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## Summer 2007

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### Swan Lake picnic celebrates water quality

A picnic at Swan Lake Saturday, July 21 will celebrate the Swan Lake watershed's exceptional water quality and give residents and visitors information to help keep our lakes, streams and wetlands pure.

Increasing development in the Swan Valley threatens water quality unless people find ways to prevent pollution and sediment runoff.

A bratwurst picnic will be provided by Swan Lake's Laughing Horse Lodge—first come, first served while it lasts.

The event will take place from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the campground boat launch. Exhibits and hands-on activities will be available and experts will answer questions.

Swan Ecosystem Center is a nonprofit "watershed group" and, as such, receives grants from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The grants support monitoring and restoration to reduce sediment runoff into the lake, the Swan River and its tributaries. Grants also make it possible for SEC to share information with residents and gain support for water quality protection.

Watershed groups are partnerships made up of residents, federal, state and county agencies, businesses and other nonprofits.

The Swan Lake watershed includes the area between the ridgetops of the Mission Mountains and the Swan Range and from the Swan-Clearwater Divide in the south through Swan Lake to the north.

Swan Lake remains relatively pure, yet scientists have found two

deep holes in the lake bottom that in summer lack adequate oxygen. Monitoring is primarily directed at



Swan River at Cold Creek bridge.

learning the causes, which could be natural or may result from development.

SEC employs contractors and enlists volunteers to monitor Swan Lake and the streams that feed it, according to a plan developed by the partners. In 2006, SEC and its partners repaired four miles of road to the popular Cold Lakes trailhead in the Mission Mountains. Further road restoration on the west side of the valley is planned for 2008-09.

*Liz Claiborne*

### Friend to the Swan will be missed

Everyone at Swan Ecosystem Center will miss Liz Claiborne, whose generosity in the Swan Valley is unmatched. Liz died June 26.

For two decades, Liz and her husband Art Ortenberg have quietly supported many good works in the Swan Valley: the schools, the Condon QRU, nonprofit organizations and more than we know about.

Liz and Art have never asked for recognition. But we can't help expressing our gratitude in print. Liz was a good neighbor in the Swan Valley and we all have benefitted.

### Swan Lands Update Conservation effort moves forward

It may seem like a glacial pace for people anxious to protect habitat, forest resources and a rural way of life in the Swan Valley. Yet considerable conservation has been accomplished over the years.

Since 1999, 8,206 acres of former Plum Creek Timber Company lands have been transferred to the Flathead National Forest. Additionally, timberland conservation easements on other Plum Creek lands at the north end of the valley now total 7,204 acres. They can never be subdivided but they can be sold.

The Swan River State Forest has acquired 480 acres. And SEC and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have acquired 640 acres.

Continued page 2

#### Swan Ecosystem Center Purpose

- Maintain a strong vital community in the Swan Valley, Montana, one involved in setting its own destiny through partnerships that encourage sustainable use and care of public and private lands.
- Create a learning center that promotes understanding of the land and relationships between people and the land.
- Integrate science and the knowledge of local people experienced with the land.
- Emphasize interrelationships of economic and social considerations in ecosystem issues and processes, and emphasize the necessity of addressing these inherent relationships at all levels.



Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC) is an inclusive, nonprofit 501(c)(3) citizens' group working on local ecosystem and education programs.

SEC shares responsibility for the U.S. Forest Service Condon Work Center through partnership agreements with the Swan Lake Ranger District, Flathead National Forest. This partnership allows the community to maintain a vital connection with the federal land managers.

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Swan Valley Ecosystem Management & Learning Center, Inc.

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406/754-3137 (phone)  
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swanec@blackfoot.net (email)  
SwanEcosystemCenter.com (website)

## Mountain trails opening despite blowdown

Three powerful winter windstorms blew many hundreds of trees across the trails in the Mission Mountains Wilderness and the Swan Range, putting Swan Ecosystem Center's rangers to the challenge this summer.

Mike Childs, who is responsible for trail opening on the Swan Range, reported 53 trees down on the Smith Creek Trail alone. Because the trail is outside designated wilderness, Mike was able to clear the trees with a chainsaw.

Kari Gunderson and Lukas Lamar, working in the Mission Mountains Wilderness where motorized equipment is not allowed, use a crosscut saw and axes to clear downfall. They have encountered twice as many trees down as usual.

The rangers start their summer seasons on about June 1 and focus first on clearing the most popular lower elevation trails that are free of snow. Despite the heavy blowdown this year they expect all the trails on their lists to be cleared by mid-July.

The Forest Service determines which trails are to be cleared. SEC raises grant funds to cover half the cost and employs the rangers who follow the Forest Service program of work. Funds come from the Forest



Shown above, Swan Valley native Lukas Lamar, 24, works for Kari Gunderson in the Mission Mountains Wilderness. Lukas is an avid backpacker, hunter and angler, who has said he wants to work in the wilderness when he grows up. Lukas has a degree in wildlife biology from the University of Montana. In 2006 he also worked as a hunting guide and carpenter in the Swan Valley...anything to stay in Swan. When Lukas is not in the wilderness he is usually found flyfishing on one of Montana's rivers.

Service, National Forest Foundation, private donors and the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Recreation Trails Program.

## Conservation progress continued



Elk Creek planning committee at work.

Conservation easements voluntarily contributed on private lands now total over 6,000 acres.

At the same time, Plum Creek has sold about 6,000 acres to private

individuals, some of which have been subdivided for resale.

The Elk Creek management planning committee is in full swing with field work to assess the conditions of the streams, forests and wetlands. The plan should be completed September 15 on the land owned by SEC and the Tribes.

Swan Ecosystem Center continues to work with The Trust for Public Land, Flathead National Forest, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and Plum Creek Timber Company to conserve land in the Swan Valley. Visit the Web site — [swanvalleyconservation.org](http://swanvalleyconservation.org) — for more information on strategies.

## Gravel pit comes alive in restoration effort

The once lifeless pond at the old Barber Creek gravel pit is now a wetland with ducks, geese and aquatic insects, thanks in part to the hard work of Swan Valley School 7th and 8th grade students.

Restoring the gravel pit on national forest land was the idea



Cascade Parcell with dip net near goose platform at Barber Creek wetland

of Swan Lake Ranger District employees. Hydrologist Liz Hill asked SEC's education coordinator Diann Ericson if she could find students to help reclaim the old pit.

Diann teamed with teacher Sue Patrick, and last fall the students began keeping field journals to inventory vegetation and wildlife use.

The Forest Service had removed debris, planted aspen, sprayed weeds and reseeded the area. They built a goose nesting platform and installed a bat house.

The students mapped the area with GPS units and selected a possible route for an interpretive trail. They began work on a sign to be placed at the site. With hand saws, they removed trees that had blown across the fence. The students plan to be the stewards of the area.

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**Having trouble with bears in your garbage or animal feed? We have bear resistant containers. 406 / 754-3137**

## SUMMER 2007 PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS AND YOUTH

Times and locations may vary due to weather or other circumstances. Watch for flyers at local businesses and contact Swan ecosystem Center at 406/754-3137 for additional information about these programs and more to come.

### June 23 - Bears

"Bears in Our Backyard." Erin Edge of Bear Aware in Seeley Lake. Holland Lake Beach, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

### June 26 - Frogs

Adults and youth help find and count amphibians. Results are compiled by the Flathead National Forest. Surveying will occur between 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Meet at Swan Ecosystem Center. **Sign up deadline, June 22.**

### July 7 - Race

The fifth annual Celebrate the Swan race. Half marathon, 10K, 5K and one mile fun run. Sprints and games for youngsters. Preregistration deadline, July 1. Registration is at Falls Creek Road by 9:00 a.m. Races begin at 10:00 a.m.

### July 7- Loons

"Loons on our Lakes." Mark Ruby, Flathead National Forest Bear and Loon Ranger, Holland Lake Beach, 7:00 -8:30 p.m.

### July 12 - Bees

"Our Bees Are Disappearing, Why?" Scott Debnam, bee researcher, University of Montana, at Swan Ecosystem Center, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

### July 16 - 20 - Y-camp

Five days of fun and activities for youth, 8-12 at Swan Ecosystem Center, 10:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m. Fee \$35/child. Scholarships are available.

### July 21 - Water

Water quality celebration. Learn more about the Swan River watershed. Brats, sauerkraut and German potato salad from Laughing Horse Lodge. At Swan Lake Campground beach and boat launch, 10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.

### July 26-27 - Fish Camp

Youth learn from biologists and fishing experts the basics of fishing techniques, equipment, trout identification, catch and release and much more. Suggested donation: \$10/person, \$15/family. **Sign up deadline, July 23.**

### July 26 - Trees

"What is Killing our Trees?" Ken Gibson, U.S. Forest Service entomologist. At Swan Ecosystem Center, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

### July 31 - History

Local history night entitled "Voices from the Past" will include excerpts from interviews with early Swan Valley residents. Moderated by Suzanne Vernon. At Swan Ecosystem Center, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

### August 2 - Fly-fishing

Fly-fishing class taught by renowned expert, Les Rutledge. Classroom and river instruction. Class size: limit 12. Suggested donation: \$25. 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

**Sign up deadline, July 30.**

### August 2 - Outfitting Stories

"Outfittin' and Some Cowboy Poetry." Leonard and Ethel Moore, Swan Valley residents, retired packers and outfitters. Swan Ecosystem Center, 7:00 -8:30 p.m.

### August 16 - See Earth From Space

"Mapping with MODIS," Dr. Steven Running, University of Montana. At Swan Ecosystem Center, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

### Sept. 6 - History Hike

Hike to the Lookout Tree, a local land mark, and learn it's story. The hike on Spook Ridge is a steady, moderate 1.5 mile climb (3 miles round trip). Meet at Swan Ecosystem Center at 8:30 a.m. and return at approximately 12:30 p.m.

### Sept. 15 - History Bus Tour

See and learn about homesteads, schools, sawmills and early Forest Service facilities. Meet at Swan Ecosystem Center. 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Suggested donation \$10-\$15/person, \$20/family. **Sign up deadline, September 10**

# Thank You SEC Supporters

We depend on volunteers and donors. The recent financial contributors are listed. But volunteers are equally important and highly valued. Thank you all.

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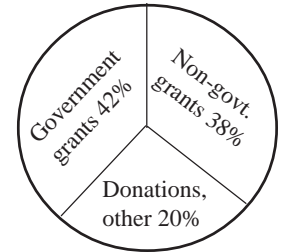
# Proposed 2006 Budget

Projects \$351,971

- Bear Smart
- Education
- Firewise Programs and fuels grants
- Forest Stewardship
- Oral Histories
- Resource Center
- Swan Lands Project
- Water Quality Monitoring & Restoration
- Wilderness Caretaking
- Visitor Center
- Footrace

Operating Expenses \$49,250

(Swan lands and Elk Creek acquisition funding is not included here.)



**Anticipated Funding Sources**

**YES, I can help**

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 6887 Highway 83, Condon MT 59826.

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