

# **The Blackfoot Community Conservation Area**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q-1: What is the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area (BCCA)?**

The BCCA is an approximate 41,000-acre block of land located around Ovando Mountain (see attached map). Landowners within the BCCA include the U.S. Forest Service, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and a number of private individuals and entities. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) currently owns 9,630 acres that they purchased from Plum Creek Timber Company as part of the Blackfoot Community Project. TNC will sell 1,312 acres to the Forest Service in February 2006 and plans to transfer an additional 2,707 acres to the DNRC as soon as the agency can arrange for a land exchange to acquire the property. TNC will deed the remaining 5,600-acre block (an area we have been calling the “Core”) to the Blackfoot Challenge on behalf of the community.

### **Q-2: Who will be the legal owner of the 5,600-acre Core area?**

The Blackfoot Challenge (BC) will hold the deed on behalf of the community. This is being pursued because it offers a range of management possibilities involving local participation and accountability, the flexibility to manage the land for the long-term according to community interests with multiple use objectives, and the opportunity to experiment with cooperative management and stewardship practices across ownership lines. The Blackfoot Challenge is a locally-governed and established organization that has been working to conserve the natural resources and the rural lifestyle of the Blackfoot watershed since 1993. They have the operational structure, capacity and resources to oversee the project. For more information on their track record and financial capacity, please see the 2005 Annual Report, which will be available by early 2006.

### **Q-3: What happens if the Blackfoot Challenge is dissolved?**

The deed will contain a clause stating that the 5,600-acre Core area would revert to TNC who would retain the right to sell or transfer the land to an alternate community organization, non-profit organization, or public agency with the community’s input. TNC is not interested in long-term ownership of the Core. Also, note Q-5, which addresses the issue of future subdivision.

### **Q-4: How will the Blackfoot Challenge and the community acquire the Core from TNC?**

TNC and BC are conducting a \$10 million private fund raising campaign to help support the Blackfoot Community Project. Four million dollars are designated to pay TNC for the 5,600-acre Core. The remaining funds will be used to cover payment in lieu of taxes to Powell County, to provide for long-term stewardship and management (\$3 million combined); to purchase conservation easements (\$2 million), and; to help meet project management expenses (\$1 million). As of January 1, 2006, the campaign has raised \$6.2 million in gifts and pledges toward the \$10 million goal. Both TNC and BC are committed to raising the full amount to ensure the project is a success.

**Q-5: Will there be any use restrictions attached to the deed?**

In 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchased a perpetual conservation easement from TNC on those lands that will go to the BC and the DNRC. This easement sale accomplished two major objectives. First, by prohibiting any residential development, it will maintain the open nature of the land as requested by community residents at our public meetings. Second, by reducing the appraised value of the land, it will require fewer funds to purchase the land from TNC. Although the conservation easement will require a timber management plan prior to harvesting, it will allow all traditional uses in the area.

**Q-6: What about the private lands within the Core and the BCCA?**

Participation in any cooperative management plan for the area will be strictly voluntary.

**Q-7: How will the community play a role in ownership and management of the Core?**

A 15-member Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council (BCCA Council) was appointed by the Blackfoot Challenge Board of Directors in July 2005 based on a list of volunteers and nominees. The Community Council is comprised of members from three general interest groups including 1) neighboring private landowners, 2) users of the area, and 3) representatives from public agencies and private organizations who own land in the BCCA. The BCCA Council members are: Ralph Allen, Dean Bennett, Jim Bauer, Don & Barb McNally, Bob & Dawn Rowland representing the private landowners; Alyssa Daniels, Donna Hawkins, Betty Miller, Jack Rich and Bob Sheppard representing user interests; and from the agencies and private organizations, Kevin Ertl (USFWS), Steve Kloetzel (TNC), Tony Liane (DNRC), Tim Love (USFS), and Mike Thompson (FW&P). Hank Goetz and Ali Duvall provide staff support for the Council.

**Q-8: What is the relationship between the Blackfoot Challenge and the BCCA Council?**

At their July 2005 Board Meeting, the Blackfoot Challenge officially authorized the creation of the BCCA Council and selected the current members. The Board charged the Council “to develop and implement cooperative management on the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area. Delegated responsibilities include: 1) Establishment of administrative procedures for administration of the core 5,600 acres and collaborative mechanisms for administration of the larger 41,000 acre BCCA, 2) Development of a management plan for the entire BCCA, and 3) Implementation of a management plan for the entire BCCA.” The Challenge Board of Directors retained authority for: “1) The approval of the annual budget and work plan for the BCCA, 2) the approval of membership new appointments and dissolution of the BCCA Council, 3) the approval of the Final Management Plan for the 5,600 core area 4) the endorsement of the MOU for the entire 41,000 acre area, and 5) providing liability coverage and administrative and general support for the BCCA Council.” In summary, although the

BC Board will retain legal responsibility for the BCCA, the Council will be responsible for the day-to-day management activities.

**Q-9: How long will the present members serve on the BCCA Council?**

Members have been asked to serve for two years. Over the course of this year, the Council will establish a method for rotating and replacing members so that other interested people in the community have an opportunity to serve.

**Q-10: When does the Council meet and are the meetings open to the public?**

The Council meets at 4:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the Fire Hall in Ovando and the meetings last about two hours. The public is welcome to attend the meetings and to comment on the proceedings or ask questions.

**Q-11: What has the Council done so far?**

The Council has met monthly since August 2005. They have concentrated on getting to know one another, learn about the BCCA itself from those with a long association with the area and to discuss a basic management philosophy for the area that reflects what they believe to be the desires of the community. In general the Council's shared vision for the area is to develop a multiple-use, working landscape that implements sustainable land management and stewardship practices that balance biological, social and economic needs and resources for the long-term benefit of the Blackfoot community. The Council developed the following list of issues/values/uses that are equally important to the future management of the area and are drafting general goal statements for each: Wildlife, Weeds, Wetland and Riparian Areas, Public Access, Travel Management, Recreation, Aesthetics, Rangelands and Grazing, Timber, Education, Water Management, Private In-holdings, Economics, and Fire Management.

**Q-12: Where did the Council get the list of issues/values/uses for the area?**

They came from the public meetings on the Blackfoot Community Project, from responses to the written BCCA survey and from discussions within the Council. (The survey was mailed in October 2004 to 347 landowners and residents in the Ovando/Helmville area, with 193 responses. An executive summary is available online at [www.blackfootchallenge.org](http://www.blackfootchallenge.org).)

**Q-13: What is the Council's agenda for the rest of 2006?**

The major duty will be to develop, by the end of the year; a draft management plan for the Core that will include specific management objectives for each of the 14 issues listed in **Q-11**. The Council will also develop and sign a Memorandum of Understanding among all the owners and managers of the BCCA prior to beginning work on a cooperative management plan for the BCCA. The Council will spend considerable effort gathering and studying existing information for the 14 issues to determine what additional data is needed to help make management recommendations.

**Q-14: Will the public get a chance to comment on the draft management plan?**

Yes, the Council is committed to an open and inclusive process for developing and implementing the management plan for both the Core and the larger BCCA. Folks are encouraged to contact any of the Council members with questions, concerns and suggestions. (See attached member list). The public can attend the Council meetings and express themselves there. In addition the Council will hold a public meeting to gather public reaction to their preliminary draft management plan.

**BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA**  
Council Members  
*Contact List*

---

**Landowners**

	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Email</u>
Ralph Allen	793-5828	
Jim Bauer	793-5036	
Dean Bennett	793-5804	hlm5804@blackfoot.net
Don & Barb McNally	793-5685	
Bob & Dawn Rowland	793-5103	

**User Groups**

Alyssa Daniels	793-3003	alyssa@blackfoot.net
Donna Hawkins	793-5657	dghawkins@fs.fed.us
Betty Miller	793-5002	bettylm43@aol.com
Jack Rich	677-2317	richranch@blackfoot.net
Bob Sheppard	793-5885	tjsheppard@blackfoot.net

**Representatives from Public Agencies  
& Private Organizations**

Kevin Ertl (USFWS)	793-0050	kevin_ertl@fws.gov
Steve Kloetzel (TNC)	793-0038	skloetzel@tnc.org
Tony Liane (DNRC)	542-4261	tliane@mt.gov
Tim Love (USFS)	677-2233	tlove@fs.fed.us
Mike Thompson (FWP)	542-5523	mthompson@mt.gov

**Staff**

Hank Goetz	244-5589	hank@blackfoot.net
Ali Duvall	549-8122	ali@blackfootchallenge.org