

The logo for Blackfoot Challenge features the words "BLACKFOOT" and "CHALLENGE" in a bold, italicized, black sans-serif font. The text is set against a blue, stylized banner that has a jagged, lightning-bolt-like edge on the right side. The banner is positioned behind the text, creating a sense of motion and energy.

BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE

2012 Annual Report

The background of the report cover is a photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are rolling hills covered in dry, golden-brown grass. A simple wire fence with wooden posts runs across the lower part of the frame. In the middle ground, there are several dark green evergreen trees scattered across the hills. The background is dominated by large, rounded mountains covered in a dense forest of evergreen trees. The sky is a clear, pale blue with some light, wispy clouds. The overall lighting is warm and golden, suggesting a late afternoon or early morning setting.

*Better Rural Communities through
Cooperative Conservation*

Community-based Conservation

The Blackfoot Challenge is a private non-profit organization with the mission to coordinate efforts that conserve and enhance the natural resources and rural way of life in the Blackfoot Watershed for present and future generations.

By leading with an inclusive, collaborative and community-driven approach, the Blackfoot Challenge builds lasting partnerships between the watershed's diverse public and private stakeholders. As this model continues to prove successful over the years, the list of positive conservation outcomes and satisfied partners continues to grow.

Join us in reflecting on 2012's achievements; we look forward to your continued partnership to achieve even more in 2013.

Inside

Our Process	1
Growing Partnerships	2
2012 Outcomes:	
Conservation	3
Restoration	4
Stewardship	6
Education & Outreach	7
Donors	8
2012 Financials	9

Process

The Blackfoot Challenge is directed through a variety of committees and supporting work groups. Composed of community members, their voluntary efforts help identify community and resource concerns to which the Challenge can respond. These committees have and continue to evolve along with the needs of the watershed.

The Blackfoot Challenge is currently accepting nominations for Board and committee members. To learn more and to submit nominations, please visit www.blackfootchallenge.org.

Committees



WATER

Balancing water needs and availability through shared sacrifice and water conservation

WILDLIFE

Reducing human-wildlife conflict using preventative and proactive abatement strategies



WEEDS

A holistic approach to controlling invasive and noxious weeds

Reaching all ages through place-based education



EDUCATION



CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

Keeping working landscapes intact by coordinating land conservation and stewardship

Working to make forests healthier and communities safer from wildfire



FORESTRY



EXECUTIVE & OUTREACH

Generating participation, sharing information, and transferring lessons learned

Committee photos credits, top to bottom: Laura Verhaeghe, Brad Weltzien, Kenneth Cook, Nancy Schwalm, Brad Weltzien, Peter Kolb, Sara Schmidt

BOARD

EXECUTIVE

Jim Stone Rolling Stone Ranch, Ovando Chair, Weeds Chair

Greg Neudecker US FWS Vice-Chair, Conservation Strategies Chair, Wildlife Chair

Denny Iverson Iverson Ranch, Potomac Treasurer, Forestry Chair

Amber Kamps* USFS, Lincoln, Secretary

David Mannix Mannix Brothers Ranch, Helmville Water Resources Chair

DIRECTORS

Brent Anderson Lincoln Landowner

Patrick Bannister Potomac Landowner

Patti Bartlett Seeley Lake Elementary, Education Chair

Caroline Byrd The Nature Conservancy

Craig Engelhard* Natural Resources and Conservation Service

Andy Erickson E Bar L Guest Ranch, Greenough

Racene Friede Ovando Landowner

Todd Johnson Pyramid Mtn. Lumber, Seeley Lake

Tony Liane MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Mack Long MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Tim Love* US Forest Service, Seeley Lake

Jeff McNally Ovando Landowner

Joel Nelson Plum Creek Timber Company, Seeley Lake

Harry Poett Ovando Landowner, Drought Response Chair

Rich Torquemada Bureau of Land Management

STAFF

Gary Burnett Executive Director

Matt Arno Forestry

Traci Bignell Finance and Grants

Deb Dillree Clerical Support

Brian McDonald Water, Weeds, Conservation Strategies

Sara Schmidt Outreach

Nancy Schwalm BCCA & Education

Brad Weltzien BCCA Land Steward

Seth Wilson Wildlife

* Board Partner

Photo by Brad Weltzien

Growing Partnerships

Since its inception, the Blackfoot Challenge has relied upon trust, inclusivity, transparency and collaboration to coordinate conservation of the natural resources and rural way of life in the Blackfoot Watershed. By the turn of the century, we had coordinated an impressive list of conservation outcomes.

As the model for a community-based approach to conservation gains ground across the nation, and even the world, the Blackfoot Challenge is increasingly invited to share its success stories with regional and national audiences. Our focus and our hearts will always be in the Blackfoot, though we recognize the opportunity to share our experiences and collaborate on a larger scale. Over the years, we've increased partnership-building efforts outside the boundaries of the watershed in order to bring resources back home.

You've heard us discuss participating in efforts like the Southwestern Crown of the Continent, the Working Lands Council, Partners for Conservation, Practitioners' Network for Large Landscape Conservation, Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent, and Rural Voice for Conservation Coalition. These are all approaches that bring a wider scope of people together to find collaborative and innovative solutions to resource management.

Relationship-building is the root of our work here in the Blackfoot. In the early 1970s, property owners and managers began to realize the need for communicating across fence lines to effectively conserve a working and intact landscape. While our list of partners grows, the benefits are the same. "Neighboring up" with our national private and public partners will bring greater appreciation of diverse values, efficiency in operations, capacity to sustain working land and leverage of private and public funds for a community-based approach to landscape conservation. These partnerships are already paying dividends to our efforts in the Blackfoot, and help us and our neighbors be better stewards of the landscapes we share. We are a small watershed in a big country; we will sustain our resources, communities and values by working together.

"The strength of the partnerships in the Blackfoot is phenomenal."

— JOHN TUBBS
DIRECTOR OF MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION





Conservation

LANDSCAPES WORKING FOR ALL

The Blackfoot Challenge continues to coordinate the Conservation Strategies Committee, founded in 2000 to bring public and private partners together to share information and identify priority areas for conservation and stewardship throughout the Blackfoot Watershed. To date, 235,000 acres have been conserved by private landowners, public agencies and land trusts.

Blackfoot Community Project

Under the Blackfoot Community Project, 72,525 acres have been transferred from The Nature Conservancy into public and private ownership. Once complete, this tremendous conservation accomplishment will bring a total of 89,257 acres of former corporate-owned timber land into conserved status according to a community-led disposition plan.

Blackfoot Community Conservation Area

Cooperative Conservation on the Ground

An outcome of the Blackfoot Community Project, the BCCA encompasses 41,000 acres of public and private lands in the area surrounding Ovando Mountain. Multiple ownerships and diverse uses characterize the BCCA and are incorporated into the decision-making of the 15-member community council elected to manage the area's natural and recreational resources.

2012 by the numbers

- 90 acres of weeds sprayed
- 5 weed biocontrol releases for spotted knapweed
- 311 combined acres of pre-commercial thins and fuel breaks
- 3 more game poles installed
- 2nd year of successful Motorized Use Policy
- 1st year of Conservation Stewardship Program completed
- Numerous tours held for partner and students groups



Photo by Paul Brainerd

Photo by Mannix Brothers Ranch

“Over the years, members of the Challenge...have played a key role in finding collaborative solutions to often complex, multi-jurisdictional natural resource stewardship issues such as land acquisitions and exchanges, noxious weed eradication, drought mitigation, predator management, endangered species recovery, forest health and fire prevention. **The Challenge is a model for the nation.**”

— **HENRI BISSON** PRESIDENT OF THE PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION, REFLECTING ON THE BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE'S 2012 LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP AWARD FOR THEIR COOPERATION WITH THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Restoration

LANDSCAPE-LEVEL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESTORATION

For two consecutive years, trumpeter swans have successfully nested and fledged cygnets in the Blackfoot Watershed for perhaps the first time in nearly two centuries. These swans were released in previous years through the Blackfoot Trumpeter Swan Restoration Program. Since 2004, this collaborative effort of private landowners, public agencies, wetland conservation groups and local schools has been working to restore trumpeter swans to their native wetlands in the Blackfoot. Now nearly in its tenth year, the Program is seeing measurable success. In 2012, at least twenty trumpeter swans returned to the Blackfoot River watershed, including five of the cygnets that were hatched and raised in the area in 2011. This marked the first account of the successful transfer of knowledge of migration and return from one generation to another. That summer, seven cygnets were born. Biologists believe the wetlands of the Blackfoot Watershed will accommodate up to 30 pairs of trumpeter swans and the recent success of the Blackfoot Trumpeter Swan Restoration Program is making that predication a reality. Learn more at www.blackfootchallenge.org/swanproject.



Photo by Nancy Schwalm



Photo by Dylan Brown



WEEDS

The Blackfoot Challenge worked with a number of partners in 2012 to implement weed management projects on 2,500 acres throughout the watershed as well as over 40 miles of mixed ownership along the Blackfoot River Corridor. The continued efforts of federal, state, county and private partners to address this cross-boundary issue are simply impressive. In 2012, we:

- Partnered with Montana DNRC to treat houndstongue and other weeds on State lands within the BCCA
- Treated knapweed on 2,100 acres of private land near Helmville
- Supported Montana FWP efforts to treat 17 miles of roads in the Marshall Creek Wildlife Management Area
- Partnered with the Seeley Lake and Lincoln Ranger Districts to treat a variety of weeds in Bear Creek, Patterson Prairie, Lake Creek, and National Forest lands near Lincoln
- Supported releases and monitoring of knapweed root weevils at sites in partnership with Missoula County, Powell County, Plum Creek Timber Company, and the BCCA Council

FORESTRY

The technical assistance and cost share funding provided to private landowners through the Forestry Committee have helped many landowners in the watershed improve the fire safety of their homes and our communities. At the same time these landowners are improving the health of their forests, reducing bark beetle mortality and providing work for local contractors. The forestry committee also works with public partners to complete fuels reduction work on public lands. In 2012, we:

- Treated 222 high priority private acres
- Provided technical assistance to more than 50 private landowners
- Created a partnership with the Clearwater Resource Council to provide forest health improvement and fuels reduction assistance in the Seeley Lake/ Clearwater portions of the watershed
- Formed the Biomass Working Group in cooperation with the USFS and Montana DNRC to encourage small wood heating facilities that will use excess woody biomass from fuel reduction projects



Photo by Kenneth Cook



Photo by Bob Hopkins



Photo by Matt Arno

"We really appreciate the help and support from the Blackfoot Challenge and hope that more property owners will take advantage of this program."

**— STEPHEN ROHDE
POTOMAC LANDOWNER**

Stewardship

WATER RESOURCES

Changing conditions kept the Drought Committee on its toes much of the year. Snowpack was near normal in 2012 but an early runoff and dry conditions throughout much of spring and summer threatened to send flows low and water temperatures high. Although we saw flows fall below 700 cfs in 2012, resources did not exhibit signs of stress and the Drought Response was not implemented. The Irrigation Efficiency rolled into its fifth year and we continued to identify energy savings and opportunities for improved water use efficiency.

2012 by the numbers

- 10 sprinkler system efficiency evaluations completed
- 483,000 kWh of energy savings identified since 2008
- 185,900 kWh of energy conserved/used more efficiently since 2008
- 1,200 acres under irrigation scheduling in 2012 bringing the total since 2010 to 3,600 acres

WILDLIFE

Throughout 2012 the Wildlife Committee continued to work to reduce grizzly bear-human conflicts and to proactively address wolf-livestock conflicts. Overall grizzly bear conflicts remained low in the watershed despite extensive bear activity. We completed a much needed electric fence and gate system at the Ovando Transfer Site to deter grizzly and black bears from entering. There were five confirmed calves killed by wolves in 2012 and one likely killed by wolves. Additionally there was one dog killed by wolves. Five wolves were removed from the watershed due to these depredations. Our livestock carcass removal program, extensive system of electric fences, and our wolf and livestock monitoring program continue to help keep overall conflicts with carnivores low in the Blackfoot Valley.

2012 by the numbers

- 253 livestock carcasses removed and composted in 2012
- 2,600 carcasses removed from Blackfoot Valley area ranches since 2003
- 18 electric fences on calving areas protecting livestock
- 3 wolf packs and 8 livestock herds intensively monitored with range riders

“My visit with the Blackfoot Challenge inspired me with many ideas to help us with the recolonization of wolves in Washington. Their efforts to find **common ground among diverse interests** is an example of how people working together for a shared vision can be successful even with the most difficult of issues.”

—PHILIP ANDERSON

Director of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Photo by Mannix Brothers Ranch



Photo by Seth Wilson



Photo by Brad Weltzien

Photo by Barry Dutton

Education SERVING ALL AGES

The Education Program brings quality place-based educational programs to the Blackfoot Watershed. We work with local teachers, landowners, conservation organizations and agency partners to determine program topics and direction through our Education Committee and Teacher Steering Council.

In 2012, we held an array of programs including topics such as gardening, trapping, bears, Native American culture, apple tree care and hands-on family fishing. We continue to provide our signature school programs including Adopt-A-Swan School Release Day for 7th and 8th grade students and Youth Field Day for 4th, 5th and 6th grade students.

2012 by the numbers

- **Youth Field Day** 90 students spent the day in either the headwaters of the Blackfoot at Mike Horse Dam or Butte's Mining Museum learning about the state's mining history
- **Montana Natural Resources Youth Camp** 30 students from around Montana participated in this week-long camp focused on natural resource management
- **Adopt-A-Swan School Program** 150 students gathered to help restore trumpeter swans to their former habitat
- **Community Education** 12 diverse programs serving 846 people
- **Family Fishing Day** 52 people learned about fisheries in the upper watershed

Through our outreach efforts over the past year, we reached roughly 3,850 individuals at the local, regional and national scales. We utilized a variety of workshops, tours, meetings, publications and press releases to share our story of community-based conservation and build relationships to support the rural way of life in the Blackfoot. Please visit www.blackfootchallenge.org to see a schedule of upcoming events.

SHARING THE LESSONS LEARNED

In September, the Challenge convened a community-based conservation transferability workshop to "transfer" the lessons learned from practicing a community-based approach to conservation. Over 110 conservation practitioners, ranging from amateurs to old hands, came together from all over the country to participate in these discussions, taking turns both teaching and learning.



Photo by Sara Schmidt
Inset photo by Elaine Caton



Photo by Greg Neudecker



Photo by Elaine Caton



Photo by Sara Schmidt

Donors

Our **private and public donors and grantors** provide the funding for our work. The majority of projects are funded with state, federal, and foundation grants. Gifts from private individuals are critical to meet match requirements for these project funds and to provide the bulk of operating funds for committees.

We are thankful to the following individuals, organizations, businesses and foundations that truly care about the Blackfoot and its future. Their support in 2012 made our work possible.

Ron & Char Aasheim in honor of Land Aasheim Neudecker • Gary & Dona Aitken • Allegra in Helena • Allied Waste Services Inc. • Brent & Carla Anderson • Anonymous (4) • Matt & Melissa Arno • Patrick & Bernadette Bannister • Ken & Paula Barber • Tom & Karen Barbour • Patti Bartlett • David Batchelder & Bridget Laird • John Baucus • Jim & Norma Bauer • Margaret Baylor in honor of Ralph & Toone Burchenal • Eldon & Helen Beck • Dean & Angela Bennett • Big Bear Sign Company—Jeff and Wendy McNally • Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited • Bignell Ranch • Traci Bignell in memory of Todd Voss • Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative • Jim & Sally Bogaert • Lee & Judy Boman • Mark Bostrom in memory of Todd Voss • Louie Bouma • Boyle, Deveny & Meyer • Bryan & Meg Bradshaw • Stan & Glenda Bradshaw • Pat & Nina Brock • Charles & Margaret Burbach • Gary & Wanda Burnett • Jerry & Laura Burns • Larry Burton • Caroline Byrd • Jerome Cain • John & Betty Cardwell • Lawrence & Elizabeth Casper • Virginia Causey • Rob Colley & Kate Godfrey • Patrick & Sue Constantinides • Margery Copenhaver in memory of Richard Copenhaver • Margery Copenhaver in memory of Wendell Copenhaver • Fred Danforth & Carlene Larsson • Bill Davis • Frank & Pat DeLeo • Deutsch Bank Americas Foundation Matching Gift Program • Larry & Debbie Dillree • Il B. Dousman Fund • Ali Duvall • Ken & Sue Dvorak • Pen & Liz Edwards • Tim Edwards & Gayle Hudgins • Family of George N. Engler • Andy & Connie Erickson • Kevin & Robin Ertl • Tom & Terri Farago • John & Jan Farrar • David Fawcett • Bruce Fleming • Patti Fogarty in memory of Bill Fogarty • Patty Foresman Foundation in honor of Lila Bahin • Racene Friede • Travis & Amber Frydenlund in memory of Lisa Pena • Donna Goens • Hank & Cathy Goetz • James Greene & Martha Vogt • Lyle & Gail Grimes • Maury Guay • Bee Hall & Marta Ernst in memory of John Roe • Neva Hassanein • Skip Hayes in memory of JoAnne Hayes • Joseph H. Head, Jr. • Ralph & Billie Higgins • Dale & Yalanda Hinkle • Ron & Clarice Hinman • Jack & Karen Hooker • Harry Houze • Jerry & Rochelle Hover • Hurlburt Farm & Forestry, Inc. • Tom Ide & Shari Marhugh in memory of Howard, Gene & Wendell Copenhaver • Denny & Charlotte Iverson • Justin Iverson • Ron Iverson-Iverson Tree Farms • Gary & Sharon Jacobsen • Sonja Jahrsdoefer • Bob Johnson • Heather Johnson & Brad Andres • Roger & Rhea Johnson • Todd & Twyla Johnson • Amber Kamps • Tim & Lisa Kemp in honor of Harry & Cindy Poett • Steve Kloetzel & Andrea Morgan • Charlie & Marcia Knell • Bob & Ellen Knight • Tom & Judy Lehman • Tony Liane • Land Lindbergh • Wendy Lofting in honor of Bill & Betty Potter • Chris & Jeannie Lorentz • Tim & Donna Love • Fred Lurie • Walter Lynn in memory of Bert Mannix • Gerald & Rene Lyons • Carla Majernik • Manley Family LP-Tracy & Sheila Manley • Brent & Stacey Mannix • Mannix-Raymond Ranch-Darlene Mannix • Mannix Brothers Ranch • Phil & Cate Mason • Bill Massee • McCormick's Sunset Guest Ranch • Brian & Tyra McDonald • Russell & Mary Ellen McDonald • Francis McInnis • Don & Barb McNally • Eloise McNally • Ted & Kim

Mead • Montana Department of Environmental Quality • Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation • Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks • Montana Watershed Coordination Council • Monty & Betty Miller • Morris Ranch-Corie & Laurice Fritz • M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust • National Fish & Wildlife Foundation • Paraic & Becky Neiberger • Doris Neudecker • Stan & Colleen Nicholson • Mike & Jeanette Nordahl • Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative • Jerry & Deborah O'Connell • Roy O'Connor • Orvis Company Inc. • Patagonia • Jill Perelman • Don & Rosemarie Phillips • Plum Creek Timber Company • John & Dan Pocha-Pocha Brothers • Harry & Cindy Poett • Wym & Jan Portman • Jim Posewitz • Jay & Kay Proops • Robert Purcell & Sarah Swanberg in honor of Elaine Caton • Bob Rangitsch • Mike & Rene Redler • Jim Robinson • Sandra Roe • Dennis Rolston • Chris & Natalie Rood in memory of Polk Laffoon • Kathie Roos & Neal Blossom • Paul & Carolyn Roos • Edward Rosenthal • Robert Sanders • Judy Schmidt in honor of Sara Nicole Schmidt and Montana • Sara Schmidt • Ezra & Nancy Schwalm • Charlie & Christine Sehorn • Dr. Stephen Seninger • Bob Shaw • Hugh & Barbara Sheehy • Ron & Addie Shields • Brian & Karen Sippy • Annaliese Smail in memory of Lisa Pena • Ty & Alivia Smith • Martin & Karen Sokoloff in memory of James David Ellis • Glen & Joy Stocking • Steve & Virginia Stocks • Rolling Stone Ranch-Jim, Colleen & Brady Stone • John & Jane Stone • Brandon Styles • Bill Sullivan • Sustainable Northwest • Tim Swanberg & Elaine Caton • Randy & Sharon Teague • The Brainerd Foundation • The Cinnabar Foundation • The Chutney Foundation • The Coca-Cola Foundation • The Conservation Fund • The Meridian Institute • The Public Lands Foundation • Robin Tokmakian in memory of Barbara Haines Tokmakian & Roscoe Haines • Rich Torquemada & Cherie Peacock • University of Montana • University of Washington • US Bank • USDI Bureau of Land Management • USDI Fish & Wildlife Service • USDA Forest Service • USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service • Ute Creek Cattle Company, Inc. • James & Marcia Valeo Charitable Foundation • Fred & LeighAnn Valiton • Valmont Industries, Inc. • Peter & Maria van Loben Sels • Juanita Vero • Louis & Mary Vero • Klaus & Beate von Stutterheim • Watershed Consulting LLC • Vicki Watson • Douglas Webber & Nancy Winslow • Brad & Corbin Weltzien • Gary & Beverly Weltzien • David & Mary Wesley • Western Governors Association • Kevin Wetherell • Charles & Eleanor Williamson in memory of Rosemary Sweet • Charles & Eleanor Williamson in memory of Debbie Ogden • Seth Wilson & Jennifer Ellis in memory of Margaret Ellis • Gary & Rita Wolfe in honor of Jim, Colleen & Brady Stone • Woodhouse Construction

We acknowledge the many photographs and in-kind donations we received throughout the year and extend our gratitude. We strive to list each and every donor accurately, but errors and omissions may occur. We apologize if we missed you. If you notice an error, please contact us at (406) 793-3900.

“U.S. Bank has enjoyed the privilege of working with the Blackfoot Challenge since 2001. Over that time, **we've watched the organization grow** in sophistication, complexity and programmatic impact. We appreciate the long standing partnership with Blackfoot Challenge and look forward to many more years of collaboration.”

—**BILL NORTHEY** US Bank

Financials

The Board of Directors manages the Blackfoot Challenge's finances by approving an annual operating budget funded from secured sources. Accounted for separately from the annual budget, the Board manages three reserve funds and two endowments for long-term stability through oversight from the Finance and Endowment Committee. These investments provide future support to benefit the Blackfoot Watershed. The BCP Operating fund, a cash fund, provides for the short-term needs of the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area until the endowment funds provide sustainable annual allocations. The Committee takes a conservative approach to investments.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (Dec 31, 2012)

NET ASSETS

UNRESTRICTED	\$ 157,567
TEMPORARY RESTRICTED	\$ 283,997
PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	
Blackfoot Stewardship Endowment Fund	\$ 569,210
BCCA Endowment Fund	\$ 349,197

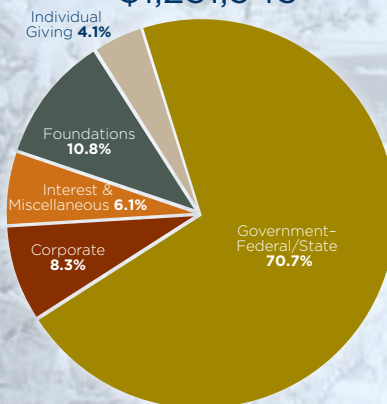
BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA (LAND)	\$ 1,891,284
-------------------------------------------------	--------------

TOTAL ASSETS \$ 3,251,255

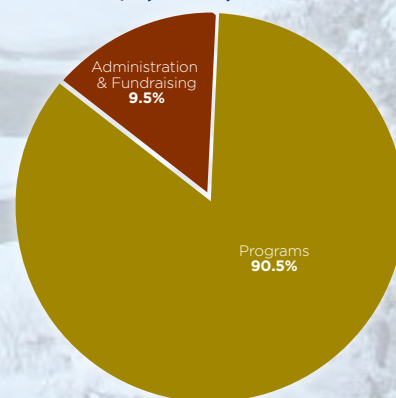
TOTAL LIABILITIES \$ 9,937

TOTAL NET ASSETS \$ 3,241,318

SOURCE OF FUNDS \$1,231,945



USE OF FUNDS \$1,303,470

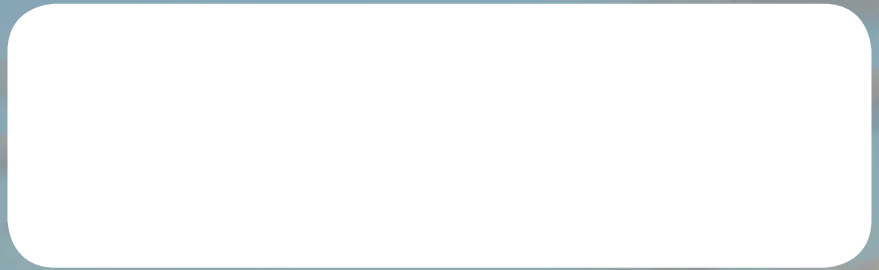




405 Main Street
PO Box 103
Ovando, MT 59854

Non-profit Org
US Postage Paid
Ovando, MT 59854
Permit # 103

to our friend:



GOING DIGITAL? If you are interested in receiving Blackfoot Challenge materials in electronic versions only, send us an email at outreach@blackfootchallenge.org

