

**Nominee:** Polebridge Mercantile

**Award:** Gateway Community

**Statement of Nomination:**

Glacier National Park (GNP) received a record 2.3 million visitors in 2015 and a growing percentage of those visitors are heading to the remote western region of the park. Much of that visitation can be attributed to the community of Polebridge, and its epicenter the Polebridge Mercantile. New owner Will Hammerquist is breathing new life into the gateway community through his efforts at “the merc” while preserving important history and character.

A visible and audible change is the installment of 35 kilowatts of solar panels which have greatly reduced the need for the diesel generator. Hammerquist leveraged the resources of the federal Renewable Energy Assistance Program to keep costs from rolling onto local and seasonal customers. He also spearheads an effort with National Parks Conservation Association and Glacier Institute on an interpretive nature trail on mercantile property which informs visitors of the history, habitat, and features of the region.

When fires closed much of the park in 2015, visitors were welcomed to Polebridge with upgraded signage, renovated historic cabins, and comfortable amenities. Hammerquist has submitted a grant application to the State to install a public bathroom facility in the summer of 2016 to help accommodate the increase in visitation. The mercantile has expanded operations with a permanent location in downtown Whitefish and a weekly presence at the Whitefish farmer’s market, driving customers up GNP’s western boundary. With all of the efforts of the Polebridge Mercantile and its surrounding community, GNP might be in store for its third straight record visitation.

**Website or relevant link:** <http://polebridgmerc.com/>

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[http://www.dailyinterlake.com/members/bakery-winery-win-state-ag-grants/article\\_42945346-c48f-11e4-a1da-231631279c4f.html](http://www.dailyinterlake.com/members/bakery-winery-win-state-ag-grants/article_42945346-c48f-11e4-a1da-231631279c4f.html)

**Website or relevant link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yj-EKRwmyDU>

