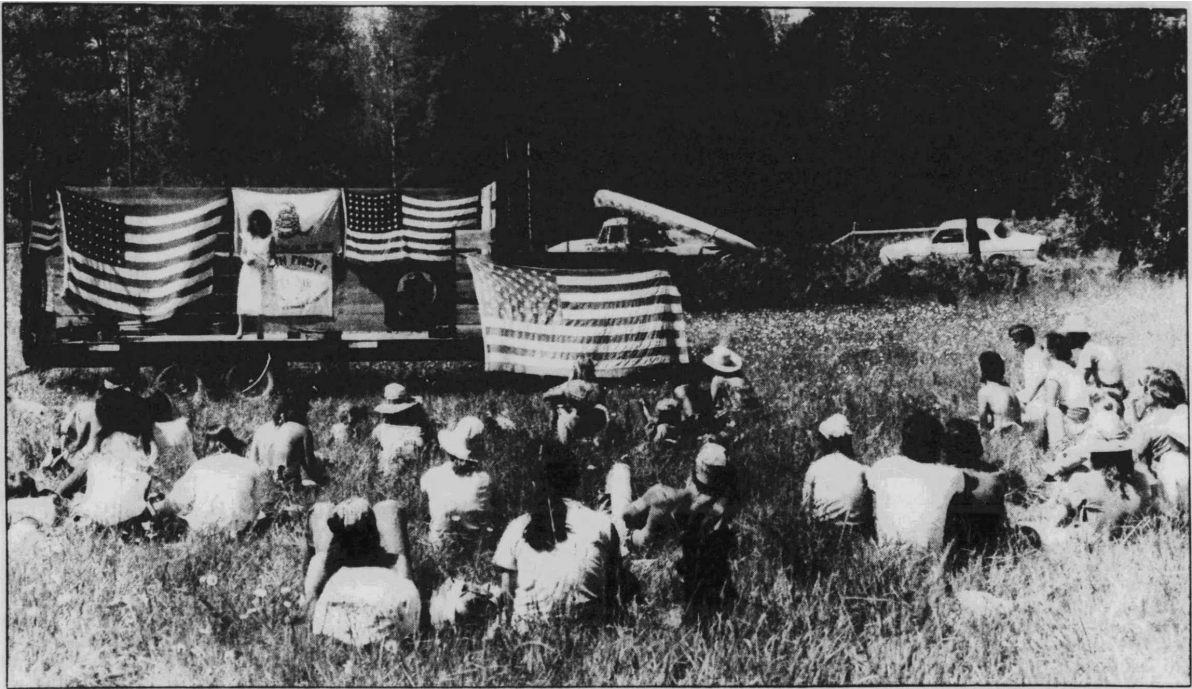


Earth First! opposes Asarco mine

July 12, 1984



ATTENDANCE at the Earth First! Round River Rendezvous last week totaled around 100 with most of the environmentalists coming from other states. Group is making plans to oppose the development of the Rock Creek Mine by Asarco.

(Ledger photo)

"You can take your bulldozers from under our noses.
We're not as gutless as the sawmill supposes.
Hands off our greenery, take home your machinery.
Take your bulldozers away."

The above and other similar sentiments were voiced loudly, strongly and often about ASARCO's proposed Rock Creek copper and silver mine, threats to grizzly bears, various western logging operations, and the need for civil disobedience at the fifth annual Round River Rendezvous Saturday at Heron.

Sponsored by Earth First! whom Mike Cimola, former president of the Montana Wilderness Association, said "is the only effective environmental organization in operation today," the gathering drew more than 90 people. License plates were counted from Utah, New Mexico, Texas, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and most western Montana counties.

Gary Steele, spokesman for Earth First! told the LEDGER Sunday evening that "at this time we are waiting for further word from our coordinator before a definite plan of opposition to ASARCO's Rock Creek project) is decided upon." However, he added he is "reason ably sure that some course of action will be taken."

The meeting place was an open hay field on Cesar Hernandez land 5 miles southwest of Heron. Speakers presented their views from a hay wagon decorated with American and Earth First! flags.

Hernandez, a democratic primary candidate for county commissioner this year, welcomed the group by saying, "foregoing the 375 jobs created by ASARCO's Rock Creek project will be difficult for people to accept," but that trading wilderness for jobs was unacceptable.

The future of grizzly bear populations in the Northern Rocky Mountain ecosystem (including the Cabinet Wilderness) was addressed by Lance Olson of Missoula, president of the Great Bear Foundation. Olson said one hopeful sign is that the National Park Service has agreed to close the Fishing Bridge area in Yellowstone Park.

Madison Gallatin Lions president Rick Meis termed the wilderness bill (in which only 747,178 acres were designated for true wilderness) proposed by Montana's four member congressional delegation a catastrophe economically as well as wilderness wise." He said, "it is nonsense that wilderness costs people money."

Comola posed the rhetorical question, "How do you stop that mine (Rock Creek)?" and then answered by saying, "it takes time, money, commitment and a hell of a good lawyer."

Comola, president of Northwest Citizens for Wilderness Mining Company and formerly of Noxon, said he stopped mining development in wilderness adjacent to ASARCO's Troy mine by working within the system.

He formed a mining company complete with board of directors and filed 2000 acres of mining claims which the company sat on. He said Chevron, ASARCO, and Far West Exploratory Company of Denver offered "\$3,000,000" for the claims which was turned down.

Environmental advocates began gathering Thursday night, and many camped near the site. Leaders postponed Friday to decide on Saturday's program.

Dinners were served Saturday and musical entertainment was provided by Cecilia Ostrow, a singer-environmentalist from Oregon, who also described procedures used in a blockade against logging in Oregon's Middle Santiam River drainage.

Dave Foreman, one of three co-founders of Earth First! and former chief lobbyist for the Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C., said the gathering was to bring serious environmentalists together to share information about issues in their states and to learn about "direct action" techniques like blockades.

Both Foreman and Ostrow were arrested for disorderly conduct for blockading a road to protest logging in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area near Grants Pass, Ore. last year.

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