

# Blackfoot Community Project News

The Blackfoot Challenge & The Nature Conservancy

WINTER: Issue 6

JANUARY 2008

## 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 in the Blackfoot Valley.

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

## Project Milestones

The partnership reached the \$10 million private fundraising goal last September and completed the land purchase phase of the five-year project with the acquisition of the final 20,000 acres on December 3, 2007.



## Lands in Transition

The project involves the purchase of 89,000 acres of Plum Creek Timber Company lands from the headwaters of the Blackfoot to the Clearwater River drainage.

The Nature Conservancy has purchased the final 20,000 acres. All project lands are being sold according to the Disposition Plan approved by individual communities and the Blackfoot Challenge Board of Directors.

Of the roughly 89,000 acres purchased from Plum Creek, just under 33,000 acres have been re-sold to private and public landowners.



In May, the US Forest Service purchased 5,200 acres in the Horseshoe Hills region southeast of Seeley Lake using Land & Water Conservation Funds. LWCF money also enabled the Bureau of Land Management to pick up 640 acres in Marcum Mountain at the end of October.

The partnership concentrated on re-selling land to public agencies during the first several years, because

of the availability of federal funding and the high public interest in conserving areas important for public access and resource conservation. In the years ahead, sales to adjacent private landowners will take precedence.

## 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 is being signed by all parties that will document their intent to implement 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 auspices of the Blackfoot Challenge.

For the past two years the Council has been working on a management plan for the Core area that will also serve as the basis for the

entire BCCA plan. Last November, the Council presented the final draft of the plan at a public meeting in Ovando.

The plan outlines goals and objectives for the area, guidelines and criteria for evaluation of potential projects, and an administrative structure for the Council. The document also includes a specific wheeled motorized use

# Blackfoot Community Conservation Area

plan for the Core that will be implemented on a trial basis this summer. The Council has been engaged with the community for the better part of this last year discussing the pros and cons of increased motorized use on the area.



After numerous special meetings and one-on-one conversations, the Council and interested community members developed a compromise

plan that will give folks an opportunity to visit the Core using motorized vehicles during a portion of the summer months under controlled conditions. The hard work of the Council was rewarded when the folks attending the public meeting accepted the plan and thanked the Council for their community conscious effort. You can learn more by reviewing the entire draft management plan on our website.

**The BCCA Council has a two year term open for a landowner member. Please contact Hank Goetz at 793-5589 or visit our website for more details.**

The BCCA Council meets the first Tuesday of every month at the Ovando Fire Hall from 4-6 pm. BCCA meetings are open to the public.

## Tracking Project Success

### 2004-2005:

The Conservancy purchases 54,102 acres from Plum Creek.

Land & Water Conservation Funds of \$5 Million are appropriated for conservation easements by the US Fish and Wildlife Service & land acquisition by the BLM in FY04 and \$15 Million for acquisitions by the Forest Service & the BLM in FY05.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation buys 3,834 acres around the Game Range until Fish Wildlife & Parks is able to purchase it using \$3.3 Million in FY05 Forest Legacy Funds.

BLM purchases 5480.39 acres in Marcum Mountain/Tupper Lakes. Our first private sale occurs for 148.27 acres in Lincoln.

### 2006 and 2007:

The Conservancy purchases 35,092 acres from Plum Creek.

Land & Water Conservation Funds of \$6 Million are garnered for land acquisition by the Forest Service in FY06 and \$3 Million for acquisition by the Forest Service & the BLM in FY07. Fish, Wildlife & Parks receives \$1.4 Million for conservation easements in FY06 Forest Legacy Funds.

DNRC purchases 2,480.76 acres in '06, the Forest Service purchases 15,142.34 acres in '06 and 5,206.22 acres in '07. Also in '07 - Fish, Wildlife and Parks purchases 180 acres and BLM purchases 640 acres.

We expect to receive \$1 Million in FY08 LWCF for BLM acquisitions.



Habitat Conservation Planning funds worth \$2.7 Million in '06 and \$3.887 Million in '07 were received that will provide conservation easements on project lands in the Lincoln area.

The project continues to receive assistance from several grants and foundations including the Kendall Foundation. Thanks to the support of our local landowners & friends, and with the help of a Kresge Grant, we raised \$10 Million in private funds.

In May, the Missoula County Commissioners approved \$200,000 in Open Space bond funding for the purchase of conservation easements in the Greenough area. We also reached an agreement with Powell County on the sum that will be donated to compensate for tax revenue foregone on lands sold to federal agencies.

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](mailto:hank@blackfoot.net)



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