

Winter 2008-09



Letter from Neil Meyer

Montana's Working Forests

I've been a logger all my life. My wife Dixie and I have managed the timber on our land for over 50 years, and we still have trees for the future. As longtime residents of the Swan Valley, we have a deep concern for the area. The Swan Valley economy has been rural and forest-based with woods jobs—logging, outfitting and small ranches. We want to perpetuate the history and rural lifestyle of the Swan. We support the Montana Working Forests initiative, which would add lands to the state of Montana and go a long way toward keeping those traditional jobs in the woods.

The Swan Valley is probably the best tree-growing area in Montana. The wildlife and fish habitat is rich and diverse, and is the finest in the state for bull trout and other endangered species, including grizzly bears. We have a diversity of plant species, and the scenic and recreational opportunities are superb.

Anyone familiar with the map of the Swan Valley knows that every other section on the valley floor has been in Plum Creek Timber, Co. ownership, with the balance in national forest and to a lesser extent state lands. The Plum Creek timberlands, originally some 84,000 acres, have historically been managed for timber and open for public access.

Recently, Plum Creek has been divesting its holdings, with some timberlands intended as additions to the

Flathead National Forest and others potentially going to the state. In the Swan Valley, this would mean acquiring about 25 square miles of checkerboarded Plum Creek lands, intermixed with the Swan River State Forest, to add to Montana's land base.

An acquisition for the state would bolster our forest economy, guarantee public access for recreation, and contribute to Montana's school trust fund.

Blocked management would make it easier for the state to provide a steady flow of forest products. This means employment for local people and more dependable raw wood material to local mills. The Swan Valley has been saddled with a checkerboarded landscape since lands were set aside in the late 1800s for the railroads. By acquiring the adjacent Plum Creek timberlands, the Swan River State Forest would at last be able to manage a block of lands rather than piecemeal in disconnected parcels. Wide ranging wildlife species and our tributaries are not constrained by po-

Fuels and forest health assistance available

This fall 11 Swan Valley landowners have been taking advantage of Swan Ecosystem Center's forest stewardship program, receiving assistance ranging from small 10-acre fuels reduction projects near home sites to a large-scale 200-acre comprehensive management plan aimed at forest health.

SEC's Forest Steward, Mike Palladini, working with the Swan River State Forest Service Forester, Allen Branine, and SEC's Kathy Koors, can offer stewardship planning and financial assistance. Funds can be available for approved stewardship plans if the



Management units map

value of the products to be removed during logging or restoration is inadequate to cover the costs of the forest

health and fuels reduction work. Forest stewardship planning involves identifying the landowner's goals, assessing the property's attributes or problems, and mapping management units. Mike Palladini can bring in spe-

Continued page 3

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Swan Ecosystem Center

Our Vision

The Swan Valley is rural and wild. It is a rich environment where people and a natural diversity of native plants and animals thrive. People learn and work together to ensure that the ecosystem's resources are protected, responsibly used, and available for all future generations.

Mission

Maintain a strong, vital community involved in setting its own destiny through partnerships that encourage sustainable use and care of public and private lands.

Swan Ecosystem Center

*Respecting each other.
Sustaining the land.*

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Swan Valley Ecosystem Management & Learning Center, Inc.

Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC) is a non-profit community 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 of the Flathead National Forest. This partnership allows the community to maintain an effective working relationship with the federal land managers.

Swan Ecosystem Center
6887 Highway 83, Condon, MT 59826

406/754-3137

406/754-3138

406/754-2965 (fax)

swanec@blackfoot.net (e-mail)

SwanEcosystemCenter.com (Web)

Art Auction supports wilderness stewardship; Swan, Clearwater and Blackfoot arts

Swan Ecosystem Center and Alpine Artisans, Inc. joined forces at the MCT Center for the Performing Arts in Missoula on September 28th to host a Crown of the Continent Celebration, supporting arts in the Swan, Clearwater and Blackfoot valleys and the stewardship of the Mission Mountains Wilderness and Swan Range.

Twenty-three painters, three-dimensional artists, and photographers were selected for the live auction by Missoula gallery owner Dudley Dana. Fifty-two art items were included in the silent auction.

All of the artists' works were inspired by the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem. The variety of media and skills displayed was impressive.

Fred Burows of Burows Auction Services, Great Falls, was the auctioneer. His experience and energy made for a fun, fast-paced event.

Abolt wins People's Choice

Russ Abolt's *Cotton Crucible* was selected for the People's Choice Award. Olivia Olsen came in second for *Wind Dance*. Tied for third were

Nancy Trieb with *Pure Gold* and Ed Wolff with *On the Prowl*.

Ralph Waldt, author of the acclaimed photo journal book, *The*



Cottonwood Crucible by Russ Abolt

Crown of the Continent, traveled from Arizona for the event. He gave a talk and slide presentation, including photos taken during 10,000 miles of hiking in the Crown. Waldt captured the spirit of the wild country, renewing our shared commitment to preservation of this magnificent ecosystem.

Andy Huppert played the guitar, creating a pleasant ambience. This evening of collaboration between SEC and Alpine Artisans came about as a result of months of work. The participation of many wonderful, dedicated volunteers made this event a success.

Arts and wilderness trails draw millions of visitors who strengthen the economy of Western Montana. According to a 2008 Travel Montana report, anglers, hunters and wildlife watchers spend more than \$1 billion each year in Montana, generating more than 8,000 full-time jobs, and Montana's arts organizations bring in a total of \$85 million annually.

Rod Ash, Candy Hummel honored for volunteerism

Swan Ecosystem Center founder and former chairman Rod Ash was honored November 10 by the Swan Valley Senior Services group for his lifetime of exemplary volunteer service. Rod died in 2006.

Rod was the first to be named on the new Candace Hummel Award plaque, which will honor a Swan Valley volunteer each year. Candy, who was herself an exceptional volunteer,

passed away in early 2008.

Rod was a founder of the Swan Citizens' ad hoc Committee, past president of Montana Audubon and he was on Montana's Best Management Practices audit team.

Candy worked tirelessly to develop an emergency contact list of Swan Valley residents that will aid fire fighters and emergency personnel if evacuations are called for.

Locally made gifts available at SEC

Don't forget to stop into SEC's visitor center for your holiday shopping. We carry an array of merchandise including *Swan Valley Place Names* by Steve Lamar, *Swan Valley, a Century of Change* compiled by Suzanne Vernon, and many



other regional books. The proceeds from Dodie Wood's ceramics benefit our Bear Aware program, and Sheri Burden's stained glass ornaments look beautiful on Christmas trees. We have cards

by Sharon Lamar, Steve Ellis, and Juan De Santa-Anna, and hand-crafted wildlife throw pillows sewn by Carmen Wyant. Our animal track stamps made by Jan Jones are perfect stocking stuffers.

The Forest Service also sells Christmas tree permits through our office, so stop in and buy one once you've found the perfect tree!



Montana's Working Forest continued

litical boundaries. Removing the checkerboard would lead to improved wildlife connectivity and better water quality protection.

Land in the north Swan Valley is highly productive. The forests are resilient. Trees grow tall and fast in this moist climate, where the Mission Mountains are low enough on the western horizon that clouds from prevailing westerlies can course over and release rain and snow on the valley floor. The annual timber growth rate on the Swan River State Forest is one of the highest in Montana. We would be remiss to lose these valuable timberlands to development for non-forest uses. If Plum Creek lands go to private buyers, fences and no trespassing signs will go up and the historical public access for hunting, fishing and berry picking will be lost.

We hear honest concern on both sides of a contentious issue: some people fear Plum Creek lands scheduled for acquisition by Montana might be constrained to such an extent few trees would ever be cut, while others are afraid the land will be over-harvested. The advantage of public ownership is that the debate can continue. Montanans will always have the right to affect land management—as long as the land IS public. This is not the case if they are privately developed for second homes. Let's protect the land while we have this rare opportunity. When the lands are secure, we can continue the discussion on how best to manage them in the tradition of a democratic society.

Thank You SEC Volunteers

We honor and appreciate all volunteers. Below are the

Larrine Abolt	Emma Hipkins	Nan Nelson
Russ Abolt	Jake Hipkins	Rich Nelson
Karen Anderson	James Hipkins	Alan Newall
Kvande Anderson	Shari Hirst	Colleen Nicholson
Leita Anderson	Leslie Hodgskiss	Mark Nicholson
John Arias	Linnea Hodgskiss	Stan Nicholson
June Ash	Ashley Holmes	Susan Novosel
Ned Banning	Jessie Hood	Pat O'Herren
Emily Beck	Justin Hood	Tom Opdahl
George Beck	Katie Hood	Frank Owens
Bill Beers	Debbie Hulett	Kay Owens
Katharine Beers	Candy Hummel	William Owings
Austin Binder	Andy Huppert	Mike Palladini
Havanna Binder	Polly Huppert	Gary Palm
Rick Birdwell	Helen Ike	Alyn Parcell
Dawn Bishop	Chris Jewett	Mitch Parcell
Rick Bishop	Jan Jones	Wrangell Parcell
Chelsea Bond	Marianne Judge	Melanie Parker
Conna Bond	Lucinda Jann	Tom Parker
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Bill Brenner	Wes Kesterson	Keith Ream
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Jeff Brown	Dosung Kim	Gene Roessler
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Sheri Burden	Kathy Koors	Sue Rowlands
Jacob Casebolt	Terry Krebsbach	Mark Ruby
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Mike Childs	Labbs Family	Seeley Swan High School
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Lily Clarke	Mike Lake	Jesse Swigert
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Marybeth Hennessy	Pam Muskett	
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Thank You SEC Supporters

2007- 08 financial donors are listed here. Volunteers are listed on the other side. Thank you all.

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Tree Farmers honor Diann Ericson

Diann Ericson, SEC's education coordinator, was honored September 27 with the Montana Tree Farmer's Forestry Educator award.

The Tree Farmer's annual meeting and dinner was held at the Arlee Community Hall, where the floors of shoe-worn wooden boards and bright white walls pleasantly created a sense of tradition.

As with many organizations, the Tree Farmers review the successes of the past 12 months and recognize achievements of its members and the community at large.

The Tree Farmers strive to help private forest landowners manage their lands with the goals of conserv-

ing forests, water, and wildlife while promoting natural resources based recreational opportunities. They support the responsible harvesting of renewable natural resources and the Montana Wood Products Industry.



Paul McKenzie, Stoltz Lumber, hands Diann Ericson her award

Diann was acknowledged for her leadership role with Swan Ecosystem Center's:

- Students-on-the-land forest stewardship educational trunk for students and teachers.
- Swan Valley 4th-6th-grade students' presentations at Seeley Lake's Tamaracks Festival.
- The Barber Pit Restoration project for 7-8 grade students.
- Other forest stewardship programs with local youth.

Forest health and forest stewardship continued

cialists to help with assessments if forest insects and disease, soil compaction, water quality, or other technical issues are concerns. Landowners can now also receive assistance in protecting their wetlands and streamside areas.

SEC will be developing forest stewardship learning materials for access on the SEC website, through a partnership with the National Network of Forest Practitioners.

Landowners and managers are encouraged to pick up applications from SEC. Contractors are also invited to have applications on hand for clients who would benefit from the program.

The participating landowners se-

Forest Stewardship Workshop

The MSU Extension Forest Stewardship Workshop for Private Landowners will be held at Swan Ecosystem Center July 9, 10 & 17. Participants will learn to assess their forests and develop management plans. Contact SEC for more information.



Stewardship planning discussion at the Wood-Wittrich property

Douglas-fir Pheromones

SEC will again offer Douglas-fir pheromones at a 50/50 cost share price, similar to last year's price of \$.67 each. The pheromone capsules help discourage Douglas-fir beetles. Contact Kathy Koors if you want to be included. She will order in February. The pheromones should be attached to Douglas-fir trees in April or early

Support outdoor learning:

Swan Ecosystem Center has become an affiliate member of REI, Recreational Equipment, Inc. and is benefiting from the company's grants program.

This fall REI provided SEC with \$5000 in program support for youth snowshoes, cross country ski equipment, and bus transportation for school field trips to the Swan Valley.

SEC's After School Club for 8-13 year-olds will be first to benefit from the new equipment. The 7th-8th-grade students working on the Barber Pit Restoration project will also get to try the new skis and snowshoes this winter.

Furthermore, shoppers can now go to the SwanEcosystemCenter.org web site, scroll down on the home page to find the REI logo, and click on it to enter the REI web site, where purchases can be made. Any shopping done this way online garners 5 percent of the sales price for SEC's educational programs.

REI is an outdoor equipment business that originated in the Seattle area in the 1960s. The company's purpose is to: "...inspire, educate and outfit people for a lifetime of outdoor adventure and stewardship."

In 2004 the company opened a branch store in Missoula. Their local presence provided SEC with program support. Shortly after opening its Missoula store, REI staff were in the Swan Valley helping SEC with presentations on GPS mapping and Leave No Trace hiking and camping.

To learn more call Swan Ecosystem Center at (406) 754-3137 and ask for Diann. The next time you have an opportunity to speak with REI staff members, please thank them for their support.

SwanEcosystemCenter.org,
SwanValleyConservation.org,
& TheMontanaLegacyProject.org
For conservation news and updates

Bear Task Force to address human/bear conflicts

A bear task force of volunteers, and Swan Ecosystem Center and Northwest Connections staff, is forming to find ways to help prevent human/bear conflicts in the Swan Valley.

The goal is to become a model community with official Bear Aware status that other communities could replicate. The task force will work with residents to reduce problems caused by bear attractants near homes. This may include:

- Purchases of bear resistance garbage containers for residents.
- Assistance with electric fencing around fruit trees, gardens or stock feeding areas.
- Site assessments to identify and resolve problem areas on private ground.

- Volunteer participation in a survey to determine effectiveness of bear resistant products.
- Keeping track of bears and bear issues in the Swan Valley to better inform residents.
- Hosting an annual Bear Fair and other events.
- Identifying one person from each neighborhood to serve as a liaison between the task force and their neighbors.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Kathy Koors at Swan Ecosystem Center.

2008 Budget

(2009 budget to be available in February)

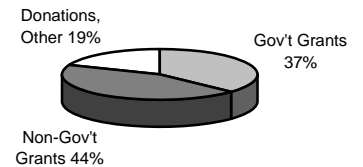
Projects: \$339,287

Bear Aware
Education
Firewise and Fuels Reduction Grants
Foot Race
Forest Stewardship
Oral Histories
Resource Center
Swan Lands Conservation
Water Quality Monitoring and Restoration
Wilderness Caretaking
Visitor Center

Operating Expenses: \$57,825

(Swan Lands and Elk Creek acquisition funding is not shown here.)

Anticipated Funding Sources



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