

Norbeck Society July 2022 Newsletter

Dear Norbeck Society members and friends

There is a lot of information to share with you this month!

Nominations for Norbeck Society steering committee officers are solicited – positions available are President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Elections are coming up at the September meeting. Please email me with your nomination or you can volunteer yourself.

Calendar: Membership Outings, Programs, Projects, and Volunteering:

- **July 7, 8, and 9: The Flutter Production performance of “ROOTS”** has been sponsored in part by the Norbeck Society. What happens when we disconnect from the natural world? ROOTS explores the symbiotic relationship between the seen and unseen networks of the forest and human beings. This all-ability piece of dance theatre follows two sisters seeking respite from a tumultuous world. They venture into the forest where they learn how to connect to the natural world from the diverse flora and fauna they meet along the way.
 - Join us on July 7, 8, and 9 at 7:30 PM in the Studio Theater at the Performing Arts Center of Rapid City. For tickets call: 605.394.1786 or visit [Current Productions \(flutterproductions.com\)](http://flutterproductions.com)
- **July 16 (Saturday): Hike in the Ice Cave area – Leader: Jane Roseland**
 - **What:** The Ice Cave by Botany Canyon
 - **Where and When:** Travel northwest out of Rapid City on Nemo Road. Take a right onto Rolling Hills Road and travel about 3/10 mile to the grassy parking lot on the right. This is where **we will meet at 6:45AM** to carpool to travel ~6 miles of gravel and dirt roads. High clearance vehicles are a must: SUVs, pickups or crossovers, but no sedans. Be ready to leave the grassy parking lot in your vehicle by 7:00 AM.
 - **Pertinent info:** Bring poles, lunch, a rain jacket just in case and plan for a 5-6 hours day, of which 3-4 hours will be hiking. The hike is rated moderate to strenuous, and involves 800 feet of uphill elevation change over the six miles hike. There will be a Norbeck waiver that participants will need to sign.
 - **Extra Information:**
 - The Ice Cave is its official name on the National Geographic Map of the Northern Black Hills. Before refrigeration, locals probably did access the cave for ice, formed by dripping water in the cave. It looks like a cave, but its roof has collapsed into a crater. The crater and the new mouth of the cave is accessible to hikers. The cave was popular with local spelunkers, but the U.S. Forest Service closed noncommercial Black Hills caves in 2010 to protect bats from the deadly white-nose syndrome. You may wish to bring a headlamp if you wish to travel as far as the gated mouth of the cave.
 - We will take the same trail down to reach the southern end of Botany Canyon, where the springs are, but at the bottom, rather than go right to Botany Canyon, we will hang a left onto a dry creek bed. The dry creek bed is a route for ATV-ers to reach Botany Canyon, although they are prevented from actually driving into Botany Canyon. As dry creek beds go, it's not horrible hiking, as a lot of the rocks are embedded from ATV travel, and at times, the creek bed resembles a cobble stone street. The dry creek bed is a slight steady uphill to the closed forest service gate that guards the Ice Cave. So the hike will be slightly faster on the way out, except for that last final hill back to the cars.
 - Please notify us of your intent to attend by emailing info@norbeckssociety.com

- **August 6: Field trip - Precious streams, springs and seeps in the dry prairie and savanna of Wind Cave National Park.**

Norbeck Society steering committee initiated a conversation with Wind Cave NP leadership last winter focused on gathering information about management of surface water resources (streams, springs, seeps) in the park. Wetlands make up less than 1% of the area of Wind Cave NP yet are critical to the persistence of all park life, from animals to plants. After learning that Wind Cave NP doesn't have any written strategy for managing its surface water, we requested a park staff person working in natural resources to lead Norbeck Society members on a field trip this summer to look at some of the water resources and learn how conditions are monitored and evaluated. Also, we're interested in what management options will be considered and implemented as water inputs to the park are reduced in times of water stress (expected to increase with climate change).

Wind Cave NP responded that they are not able to provide a field trip leader. However, the park's Chief of Natural Resources has agreed to speak to Norbeck Society members on topics of resource management (including surface water) in a Norbeck Society public meeting next fall. Norbeck Society leadership feels that we can get the most out of this educational experience if we have some pictures fresh in our minds - and in digital format - to share at the fall meeting. Please join us for a field trip on August 6 in Wind Cave NP for a tour of wetlands. Field trip will be led by Beth Burkhart, Botanist trained and experienced in implementing the BLM/Forest Service Multiple Indicator Monitoring Protocol to evaluate wetland condition. She has worked on a diversity of wetlands on public lands throughout the Black Hills.

August 6 will likely be hot and this is the beginning days of Sturgis Rally week. We will start the trip as early in the day as helpful to avoid the highest heat. But once you get there, Wind Cave NP is a great place to escape the noise and traffic of a Rally day! Stay tuned to next month's Norbeck Society newsletter for final details. Tentative plan is to meet at Wind Cave NP Visitor Center parking lot at 8am on Aug 6 and car caravan or carpool from there.

If you have questions in the meantime, please email Beth at burkhartbeth1227@gmail.com.

Issues and Sharing:

- **Forest Planning:** FYI – Norbeck Society steering committee members are reviewing assessments and preparing comments due by July 31. Feel free to access the digital version of the planning document here [Black Hills National Forest - Planning \(usda.gov\)](#) There is no hard copy available
- **Travel Management on BHNF: Members of the Norbeck Society Steering Committee met with Superintendent Jeff Tomac of the Black Hills National Forest along with Bradley Block and Ralph Adams of the Forest Service** to discuss **motorized trails** and **OHV** use, and possible solutions to problems and abuse, in the Black Hills. Those present for Norbeck Society were Mary Zimmerman, Gerry Renner, and Kate and Doug Shreves. In preparation for the meeting the Norbeck Society offered a list of ten possible solutions for potential improvements. **(See attached June 2022 document below)**

We discussed the carrying capacity of the backcountry roads of the Black Hills region - that is, "When is enough, enough? - The traffic is overwhelming!" Control of the numbers on the roads is the jurisdiction of the state through vehicle licensing, not the Forest Service. How do you limit the number of state license tags, including from other states?

The meeting was a good exchange of ideas, questions and explanations. The limitations on the Forest Service were outlined through discussion. It seemed clear that they are, as Superintendent Tomac pointed out, "Doing what we can do."

Some thirty-six thousand motorized trail permits were issued by the Forest Service. All these permits really control is access to the Forest Service Motorized Trail System - these are the roads with the trail four-digit number – usually beginning with a six, such as "TR 6642" - on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) and a brown, vertical, plastic sign on the trails. Meanwhile any vehicle with a state license tag can drive the main Forest Service Roads (FSR), usually brown signs with three or less digits and written horizontally. All errant traffic abuse –

excessive dust, loud noise, large groups, drivers without licenses, etc. – can only be remedied by local law enforcement jurisdiction.

There are about 2900 miles of Forest Service roads, 702 miles of motorized trails and 21 Trailheads. In spite of official Trailheads, the majority of access to the narrow, rugged Forest Service trails is via the graveled and maintained forest service roads and paved highways –most recreational users use these roads for access to the Forest Service trails. Approximately 80% of the complaints that the Forest Service receives deal with these graveled and paved roads where, again, if the vehicle has a state license tag, it is as legal as our family vehicles. The remedy is in the hands of the state legislatures, county commissioners and the governor.

The Forest Service is severely limited. For enforcement on the OHV trails, more personnel have been added to the Forest Service staff to help alleviate abuses such as mudboggging, driving while intoxicated, and going off-trail from the designated trail system. There are currently 3 ½ Federal Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) and about 9 Trail Rangers charged with tending to the motorized trail system.

Brad, a Recreation Program Manager, described current efforts were for development of community information through social media and the internet. This would be easily accessed and give general information similar to the protocol of “Tread-lightly”.

Suggestions for a “TIP-line” such as that the GF&P has for wildlife poachers will not be developed to report offenders of proper trail usage in the backcountry. **Instead, the Forest Service suggests that observers of abuse call “911.”**

The Forest Service is striving to make certain that there is a “**collective understanding**” - that all those who have interest in recreation in the Black Hills, no matter what the form of enjoyment, should attempt to understand the complexities of balancing OHV use with other outdoor recreation and multiple values of the Forest.

The efforts of the Forest Service have brought about clearer, mutual understanding and the Norbeck Society appreciates Supervisor Tomac and his staff for their input.

Don't forget to sign up for the field trips. Happy July 4th!

Best wishes
Colin Paterson
Norbeck Society Communications



The Black Hills National Forest & Motorized recreation

The Norbeck Society

June 2022

The Norbeck Society has a long history of involvement with the motorized trail system; pre-2005, we had apprehensions that we still have today. As advocates for stewardship, restoration, and enjoyment of public lands, we are concerned about the amount of damage done by abusive motorized vehicle use to trail systems and beyond. Recent exponential growth of this activity on the Black Hills National Forest is a grave concern.

Use is concentrated around urban interface areas and areas that are easy to reach by road. Communities continue to grow. We expect human impacts of every sort to increase and intensify. Increases in OHV use follows residential development along I-90 corridor and other areas too. Differences in social, economic, and cultural values have become more of an issue.

Solitude is more difficult to find. **We think hikers and other non-motorized users should have a Centennial Trail and other trails and areas that are free of motor traffic. People should have an easy time finding places for solitude on the forest. Wildlife and human residents should not bear an unreasonable burden of disturbance because of OHV use on the Black Hills National Forest.**

The Norbeck Society believes that beyond finding and pointing out abuses to our National Forest lands that we should also offer possible solutions to the problems. To that end, we offer these ten points of potential improvement:

- 1. Carrying Capacity:** Limits need to be placed. In reality, at times there are just too many people using OHVs in the Black Hills that in aggregate contribute to overall road and trail congestion, impacts to wildlife and other resources, residents, and trail conditions. Forest Service must consider use limitation. The issues of over-use will not go away. A comprehensive use plan, with use limitations is the first step to a real plan for the future, not merely addressing symptoms of over-use.
- 2. Forest Service, as the regulatory agency, needs to lead the conversation, not motorized users or industry.**
- 3. Do not open the door to wider machines and trails.**
- 4. Do not open the door to more trails.**
- 5. Eliminate dead-end trails and roads from the system.**

6. **Be proactive and close trails when conditions are wet. Close damaged trails.**
7. **Educate, educate, educate:** It is our belief that communication is one of the keys to managing the motorized trail system successfully. Users must understand the rules, the reasons for them, and consequences of not following them.
 - Provide Brochures outlining the rules** to users of the motorized trail system. This information should include Tread Lightly and Leave No Trace concepts. Additional suggestions for users:
 - Think ahead. Move from “unintended consequences” to “Intentional attentive actions.” For example, prepare for other users and be ready to yield.
 - Move from Misuse to Multiple Use. This is not your personal racetrack.
 - Show respect for the rules of the Black Hills National Forest. Be good or begone. Be part of the solution, not the problem.
 - Users should be encouraged to save the brochure for future reference and sharing with their friends, and they need to be required to sign a statement acknowledging receipt of the provided information and their willingness to comply.
8. **Partner with local businesses and visitor centers:**
 - to partner in educating users (as above)
 - to do something like “Adopt-A-Trail”
 - to handle more details at Point of Permit Sale: More information must be gathered at outlets selling trail permits including name, address, phone, email, driver’s license. Operator expectations outlined in the brochure need to be emphasized and acknowledged by signature.
9. **Enforce, enforce, enforce:**
 - More enforcement staff.
 - LEOs and Trail Rangers must continue to provide stringent enforcement. A more rigorous issuance of fines is appropriate at this point.
 - Formulate a TIPS-like program. Encourage and make it easy for users and public to report on damaged and dangerous trail conditions, illegal actions of other users, and anything else related to trail use or negative impacts of trails on the environment.
 - Coordinate and share information with local police and sheriff.
10. **Fees must be increased to have adequate funding for all aspects of trail management, and perhaps a recreation use permit could be added to all ATV/OHV/dirtbike passes that will go back to BHNF directly for FS road and trail repairs, signage, and LEOs and trail rangers. Compare the current trail permit fee with what people pay for fishing, for example:**
 - SD non-resident fishing: \$67 per year
 - SD resident fishing: 8/day, 37/3 day, 28 annual,

- Montana annual non-resident fishing \$100 + 7 angler aquatic species prevention pass + 10 conservation fee = \$117.

From the original Travel Management Decision: the Black Hills National Forest trail system is legally classified as an “Active” system. *This means the forest service must manage it according to the incoming funds and administrative capability.* If Forest Service is unable to maintain the trails (the size of the system/miles of trails) of the system with the administrative and monetary assets at hand, the system is supposed to be reduced. Costs should be reflected in increases in licensing fees and fines. There should be a solid plan for trail monitoring and maintenance/repairs and the trail system must match this plan.

In conclusion, the Norbeck Society supports the Forest Service work to solve problems connected to motorized use on the forest. The recent increase in discussion, effort, and enforcement will help bring users into compliance with the rules, but here we have outlined the aspects that we deem most critical for successful outcomes. Restoration of damaged areas, and ongoing monitoring and maintenance will bring more enjoyment of the forest resource for all users.

As always, we appreciate the opportunity to participate in the management of the Black Hills National Forest. However, in spite of the efforts of the Norbeck Society for the past 17 years (since 2005), there is still a lot of work to be done.

The Norbeck Society