

Spring 2008

Changes in the Swan Valley call for super hero

The Swan Valley is changing: new homes in the forest, views through the trees where once there were dense stands, open swathes on the hillsides from the recent Crazy Horse and Holland Peak fires, and new colors on the maps where lands have changed hands.

Plum Creek Timber Company has been selling land, much of it to the Forest Service for conservation purposes, but some is being converted to residential subdivision and in a few places “No Trespassing” signs have blocked passage where we once freely walked. About 66,500 acres of Plum Creek lands may be sold in the next few years.

In an effort to slow the change caused by development, about 30 new and longtime residents have negotiated conservation easements with land trust organizations, giving up valuable development rights and disallowing future subdivision to protect their private forestlands, wildlife habitat, open space and a rural way of life.

When newcomers arrive, they naturally are eager to “improve” their places, but often before learning the functional role of their forestlands in the larger ecosystem or how to utilize best management practices.

New residents recognize the need to reduce forest fuels near their home

sites, but each property has its unique attributes and requires a site-specific plan. There are a myriad of issues to consider.



Mike Palladini, SEC's new Land and Forest Steward

The Swan Valley map resembles a checkerboard with the lands managed by Plum Creek intermingled with national forest lands, and to a lesser extent state forest lands. The residential areas are spreading out from the highway and the Swan River, farther into the forests and up the hillsides.

We have grizzly bears, gray wolves, bull trout and other wildlife federally listed under the Endangered Species Act, and we have more wetlands and rare plants than anywhere else in Montana. Everything we do on private or public lands affects everything else.

In this complicated setting, what we need short of a super hero, is a

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Swan Lands Update

Collaboration leads to conservation

In early 2007, The Trust for Public Land (TPL) acquired 480 acres of Plum Creek Timber Co. land adjacent to the Swan River State Forest (Section 29, T23N, R17W) and then conveyed it to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). Funding came from the federal Forest Legacy Program and the private Wyss Foundation.

In July, an additional 640 acres (S21, T23N, R17W) was acquired with Forest Legacy funds and was later passed on to FWP. The Wyss Foundation and the Bonneville Power Administration contributed funding for this acquisition.

In December, another 320 acres of Plum Creek land (N1/2 Section 33, T23N, R17W) was purchased by TPL. It was also conveyed to FWP, utilizing funding from the Forest Legacy Program and the Wyss Foundation.

The federal Forest Legacy Program provides funds to protect forest-

Continued page 2

Congratulations Photo Contest Winners

- Landscape—Lee Anne Stultz, Bigfork
- Outdoor Recreation—Paul Gereg, Swan Valley
- Outdoor Work—Lucas Lamar, Swan Valley
- Wildlife—Jesse Lee Varnado, Helena
- Youth—Martin Horejsi, Missoula

For details see SwanValleyConservation.org.

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.



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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
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406/754-3137
406/754-3138
406/754-2965 (fax)
swanec@blackfoot.net (e-mail)
SwanEcosystemCenter.com (Web)

Super hero continued...

Land and Forest Steward, someone to coordinate conservation planning in response to Plum Creek divestment and be available to help new and long-time landowners maintain their valuable timberlands and protect the natural amenities that brought them here in the first place.

Swan Ecosystem Center hired Mike Palladini in April to fill this super hero role. Mike is an ornithologist, with an MS in Wildlife Biology from Humboldt State University. His thesis dealt with the effects of ponderosa pine forest restoration on Cooper's hawks. In 2007, while working at the Avian Science Center in Missoula, Mike conducted research on bird communities in old growth forests in northwestern Montana.

"I'm a research scientist by training, but my goal has always been to make a difference," Mike said in his job interview. "Coordinating conservation strategies and helping landowners with stewardship plans will put my science training to work."

Mike has a three-part job. He will be responsible for convening and facilitating meetings among all the agencies and organizations that tackle conservation in the Swan Valley.

To help landowners, Mike will

work hand-in-hand with residents and with SEC's Kathy Koors, and DNRC's Service Forester Allen Branine to devise effective stewardship plans, enhancing SEC's current landowner program.

To improve communication between Swan Valley residents and public land managers, he will also organize field tours and meetings with the Flathead National Forest and the Swan River State Forest. This will provide a learning opportunity for landowners and help the agencies develop good

Events, Meetings and Field Tours Schedule

May 13—Spring Outdoor Clean up Day, U.S.F. S. Condon Work Center, all day.

May 17 - 18—Restoration Workshop at SEC and the Elk Creek Conservation Area beginning at 9am on May 17.

May 22—Swan Lands Coordinating Committee at SEC, noon-2pm.

May 29—Noxious Weed Meeting—Swan Ecosystem Center, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

May 30—Hemlock Elk Fuels Reduction and Forest Health Stewardship Project field tour, begin at SEC, 9 am.

June 19, 20 & 21—Living in the Swan landowner workshop, at the Swan Valley Community Hall, beginning at 8:30 a.m. on June 19.

Swan Lands continued...

lands in the United States. The program requires matching funds totaling 25 percent of the cost of an acquisition or conservation easement.

In April 2007, TPL completed the acquisition of 440 acres of Plum Creek land in the Owl Creek area and conveyed it to an adjacent private buyer who plans to protect the land with a conservation easement.

The Montana Land Reliance, Vital Ground Foundation, and TPL worked together to complete several conservation easements on private parcels in the Swan Valley. Through these collaborative efforts, an additional 1,324 acres of private lands were placed un-

der easements, including 870 acres of land previously owned by Plum Creek.

Efforts continue this year to develop and implement conservation strategies for the Swan Valley, including the protection of 9,142 acres of identified Plum Creek lands with high resource values, including wildlife, fisheries and wetland habitat, public recreation, and timberlands that are at risk of development and subdivision.

To view the updated conservation map and learn more details about the conservation strategy, visit the Web site SwanValleyConservation.org.

Fuels reduction project alters the views from the Everchanging Forest Trail

The view from the trailhead at the start of SEC's Everchanging Forest Trail indicates the forest is indeed changing, in this case from recent thinning as part of the Forest Service Condon Fuels Reduction stewardship project.

Last winter Pyramid Mountain Lumber thinned the forest west of the U.S. Forest Service Condon Work Center.

Volunteers will be called on this summer to help revise the trail signs and brochures so they reflect these human-caused changes as well as natural events that have occurred in recent years.



Restoration workshop planned for Elk Creek Conservation Area

The Elk Creek Conservation Area will be the site of a restoration workshop May 17-18. Open to landowners and contractors, participants will develop a restoration strategy that can be used throughout the Swan Valley.

Topics will include assessing restoration needs; developing plans; restoring roads, streams and ponds; managing noxious weeds; using native plants; creating a restoration workforce; and other topics.

Restoration consultant Sungnome Madrone will lead the workshop. He was a co-director of Natural Resources Services (NRS), a Division of Redwood Community Action Agency in Humboldt County, Calif. NRS provides assistance to watershed groups such as Swan Ecosystem Center.

Madrone is a certified Forest Stewardship Lead Professional. He received the 2005 Restoration Worker of the Year Award from the Alliance of Sustainable Jobs and the Environment. He is a past board president of the National Network of Forest Practitioners.

The workshop is sponsored by Wildlands CPR, a Missoula-based organization specializing in restoration, Northwest Connections, a Swan Valley nonprofit group, and Madrone Enterprises, Inc. Contact Northwest Connections, 754-3185, or go to the NwC Web site to sign up: northwestconnections.org.

Thank You SEC Volunteers

At long last we are making room to honor our recent volunteers. Below are the names of people listed in our Volunteer Sign Out Book, and a few others who are not listed. We know that many volunteers never log their hours in our book. Please help us correct this list. We want to acknowledge everyone who contributes, and we want to spell names right. Volunteers are very important. We would be helpless without their contributions.

Larrine Abolt	Robin Hamilton	Harriet Nelson
Russ Abolt	Mo Hartmann	Nan Nelson
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Kvande Anderson	Betsey Hipkins	Alan Newall
Leita Anderson	Emma Hipkins	Stan Nicholson
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Dawn Bishop	Jan Jones	Tom Parker
Rick Bishop	Marianne Judge	Bill Peabody
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Conna Bond	Adam Lieberg	Jim Quinn
Emily Beth Bond	Lucinda Jann	Robert Rasmussen
Mark Bond	Ron Jones	Keith Ream
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Vern Guyer	Jerye Motschman	Sam Yates
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Thank You SEC Supporters

Recent financial donors are listed here. Volunteers are listed on the other side. Thank you all.

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Living in the Swan Best Management Practices Workshop for Landowners

A workshop for longtime residents and new arrivals June 19-21 will help people make informed choices when caring for their land.

Swan Ecosystem Center is sponsoring this landowner workshop at the Swan Valley Community Hall.

Topics will include: tree diseases and insects, water quality, landscaping and native plants, thinning and logging, weeds, conservation strategies, living with wildlife, and wildfire home protection.

Local landscapers and logging contractors are invited to provide in-

formation about their services at the workshop. Contractors should call Swan Ecosystem Center to sign up. Due to time constraints, the number of local businesses participating will be on a first-come first-serve basis.

Workshop participants are asked to pre-register by June 15. Fees include refreshments, hall rental, transportation and materials. Registration for the 3-day workshop is \$40 or \$15 per day. Family rates will be \$50 and \$20 respectively. Call Swan Ecosystem Center—754-3137—to sign up and to receive a syllabus.

Taylor Wilcox, SEC youth volunteer honored

Swan Ecosystem Center's nominee for the Montana Environmental Education Association Student of the Year award received the top honor for his volunteer water quality monitoring, wetland restoration, and assistance with SEC's student fieldtrips.

Taylor Wilcox received his Award March 14 in Helena at MEEA's annual conference. In May, he will report on SEC's volunteer youth water quality

monitoring program and review the data collected in the Swan River and Glacier and Elk Creeks for the Montana Watercourse at Lubrecht Forest. Taylor has volunteered over 100 hours helping SEC. Taylor enjoys hiking, fishing, hunting, and primitive bow construction. He is conducting his own lichen research to establish the relationship between lichens and various altitudes. He will major in environmental studies when he attends college.



Taylor Wilcox bores a ponderosa with Scott McCleery and After School Club members

Lex Blood to return in June for popular geology program

Swan Ecosystem Center is bringing back geologist and educator Lex Blood June 28 to conduct a workshop on the geology of the Swan Valley.

The sign up deadline for this popular workshop is June 24. People began signing up as early as April. If

you are interested please contact Swan Ecosystem Center to get your name on the list. The workshop is limited to 30 participants. Pack a lunch and be prepared to go outside.

Watch for a full summer education program schedule coming soon.

Mission Mountains, Swan Range fundraiser planned for Missoula; Alpine Artisans involved

A September art auction in Missoula will be sponsored by Swan Ecosystem Center and Alpine Artisans to support the care of the Mission Mountains Wilderness and the Swan Range, as well as AAI's Cultural Arts Corridor initiative.

The event will commemorate the Crown of the Continent—the ecosystem encompassing Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta, the wildlands of southeast British Columbia, Glacier National Park, the Bob Marshall and Mission Mountains Wildernesses, and the communities surrounding these natural areas.

Alpine Artisans, Inc., is comprised of artists and supporters of the arts in the Swan Valley, Seeley Lake and Ovando communities. The Cultural Arts Corridor promotes local art and culture and celebrates the artists' connection to wild places.

For several years, SEC has benefited from the generous contributions of AAI members supporting SEC's wilderness and backcountry program. This is the first year SEC and AAI are formally joining forces for the benefit of both.

Artists should contact SEC or AAI for information on how to participate. Details will be available in SEC's summer newsletter and on the SEC Web site, SwanEcosystemCenter.com.

Trail Reports

Beginning in June, trail conditions will be posted on SEC's Web site.

Funding to support SEC's 2008 wilderness and backcountry program also comes from the National Forest Foundation, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Recreation Trails Program, and private donors. SEC is applying for 2009 funding from the FWP Recreation Trails Program.

Bluebird boxes become a community project

Three Seeley-Swan High School seniors joined with Swan Ecosystem

Center's After School Club to build, install and care for blue bird boxes on the Condon airstrip fence.

Seniors Tyler Everson, Ben Mendenhall and Caitlin Stone responded to long-time resident June Ash's suggestion that they meet their community service requirement for graduation by developing the bluebird box project.



L. to r.: Linnea Hodgskiss, Kimberly Kellogg, Tyler Everson, Wrangell Parcell, Jack Kennedy, Ben Mendenhall

The seniors asked the After School Club to provide long-term

care for the boxes and received a resounding "YES" from the members. The boxes were installed April 8. Blue birds like open areas with lots of snags. They are one of the species that benefit from burned forests. Bluebird boxes provide nesting cavities where snags are missing.

2008 Budget

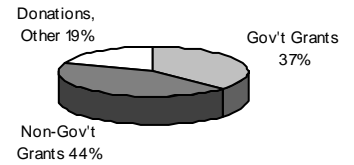
Projects: \$339,287

- 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



YES, I can help

please clip and mail

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6887 Highway 83, Condon, MT 59826

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