

Hello Everyone,

For a change, we want to share some good news. It doesn't seem possible. And at the end of this is a chance to voice your opinion on a name change for Harney Peak.

1. The North American Indigenous Peoples Caucus (NAIPC) meeting that was hosted by Defenders was said to be the best one they ever had. We are very pleased to have been able to make their work here as easy as possible. As soon as their report is ready, we will let you know. Their report will include the recommendations they will make to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as well as other places in the UN. If anyone wants a copy, please let me know.

2. The Bear Butte by-pass road referendum to impose a special tax on the people of Meade County was defeated. As the road would not be funded by federal or state money, the Meade County Commissioners wanted a special tax on the people of Meade County. It failed. So, it is back to the drawing board for the Meade County Commissioners. The traffic jam in Sturgis during the Bike Rally in August was the reason for wanting to build a new road.

3. The Bear Butte Forum, according to the Department of Game, Fish and Parks, "is scheduled for Saturday, May 2, 2015, from 8:30 a.m. to noon MST. The Forum will meet at the Sturgis Community Center located at 1401 Lazelle St. in Sturgis, SD." This is a chance to hear an update on what is happening at this sacred place, and to give your ideas for improvements, or comments on problems. The meeting is open to the public.

Discussion items include: land sales around the mountain; environmental concerns about plastic cups, plates, bags, etc. in the campground; overcrowding in the Ceremonial Campground in June and July; and-or other concerns.

4. The Abandoned Uranium Mines Federal Bill after many rewritings is once again in the hands of the staff of Congressman Raul Grijalva, D-AZ, hopefully to be introduced this session of Congress. Of course, there might be more changes, but if you wish a copy of the current draft, please let me know. We also have a flyer prepared by the Clean Up the Mines campaign as this Bill addresses ALL 15,000 plus Abandoned Uranium Mines and Prospects in the U.S., if you wish a copy. Or go to www.cleanuptheminesthings.org for more info.

5. A Wopila Prayer Gathering will be held June 12th, beginning at 9:00 a.m. to give thanks for the clean-up of the Riley Pass abandoned Uranium mine. Take a left on the first gravel road about a mile-and-a-half past Ludlow, SD, on SD Highway #85, then proceed about 5 miles on the gravel road taking lefts only.

We have been having Prayer Gatherings there for more than 10 years at a sacred site praying for the clean-up of the 103 abandoned Uranium mines in that area. Now, the Riley Pass mine is scheduled to be cleaned up. A picnic brunch will follow the Prayer Gathering at the Reva Gap Picnic Site on SD Highway #20 between Buffalo and Reva.

6. An Environmental Campout will also be held at that same time at the Slim Buttes - Reva Gap Campground on Hwy 20 in one of the most beautiful wild settings in North America. Board member, Harold One Feather, will coordinate the Campout from June 10 -16. No camping fees. First come, first served. Bring your own equipment, and especially water.

See where the Keystone XL Pipeline plans on entering South Dakota near there, and also learn about Tribal Cultural and Historic Sites on that route. On June 12th, the U.S. Forest Service will present the details of the clean up at the Riley Pass mine followed by a discussion of other concerns. June 13th will be a tour of the Bowman Haley and Shade Hills Reservoirs which are downstream from the mines. Other tours are on the agenda.

7. “Report: Beetles don’t make forests burn” was the headlines in the Rapid City Journal on March 25, 2015. I was dancing around my living room. For years, before Defenders was established, many of us were arguing against the logging in the Black Hills. The U.S. Forest Service said they had to log to stop the Beetles under the guise that the beetles caused forest fires. The USFS even broke Wilderness and Roadless laws to allow logging...to today. We submitted our comments as often as possible, to no avail. Now, studies are showing that we were right! The Pine Bark Beetles do not make the forests burn! They only help to make the forests healthier by taking out sick trees.

Brian Brademeyer, our Treasurer, Jake Krelick and Jeremy Nichols, also former Defenders' founders and Board members, and Jeff Kessler, Attorney from Biodiversity Conservation Alliance were in the lead to protect the Black Hills National Forest, especially the Wilderness and Roadless areas at that time. I was a newspaper columnist writing about it. When former Sen. Daschle introduced the rider that opened the entire Black Hills to logging, that was when we met to begin discussing forming a group with Native and non-Native members. We are planning a celebration for September on Defenders' 13th Anniversary. Hope you can join us in the Celebration!!

8. Harney Peak Name Change. The SD Board on Geographic Names (SDBGN) is seeking public comments on changing the name of Harney Peak, the highest point in the Black Hills. They have mentioned changing it to Black Elk Peak as the Black Elk Wilderness is just below. For those of you who don't know about any of this, there is a book called “Black Elk Speaks” which tells more about why Black Elk is considered so prominently on this site.

However, in the Tituwan Oceti Sakowin (Lakota Sioux) culture, mountains were not named after people. So we are including other names for that site so our members, and others, will have a choice. They are:

Paha Hinhan Kaga - common traditional name, means “great owl place” or “owl making place” in Lakota grammatical form.

Opahata 'I - sacred traditional name, means “the center of all.”

Paha Hehaka Sapa - means “Black Elk Mountain” in Lakota grammatical form.

Black Elk Peak - which is what the SDBGN is considering.

Now our members have a choice. Written comments may be sent to:

SDBGN, Dept. of Tribal Relations, 302 East Dakota, Pierre, SD 57501

Or, Email: David.Reiss@state.sd.us

Or, FAX: 605 - 773 - 6592

Your comments must include your name, title if representing an organization, Mailing address, Telephone number, and Email address if you have one. Also, if you do recommend a name other than Black Elk Peak, you must include a reason for the name, and the origin or meaning of the name.

Hope to see you at one of the upcoming events. A calendar of events is at the end of this newsletter,

Submitted by Charmaine White Face (Zumila Wobaga), Coordinator

Schedule of Events:

Saturday, April 25, 2015 - Sioux Nation Treaty Council Meeting
Mother Butler Center Hall, 221 Knollwood Dr., Rapid City, SD

Saturday, May 2, 2015 - Bear Butte Forum
1401 Lazelle St., Sturgis, SD.

Friday, June 12, 2015 - Wopila Prayer Gathering - 9:00 AM
East side of Riley Pass Abandoned Uranium Mine
First gravel road North of Ludlow, SD, on Hwy 85
Followed by Picnic and Meeting at Reva Gap Picnic Grounds
SD Hwy 20 between Buffalo and Reva, SD

June 10 - 16, 2015 - Slim Buttes Environmental Campout
Reva Gap Campground
SD Hwy 20 between Buffalo and Reva, SD