

Blackfoot Community Project News

The Blackfoot Challenge & The Nature Conservancy

SUMMER: Issue 7

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Community Voice, Community Involvement

The Blackfoot Community Project, a partnership between the Blackfoot Challenge and The Nature Conservancy, is a community-based and locally developed effort to guide the future ownership and management of key lands formerly owned by Plum Creek Timber from the headwaters of the Blackfoot to the Clearwater River.

We invite you to join us in the project and stay posted with news updates.

Project Milestones

Sales to adjacent, private landowners began in earnest in January of 2008.

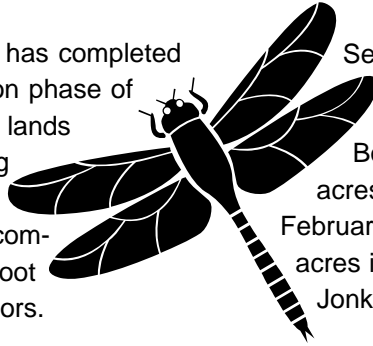
The BCCA Council moves from planning to the management

Lands in Transition

The Nature Conservancy has completed the 89,000 acre acquisition phase of the project. All project lands are being sold according to the Disposition Plan approved by individual communities and the Blackfoot Challenge Board of Directors.

To date, nearly 36,000 acres have been sold, primarily to public agencies. However, the emphasis in 2008 has shifted to transactions with the private sector.

In March of 2008, TNC closed on a 514 acre sale to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe in North Lincoln that will become part of a land exchange with the DNRC for state in-holdings on the reservation. The tribe has 3 years to complete a transfer to DNRC. If the exchange fails to take place, TNC will repurchase the land at the original sale price. The sale includes 116 acres in



Section 2: T14,R9 and 398 acres in Section 1: T14, R9.

Bob Shaw purchased 36.51 acres in Tupper Lakes area on February 25th and the sale of 80 acres in the Tupper Lake area to the Jonkel family closed on May 5th.

Sunny Slope Grazing Association, SSGA purchased 2,888 acres of project land from The Nature Conservancy on April 21st and placed a conservation easement on 4,682 acres of their property. The total purchase price of the 7,570 acres of conservation easements was \$4,583,600. Habitat Conservation Plan funds were used to fund the project. This large private sale is a result of years of collaboration between SSGA, TNC, Five Valleys Land Trust [FVLT] and FWP. FVLT will hold and monitor the easement on the total acreage.



A Unique Model for Land Management

The Blackfoot Community Conservation Area is a 41,000 acre tract of land around Ovando Mountain owned by both public and private entities.

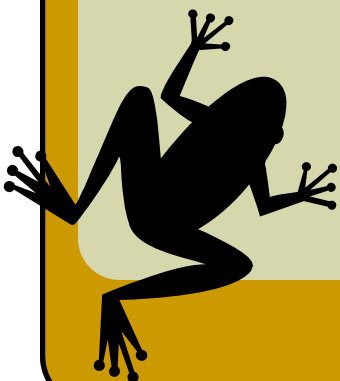
A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by all parties that documents their intent to imple-

ment a cooperative policy management plan for the area.

Later this year the Conservancy will transfer ownership of a 5,600 acre Core area to the community who will own and manage the area through the BCCA Council, under the aus-

pices of the Blackfoot Challenge.

After two years of hard work, the Council has approved a management plan for the Core area that will also serve as the basis for the entire BCCA plan. Visit our website for complete details.



Blackfoot Community Conservation Area

As part of the transition from planning to management, the Council is being led by Chairman Bob Rowland and Vice Chair Ralph Allen. The Council also established three permanent working groups: Forestry, Grazing/Weeds, and Recreation/Education.

The Forestry Work Group is utilizing a \$137,000 federal Western Forestry Competitive Grant to do a fire mitigation/thinning/weed control project along eight miles of the Ovando Haul Road. The project, which will begin after the general hunting season, involves the Core, seven private landowners, and the State of Montana.

The Grazing Work Group is developing a grazing management plan for the northern portion of

the Core that includes fencing and off-stream water sources.

The Rec/Ed Work Group will begin weekly tours of the Core based on the plan approved by the community. Tours will begin July 1st and will continue through August 15th, weather conditions permitting. Contact Bob Rowland at 406.793.5103 for details.

This fall, the Forest Service will conduct a wildlife habitat improvement burn on approximately 1,000 acres on the west side of Dick Creek.

The BCCA Council will have open terms for 4 people in 2009; the selection process will take place this fall. Please contact Hank Goetz or visit our website for details.

The BCCA Council meets the first Tuesday of every month at the Ovando Fire Hall from 4-6 pm. For info on Work Group meetings please call 406.793.3900

Tracking Project Success

Now in our 5th year, we have reorganized the BCP web page to better track milestones. Check out **Tracking Project Success**. It includes a *Purchase Summary and Sale Summary* in addition to a new *Public Funding Summary* that details funding sources and amounts. As always, your feedback is appreciated!

In April, TNC and the Challenge presented the Powell

County Commissioners with a check of \$357,608 to offset the loss of tax revenue from Plum Creek lands being transferred to BLM and the US Forest Service within the County.

BLM received \$500,000 in FY08 Land and Water Conservation Funds for acquisition. The FY09 LWCF request includes \$4.5 Million for BLM and \$2 Million for the Forest Service.

The project was also awarded \$6.5 Million in Habitat Conservation Planning funds that will be used to place conservation easements on qualifying lands and \$100,000 from the MT Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust that will help place an easement on the Little Doney parcels.

We extend a special thank you to the Sand County Foundation Bradley fund for the Environment for their support of the BCCA management plan.

Through this project the community's voice will shape the future of the valley and help to preserve the natural resources and rural lifestyle for future generations.

Staying Involved

The Blackfoot Challenge is committed to an open process. To learn more about this effort, please contact the Blackfoot Challenge Lands Director, Hank Goetz at 406.793.5589 or hank@blackfoot.net



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