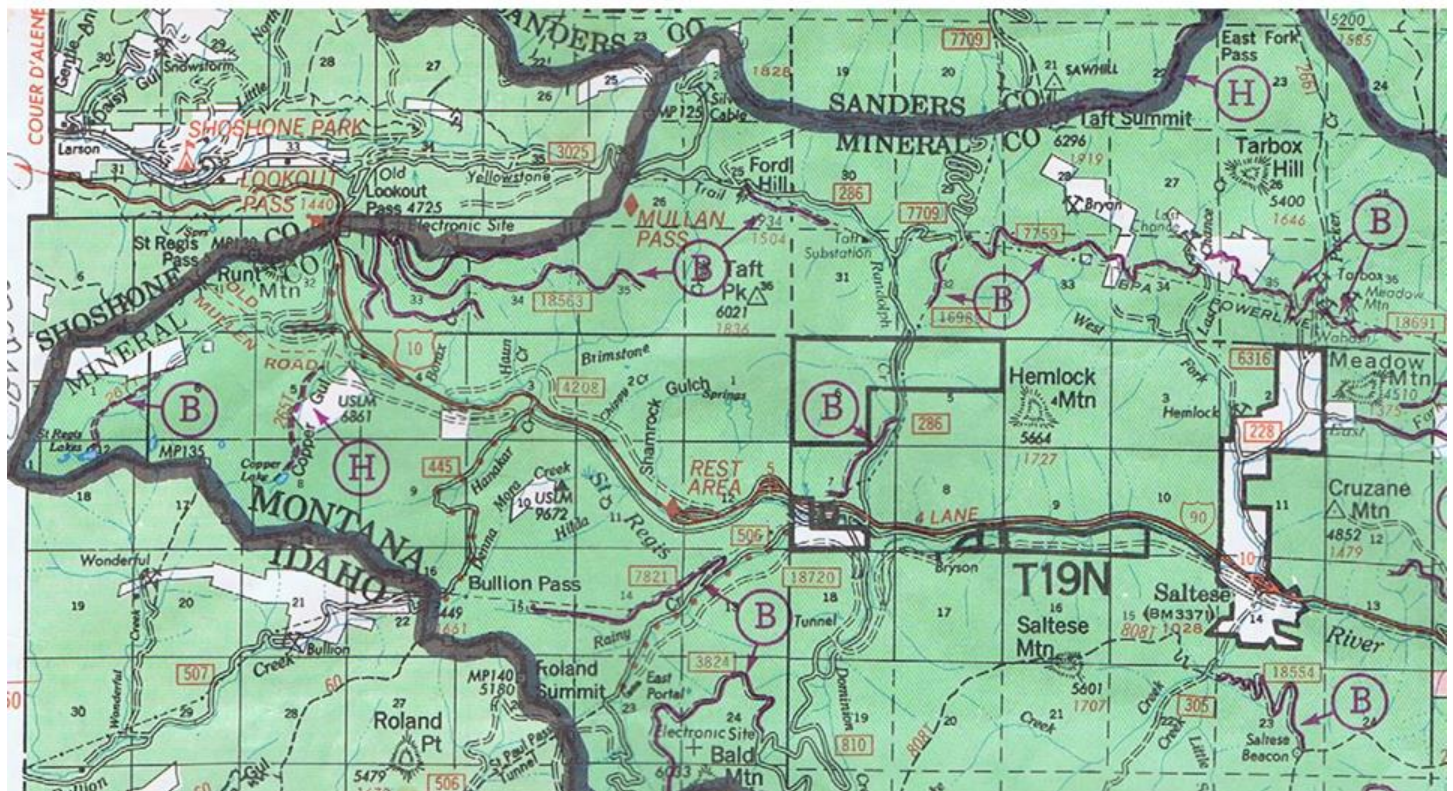


The pole marking the old Mullan Road. Photo by Julia Kahl.

From the pass, roads had gone in a big loop to the north that had roads coming off going to the Ski Area, and a road was going to the south that zig zagged back and forth across the state line eventually dropping down into Willow Cr., which I had suspected was the route of the Mullan Rd. - but the GPS showed that in one spot three roads stopped and did not connect, and I had wanted to go to that spot and see what was there. The GPS showed that we were near that spot, and we couldn't see any road but the one we were on. The pass was below us, and at 2pm we started back down to it. The GPS showed that we needed to follow the ski trail a few hundred feet and came to the main part of the pass, where a major road went down on the west side. Lois looked around and found a pole with the words "Mullan Rd." and an arrow pointing to a long overgrown road. An ATV came by and went down the road to the north. We took pictures with the pole and headed back down, stopping to chat with a couple from Spokane by the ski lift. Back to the pickup by 3:30, we headed home, stopping in St. Regis to get ice cream.

I checked the downhill road on the west side on the GPS later and it was part of the larger loop road with lots of phantom roads coming off it, but following it down into Willow Cr. it appeared to come off of the road that, at the Willow Cr. trailhead, was the old railroad road. This appears to be the approximate route of the Mullan Road and not the zig zag road. Plans are to go back sometime in the future and either hike, ski, or snowshoe the section on the Willow Cr. side as a point-to-point trip.

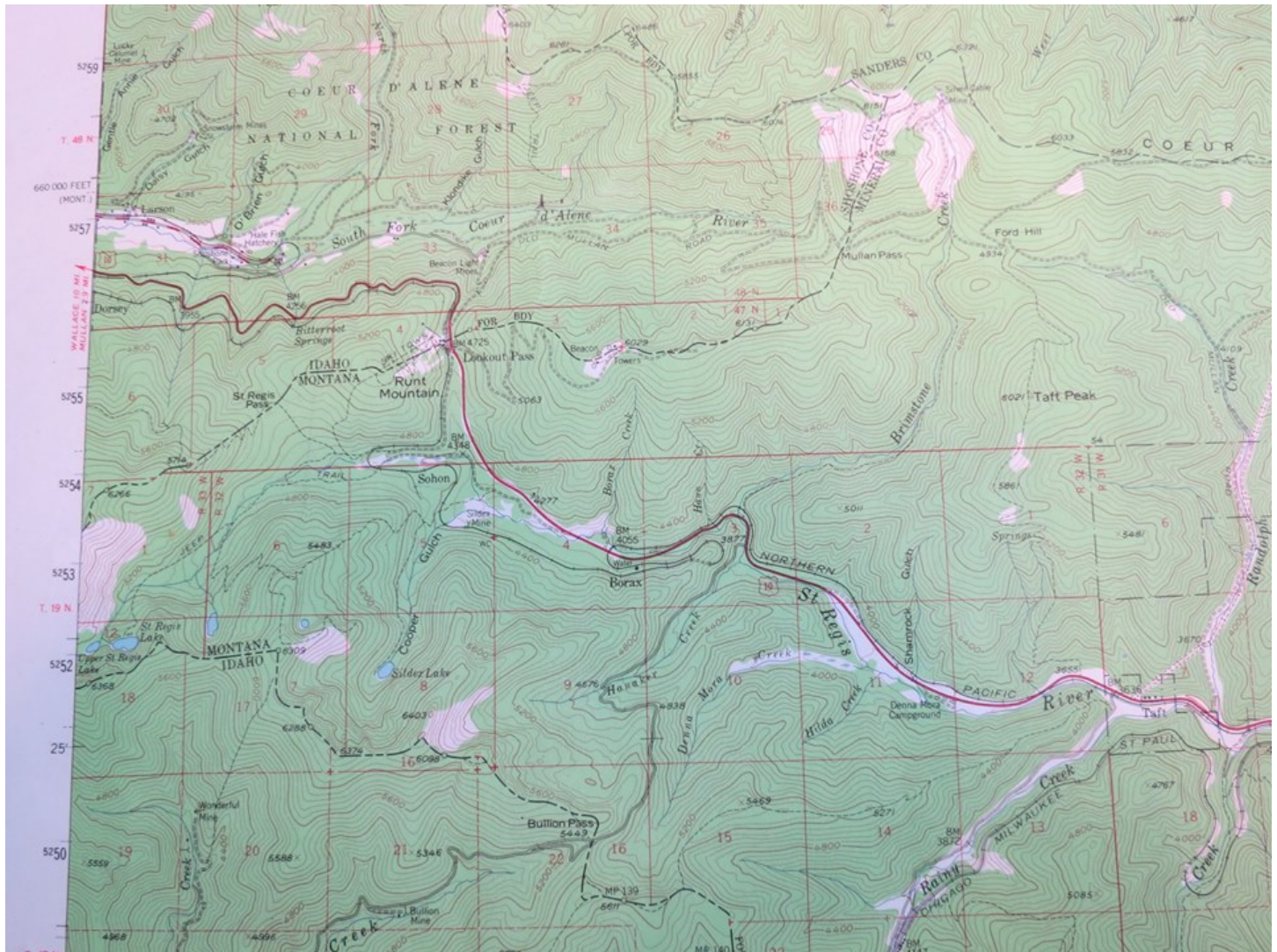
Follow-up: The GPS coordinates for the Mullan Rd. pole are N 47°26.991', W 115°43.326.'



Lois Crepeau's old 1987 Forest Service map.

Lois got some old topo maps at the Mansfield Library from 1956 and 1999. From these we learned that the road bed we came up on about 1/4 mile up the trail was actually an old railroad bed for a train line that ran through Lookout Pass. The area where we parked was labeled the “Sohan” area, and “Lookout” is probably also a name the railroad gave the area of the pass.

The 1956 topo made it clearer, that what we suspected was that the Mullan Rd., which actually ran south of the existing roads today, on the Montana side, and that only the section between St. Regis Pass and the junction with the trail to the St. Regis Lakes was the actual route.



1956 topo.

Both topos (USGS) labeled the road from Mullan, ID to Mullan Pass and Randolph Cr. on the MT side as being the “Old Mullan Road,” while the FS maps of the time have the correct route via St. Regis/Sohan Pass, and the Yellowstone Trail (1912) through Mullan Pass. One wonders if the Mullan Pass route was “the old road to Mullan, ID,” that somehow got mixed up with the other Mullan Rd. But how old of a road would it be?

On Oct. 8th, Lois and I went to the Mineral Co. Museum in Superior; hanging on a wall in the hallway was a map from before Mineral County split off from Missoula County (before 1910), it shows the Mullan Rd. going through St. Regis Pass, on the zigzag road. It also shows the train line through Lookout Pass but there are no roads going through either Lookout or Mullan Passes.



Map dating from before 1910.

Another bit of info we got at the museum was that the Camel's Hump Rd. is so named because on a map this deviation from the Clark Fork Valley to avoid a steep cliffy area looks like a camel's hump on the map. *Julia Kahl*

Saturday, October 17, 2015 - The Shard (9,883')



Looking up to the south face route on the Shard. The ledge goes below the sheer cliff at center left. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Earlier this year, Forest Dean had led a spring snow climb up the south face of the Shard, the unofficially named third highest peak in the Bitterroots. I didn't have the technical expertise to accompany him, but desired to eventually attain the top of its airy battlements. As Indian Summer kept going well into October, I finally saw an excellent window for this Saturday - temps in the 70's and no wind. Three Mountaineers accepted my call to scale the Shard before the snows made it the domain of the expert climber once again - Norman Singley (with his mountaineering dog Choteau), Michael Halm, and Lou Herritt.

We pulled into the trailhead at first light, just after 7:30am. Norman drove separately, as he planned to camp that night by the lakes. As we got ready, another vehicle drove up, and a young college-age couple came out - they were also doing the Shard and the exact same route! No pre-planning there, it was pure coincidence. The other party went on ahead, and we would not see them for awhile.



Hart Lake with the Chaffin Peaks beyond - "South Chaffin" (9,485') the pointy peak is considered technical by Mike Hoyt. Photo by Dan Saxton.

It took over 3 hours to walk the 5 miles or so to Hart Lake up lower Chaffin Canyon. The rock buttresses and towers on the canyon's north side were spectacular; I wonder how often they've been climbed. We entered the shade for a while on the north side of Sugarloaf Peak and since it now no longer sees sun, it was much colder (there was frost)!. Just below Hart Lake, the trail doubles back on itself as it crosses Chaffin Creek to the north side; a confusing line of cairns continues on the south side of the creek leading to a rough route up to the lake. We followed that way and it consumed a bit of time trying to find the best route to get to where we needed to be, on the north side of the lake.

The massive bulk of the Shard loomed up to the north, its summit not especially prominent, but thanks to Michael Hoyt's excellent guidebook and Summitpost descriptions, we were armed with precise information as to the ledge route up. It would definitely be a challenging route-finding endeavor without the beta!



The beginning of the ledge. Photo by Dan Saxton.

We climbed straight up from Hart Lake through forest, talus slopes, and small meadows to the main treeline (though smaller trees go quite a ways up the mountain). Our route led us to a prominent grassy patch, which we then traversed left from to reach the ledge that provided the only relatively easy route to the

summit. This “ledge” was more of a broken-up ramp with several small gullies scouring it at intervals, but it continued up at a consistent leftward angle, always to the left of a huge sheer cliff dropping from one of the Shard’s eastern peaks.

At the bottom of the ledge, we met the other party, Ian and Kaitlin, who had taken a wrong turn to the right and now were downclimbing. They joined forces with us and all six of us began the scrambling portion of the climb.



Scrambling up the ledge. Photo by Dan Saxton.

The upper section of the route - stay close to the sheer cliff at right until almost to the notch, then work your way left to the summit. Photo by Dan Saxton.



The ledge was mostly Class 2+ lower down, but steepened to Class 3 up steep slabs with a bit of loose rock - but solid ground was always easy to find.

Mike Hoyt said some people might consider

this section Class 4 due to exposure, but I didn't think it approached that difficulty. There were always plenty of good holds and I never put away my hiking poles. The slabs were divided into two main sections; the top section ended just below the notch separating the true summit (west) from the serrated crest to the east. We went through a bit of route finding

confusion trying to discover the best way to traverse slightly left to reach the summit (it's best to go up the slabs under the cliff until almost to the notch). It is in this section (the upper slabs) that the steepest climbing, moderate Class 3 at easiest, lies.



Dan Saxton on the summit, with El Capitan in the distance. Photo by Norman Singley.



Deep into Terra Incognita: the Mount Paloma-Nipple Knob ridge in Idaho, the most remote place in the Bitterroots. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Progress this whole time was methodical and a bit slow, due to there being 6 of us and a dog, but there were no complaints - the day was so nice! Even up high it was warm and pleasant. At last, at 2pm, all of us attained the narrow summit ridge, no more than 6-7 feet wide with a tremendous drop off to the north, 4,500 feet down to Tin Cup Creek (probably one of the Bitterroots' biggest faces). What a peak! The entire Bitterroot crest soared away to the north in endless granitic waves, with only the head of El Capitan rivaling us. To the south Trapper Peak's black north face, in perpetual shadow, greeted us. A tiny amount of snow clung to north facing slopes above 9,000'. All of wild Idaho soared away to the west, a hundred miles of roadless country. Truly a classic summit and view!

We stayed on top for 45 minutes, relaxing and enjoying this final warm Indian Summer day, before reluctantly heading down.



The Rocky Mountaineers atop the Shard. From left to right: Choteau, Norman Singley, Michael Halm, Dan Saxton, Lou Herritt. Photo taken by Ian Marynowski.

After picking our way through the upper slopes, we lounged on the grassy meadows above Hart Lake for a little while longer before finishing the descent to the valley floor. There we bade farewell to Norm and Choteau and began the long trek out at 5:30pm. Ian and Kaitlin accompanied us the whole way back, and we greatly enjoyed their company.

Night overtook us about 2/3 of the way back, and so we spent the final hour in that immense, dark world faintly illuminated by the small circular glow which is headlamp walking. Truly, one's life shrinks down to a little point during these times! At last, the light reflecting off the vehicles welcomed us back to the trailhead at 8:30pm - 12 1/2 hours of walking, a perfect day, and one of the best climbs of the year. *Dan Saxton*

Sunday, October 25, 2015 - Seeley Lake Larch



Beaver house in Seeley Lake. Photo by Steve Schombel.

Last Sunday's trip up to Seeley Lake turned out really nice. First we went to Big Larch area on the east shore and started to hike the short nature trail. There was a user type trail closer to the lake shore which we chose to follow. We must of gone at least a mile, maybe a mile and a half, before the trail branched off, got brushy, and kind of faded out. All the while we were near the lake with great views, and we never did see a fence or private property signs. There must be some, probably not too far from where we turned around. Then we ate and went over to the west shore and parked in the lot for the biggest larch in the area, named Gus. Here is where there are several ways to hike. We headed north on the main trail which, hopefully, someday may be a loop all around the lake. I got confused at the first junction with no sign, so we went into the Seth Diamond Grove area before we found a trail back to the road and the Seeley Lake Campground. This is my personal favorite area, with several places along the lake shore. You can see several peaks: Morrell, Devine, Pyramid, Fisher, Ptarmigan, and others with less familiar names. And, of course, there were golden larch all around. The special thing was that there was no wind, and no motorboats. Only some ducks rippled

the surface of the mirror-like water. Personally, I can't remember being up there in the fall when the lake was so smooth and there were such pretty reflections in the water. Only Julie K. and Lois C. joined me, but it was opening day so a lot of the guys were probably out hunting. *Steve Schombel*



The Swan Range across Seeley Lake. Photo by Steve Schombel.

UPCOMING TRIPS AND ADVENTURES

Trip Notes:

Please contact the trip leader for more information regarding any listed trips. Mileage listed is round trip mileage. Elevation listed is gain only. For information on Class Rating see below:

Class Rating System:

CLASS 1 – HIKING Mostly on trails, but may also include some easy cross country travel.

CLASS 2 – EASY SCRAMBLING Rugged off trail hiking, no hands required.

CLASS 3 – SCRAMBLING Use of hands to ascend some sections of rock. Little to no exposure; a fall would not likely cause serious injury.

CLASS 4 – CLIMBING Easy climbing, great exposure; a fall would quite possibly cause serious injury. Use of a rope and protection at times possible.

CLASS 5 – TECHNICAL CLIMBING Use of rope, protection and belay are a must.

CLASS 6 – AID CLIMBING Use of equipment to support your weight as you climb.

Sunday, November 29, 2015 - LOLO PASS

There is almost always something we can do on snow on the Sunday after Thanksgiving at Lolo Pass - conditions at the time will determine what.

Leader: Julia Kahl - jawkal@rockymountaineers.com



Grave Peak in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness in Idaho; a wonderful climb from Tom Beal Park along its north ridge. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Looking ahead.....

The Rocky Mountaineers will **meet at the Trail Head**, 221 E. Front St., Missoula, at **7pm on Tuesday, November 10, 2015**. They will host the following presentation:

Ian Magruder is an avid skier from Missoula, MT. In his on-time he's a crack-pot scientist - a geologist who keeps track of rocks and water. In his off-time, he has always headed for the hills. Winters spent in the Alps and Canada exposed him to the culture of ski mountaineering and long-distance ski traverses. His trips in Montana have included extended ski traverses of the Bitterroots, Beartooths, Beaverheads, Missions, Glacier, and an epic ski from Ovando to Waterton, Alberta. Most of all, he has been trying to learn respect for the hazards of the mountains, safe traveling, and the limits of his own risk acceptance. He has produced two videos of his travels. He will discuss details of a Wind River trip and show its 20-minute video, then do an overview of run-ins with grizzlies and end with a 4-minute Glacier video. For a preview, see <https://youtu.be/0JFzyLppQqQ>.



Rocky Mountaineers' Meeting Minutes, 10/13/2015

I. Call To Order: 6:10, MacKenzie River Pizza

II. Attendees: Steve Schombel, Alden Wright, Lois Crepeau, Julie Kahl, Dan Saxton

III. Treasurer's Report: \$938.28, Couldn't put Steve Schombel on as signer as both Steve Niday and Joshua Phillips need to be there.

IV. Discussions:

A. New Meeting Place: business meetings at MacKenzie River Pizza.

B. Speakers

1. Ian McGruder in Nov. Avalanche program in Dec. or Jan.

2. Should we pay for gas for speakers from out of town? Unanimous yes, \$50 for more than 100 miles, who arranged the speaker will deal with reimbursement.

3. Future

a. Marc Ankenbauer who jumped in every lake in Glacier, Julie gave Steve S. email for him.

b. Forest Dean knows Steve Gnam who just hiked from the Rattlesnake to Banff, he will try to get in touch with him.

c. Alden knows someone (Norman Singley) who bicycled the State Line Trail from near Lookout Pass towards Lolo Pass.

d. Lois saw someone online who did the crest of the Bitterroots - couldn't refind the reference later.

C. Facebook: Alden deleted the Facebook page, but we still have the Facebook group page.

D. Someone should add in family memberships to get a correct membership count.

E. Trips: Dan - the Shard this coming weekend. Steve - Seeley Lake, 10/25. Julie - Lolo Pass, 11/29

V. Adjourn 6:42 PM

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Membership Fee: \$10.00

Note: Membership includes all members of a family or household.

Make checks payable to 'The Rocky Mountaineers' and send to: The Rocky Mountaineers, PO Box 4262, Missoula, MT 59806

Name: _____

Additional Family Members' Names:

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone (optional): _____

Email: _____

Additional Email (optional):

Joining or maintaining your Rocky Mountaineers membership has never been easier!

PayPal is now available on the Rocky Mountaineers website. Click on the membership link on the main page.