

The Nature Conservancy

Protecting nature. Preserving life.™



INTERIM MANAGEMENT STRATEGY For The Nature Conservancy Lands In The Blackfoot Valley

From 2004 to 2006, The Nature Conservancy of Montana purchased almost 70,000 acres of former Plum Creek Timber Company land throughout the Blackfoot Valley. On December 3, 2007, in a move much-anticipated by the local populace, the Conservancy purchased another 20,000 acres of Plum Creek land. This exciting purchase completes the Conservancy's acquisitions under the Blackfoot Community Project, encompassing all of the Plum Creek timberlands in the middle and upper reaches of the Blackfoot watershed.

The Conservancy has been holding and managing these lands while the Blackfoot Challenge and the Conservancy carry out a community-developed disposition plan for sale of all of the former Plum Creek lands to public and private buyers. From 2004 to 2007, the Conservancy sold over 33,000 acres to the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP), the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Bureau of Land Management, and the US Forest Service, as well as a few private buyers. Virtually all lands sold to private parties will be protected from development and subdivision with conservation easements; these easements will allow livestock grazing and managed logging to continue, and in many cases ensure public hunting access.

While the Conservancy holds these lands, they are following essentially the same policies for public use as Plum Creek had for these lands. The interim management emphasis focuses on administering and monitoring pre-existing grazing leases, enhancing weed control efforts, and ensuring recreational access. Historic recreational access agreements have been reissued with local snowmobile groups, guest ranches, and FWP. Additionally, the Conservancy is enhancing and restoring selected forest, native prairie, wetlands, and riparian areas on their lands with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Blackfoot Challenge, Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited and other partners.

Public use regulations for Conservancy lands in the Blackfoot Valley are as follows:

- Non-motorized public access is allowed on all lands, at all times of the year.
- Wheeled motorized access is allowed, but is limited to open, established roads.
- No unauthorized wheeled motorized use of closed roads or trails is allowed. Closed roads and trails are posted as such by TNC. A closed gate or other closure device (such as a log barricade or earthen berm) with no sign is closed to all wheeled motorized vehicles. Road restrictions apply even if a sign, gate or closure device has been vandalized or damaged.
- Gates must not be blocked. Administrative, contractor, or emergency traffic may need to pass through.
- No off-road or off-trail wheeled motorized use is allowed by the general public; however,
- Snowmobiles are allowed from December 1 to May 1, except where signed closures exist. To reduce impacts to soils, vegetation and wildlife, TNC requests that snowmobilers stay on groomed or signed snowmobile routes.
- Hunting, fishing and all forms of legal animal harvest in accordance with relevant law are allowed.
- Personal-use plant, berry and mushroom harvesting are allowed. Commercial food harvesting is not permitted.
- Personal-use firewood gathering of dead or down wood is allowed; a \$15.00 permit is required. Vehicles must stay on established, open roads for wood retrieval. Commercial firewood harvesting is not permitted.
- Camping is limited to 14 days per campsite. During this time the campsite must not be left unattended for more than 3 consecutive days. Camping beyond 14 days requires relocating to a new site at least 5 miles from the original site. To minimize conflicts with bears, human, pet and livestock food, garbage and all other attractants shall be acceptably stored at all times (see Lolo Nat'l Forest Food/Attractant Order #F06-003-LOLO-D6). During campsite occupation, firewood may be cut only for use within that campsite. No live trees may be cut by campers.
- The use of certified weed-seed-free livestock hay, forage, and bedding is required for all livestock users and animal handlers. Do not tie livestock to trees; instead use a post, high-line or hitch-rail.

- Pack out all garbage. Leave TNC lands as clean as or cleaner than you found them.
- Avoid polluting with human waste. Pack out or bury all human waste at least 6” deep. Toilets located within 300 feet of water must be self-contained.
- All activity on TNC lands is at the individual’s OWN RISK. TNC assumes no liability or responsibility of any kind with respect to any of the activities described above or otherwise.
- Any use of TNC lands not consistent with these regulations shall be considered trespassing (and/or any other applicable crime) and shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Many of the Conservancy lands are also covered by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Block Management area rules; for more information about Block Management, call the region 2 Block Management Office in Missoula (406-542-5530).

Regulations are posted on Conservancy property boundaries, road closures, and at some campsites. For more information call 406-793-0038 (Ovando office) or 406-443-0303 (State/Helena Office), or contact the Conservancy’s Blackfoot Land Steward at:

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