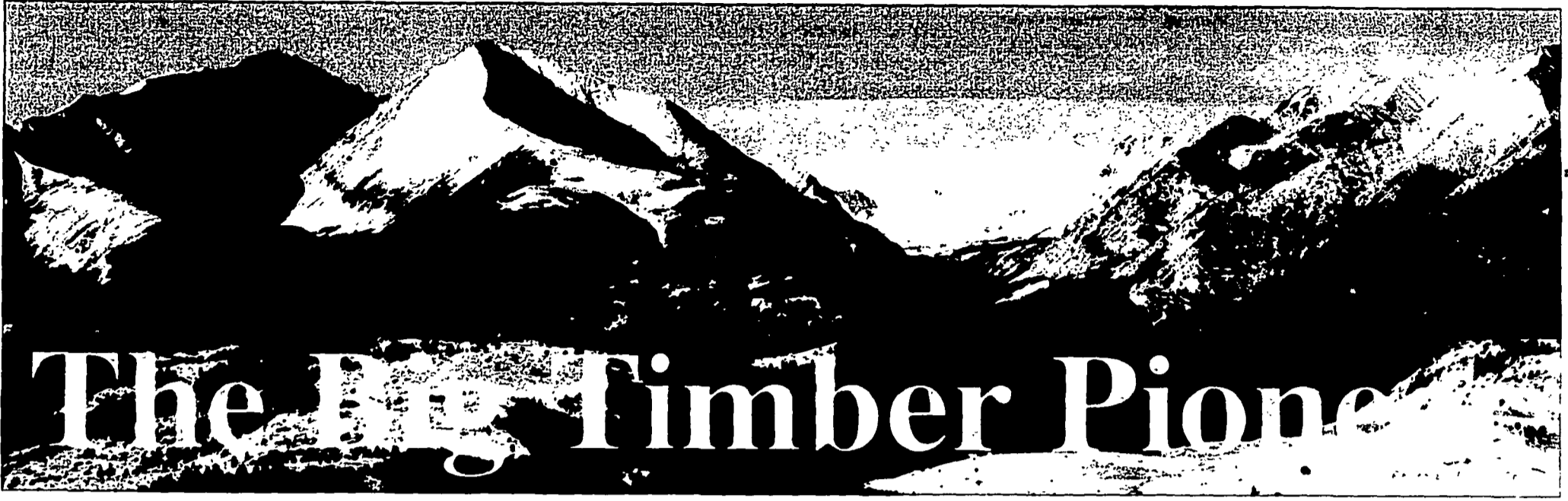


# INSIDE HOW DID WE EVER SURVIVE?



Serving Big Timber & Sweet Grass County, Montana Vol. 115, No. 7 - December 12-18, 2003 **75¢**

## Food Bank donations appreciated

For the second year in a row the Timber Bar is participating in a food drive for the Big Timber Food Bank.

According to Jo Ann Fuller, the second year has definitely been slower than the first.

Fuller stated December 9 donations have been slow so far and very disappointing.

"Last year," stated Fuller, "we started with the drive on December 1 and it seemed like every day people were bringing in bags of food. This just seems to be a different kind of season."

Although the drive is scheduled to continue until the end of the year, a conversation with Tana Parisi of the Big Timber Food Bank has Fuller considering changing the dates for the drive next year from the last two months of the year to January, February, and March.

Parisi stated this week donations are usually pretty steady during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons; the real problem the food bank runs into comes in the first three months of the new year.

She also said the food bank has been hit harder in November and December this year, although food donations from the churches have remained constant and allowed the needs to be met.

The Big Timber Grade School has also been participating in food drives for the bank for the last five years and took their latest donation to Parisi this week.

Parisi added monetary donations have decreased generally and some who usually can be counted on to contribute have not this year.

This makes a recent donation by the Town Pump Charitable Foundation especially welcome, she stated.

Just what is causing the slowdown in donations has Fuller somewhat confused.

"I don't know what the problem is this year," observed Fuller. "News reports say people are out spending, but I don't see it."



Snow blankets the earth with a winter calm in this picture taken up the Boulder Road at Four Mile; a welcome change as the hustle and bustle of the holiday season seems to overtake us. (Photo by Dale Oberly)

## Hobble Fire costs SG County \$53,000

Reminders of the Hobble Fire that swept the eastern part of Sweet Grass County during August of last year will be with us for a long time.

While it will be spring before new grass comes in and covers some of the damage, at least some of the monetary costs of the long siege have been settled for the county government.

When asked about the cost of the fire, Sweet Grass County Sherry Bjorndal, Sweet Grass County Clerk and Recorder, explained this week the first two days of the fire, August

8 and 9, fall under the day to day operational outlays of the local government.

It was on August 10, when the fire exploded and the fight was joined by the Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) and its Northern Rockies Incident Management Team, that the expenses were viewed differently and the tabulation begun of costs that would ultimately reach \$212,464.80.

According to documents submitted by the county to the Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) the \$212,464.80 was expended for the services of four volunteer fire departments, the Sweet Grass County Sheriff's Department, Sweet Grass Road and Bridge Department, and ambulance service.

Although the last document released by the Incident Management Team, dated August 23, lists the price to date to fight the fire as \$3,000,000 Bjorndal stated this figure was an estimate of costs that the State, DNRC, FEMA, and county had incurred to that point.

Of this figure, the county is only responsible for the first two days of the fire plus any assistance they provided during the time that FEMA was in charge, and some expenses after the fire was contained and turned back over to the county, according to documentation supplied by Bjorndal.

In this article, only the \$212,464.80 amount the county was responsible for will be addressed.

Volunteer firemen and law

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