
Summer 2008

Legacy project to protect Swan timberlands

Excitement and words of congratulation are wafting on the wind as news of the Montana Legacy Project unfolds and details of the conservation agreement to protect 320,000 acres of timberlands in western Montana come to light.

About 66,000 acres of Plum Creek Timber Company land in the Swan Valley will be safe from subdivision development and available for timber management, recreation and wildlife habitat, according to the plan.

"We found a nice place when we came here; we need to leave it the same when we are gone," said SEC chair Neil Meyer.

"It takes a weight off my shoulders," said Gary Lazarowski. "I was worried about the land next to me."

Senator Max Baucus included a funding provision in the 2008 farm bill allowing acquisition of timberlands for the national forest system.

Representatives of the Trust for Public Land (TPL), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Plum Creek Timber Company reached the agreement in late June. It will have historic significance in the Swan Valley, yet result in very little change. The valley will remain rural and wild.

Swan Ecosystem Center has been working with TPL, Plum Creek, the Forest Service and many other partners to protect Plum Creek lands since

the late 1990s when the Flathead National Forest acquired several sections around Lindbergh Lake. TNC joined the partnership more recently, playing a key role in initiating the Montana Legacy Project.



The Swan Valley and Mission Mountains. *Photo by Diann Ericson*

Some of the timberlands may be available for the State of Montana to acquire—or for other conservation strategies, such as additional community forest land. The final outcome, however may be years away. SEC will work with partners to provide opportunities for residents to weigh in on the land's dispersal.

Most of the parcels have been re-

**Bear Affair offers fun,
food and latest research**

A beer and bratwurst festival at Condon's Hungry Bear Steakhouse August 2 will celebrate Swan Valley bears and be a barrel of fun.

Most of the Seeley-Swan Bear Affair activities will take place on the restaurant lawn behind the restaurant from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Chris Serhveen, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grizzly bear coordinator, will present his most recent digital slideshow of bear research in the Swan Valley. His indoor presentation underscores the fact that people share the Swan Valley with grizzly bears.

Tim Manley, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, will provide information on how to successfully live with bears and avoid conflicts.

A demonstration of Karelian bear dogs by Wind River Bear Institute will be a highlight for kids and adults.

Chuck Bartlebaugh, Center for Wildlife Information, will demonstrate the proper use of bear pepper spray.

Kids and adults can walk the Bear Aware Trail, guided by Missoula Girl Scouts, for a fun way to learn about camping and hiking safely in bear country. SEC's Bear/Loon Ranger will challenge people's knowledge with the Bear Jeopardy game.

Raffle

A raffle drawing to support the Bear Aware program will take place August 2 during the Bear Affair. Prizes include three handmade quilts, a river float trip donated by Montana

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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.

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Swan Valley Ecosystem Management &
Learning Center, Inc.

Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC) is a nonprofit 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)

Late snow, wind storms slow trail opening

"The forces of nature are playing out their role in the Missions this summer with raging creeks from late runoff, making for challenging creek crossings," said wilderness ranger Kari Gunderson on July 11 describing conditions in the Mission Mountains Wilderness.

"You can still find snow in the high alpine lakes and as the snow melts the mosquitos are building up momentum."

Furthermore the July 4 mini-



Top: Mike Childs and Diann Ericson clearing trails on the Swan Range. *Diann Ericson photo*



Left: Mark Ruby and Adam Lieberg with crosscut saw in Mission Mountains Wilderness. *Erika Edgley photo*

tornado that swept across the valley from Piper Creek to Lion Creek uprooted thousands of trees across the valley or broke them off at the trunks.

After the storm, Kari inspected the Piper Creek Trail, which her crews had recently opened. "I counted 133 trees down from the trailhead to the wilderness boundary. I walked a mile beyond the boundary and counted 40 more trees down with several jackpot piles of stacked trees. Right now the trail is impassable."

On the Swan Range, Mike Childs opened the Foothills Trail twice after an earlier windstorm caused new blowdown on trails on the east side of the valley.

As of July 13, Hikers were encountering patches of snow at about 6,000 feet and wet camping spots where melting was just occurring.

Visitors are also expected to comply with the Flathead National Forest Food Storage Order that protects people and wildlife. Food must be hung 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet out

from the trunk of a tree when people are away from camp, or stored in an approved bear resistant container. It is also good practice to hang food at night away from camp.

Coolers are not bear resistant. The rangers ask you to leave coolers, even if empty, in your car or in the cab of your pickup truck. Bears can recognize coolers and will inspect them.

Climbers should be reminded that the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes close the area around McDonald Peak each year from July 15 to October 1 to allow grizzly bears to feast on insect larvae in the rocks.

SEC employs the rangers who work in the Mission Mountains Wilderness and the Swan Range with funds from the MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks Recreation Trails Program, the National Forest Foundation, the Forest Service, and private donations.

Visit SwanEcosystemCenter.com for trail reports or contact SEC at 406/754-3137.

Elk Creek fencing to restore native plants and secure stream bank

A grant from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks spawned a restoration project to benefit bull trout in the Elk Creek Conservation Area at the confluence of Elk Creek and the Swan River.

During a restoration workshop in May offered by Wildland CPR and Northwest Connections (see spring newsletter), participants noticed that hundreds of willow, red osier dogwood, and cottonwood seedlings near the creek were sprouting, but failing to reach maturity. They were being severely browsed each year by elk, moose and deer.

The streamside area had been logged in the 1980s, but the site had not regenerated. The banks were losing root structure and collapsing, causing silt and sand to wash into the creek, potentially discouraging bull trout from traveling upstream to spawn.

An on-site discussion during the restoration workshop led to a plan for protecting young deciduous trees and shrubs with wire "exclosures."



Bill Moore and Mo Hartmann fasten wire mesh to exclosure fence posts. *Marnie Criley photo*

The fencing would allow the seedlings to grow, establish roots and eventually help secure the banks.

On June 11, volunteers working with a crew from Mark Vander Meer's Watershed Consulting erected the exclosures, which range in size from four feet in diameter to protect individual plants to as large as 50 by 20 feet, where clusters of seedlings were present. After about five years when the plants are taller than deer and elk can reach, the fencing can be moved to protect additional trees and shrubs.

A second small grant will fund the collection and germination of cottonwood and willow seedlings. The seeds are being collected along Elk Creek by Native Ideals, an Arlee nursery. When large enough, the seedlings will be placed in pots and grown in the Swan Valley until they can be transplanted to Elk Creek.

People with extra garden space, a source of water, and adequate fencing to keep deer out are invited to care for the plants while they are in containers. For more information on how to participate, please contact Swan Ecosystem Center.

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	Mo Hartmann	Rich Nelson
Russ Abolt	Marybeth Hennessy	Alan Newall
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Recent financial donors are listed here. Volunteers are listed on the other side. Thank you all.

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Summer Programs

June 19-21, Living in the Swan Workshop

Homeowners receive valuable strategies from natural resource specialists for fireproofing, landscaping and general land management of private property.

June 26, Frog Day

Adults and youth are encouraged to participate in the annual inventory of amphibians and reptiles by helping to survey wetlands of the Elk Creek area.

June 28, Geology Workshop

Retired geologist Lex Blood will conduct a brief lecture and extended field tour on the topic of Swan Valley geology.

July 5, Foot Race

The sixth annual Celebrate the Swan Race. Half marathon, 10K, 5K and one mile fun run to support land conservation in the Swan Valley, including games for youngsters.

July 7-11, Y-Camp

Five days of outdoor education and fun in the Swan Valley for youth ages 8-12. US Forest Service Condon Work Center, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Fee \$35 /child. Inquire about scholarships. Call 677-3033 for more information.

July 24-25, Fish Camp

Youth learn from biologists and fishing experts the basics of fishing techniques, equipment, trout identification, catch and release and much more. Held at Van Lake. Be at Van Lake by 10:00 a.m. Suggested donation, \$10/person, \$20/family. **Sign up deadline, July 21.**

July 31, History Night

This year's annual local history night will feature Steve Lamar discussing his book, Swan Valley Place Names. US Forest Service Condon Work Center, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

August 1, Fly Fishing

Renowned fly fishing expert Les Rutledge will offer classroom and streamside instruction. Meet at US Forest Service Condon Work Center, 10- 2:30 p.m. Class size limited to 12. Fee \$25/person. **Deadline to sign up July 30.**

August 4-8, Backpacking

Two days of instruction and two nights in the woods. Learn backpacking techniques to simplify and enjoy camping in the backcountry. Students under 11 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Classes 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon. Donations appreciated. **Sign up deadline, July 30.**

August 14, Osprey

Wildlife biologist from the University of Montana will discuss the natural history of osprey, commonly seen at Holland Lake as well as all of the Seeley-Swan Valleys. Holland Lake Beach, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

August 16, Patagonia Wildlife

Jim Williams of MT FWP, will narrate awesome photos and discuss his work with wildlife managers in Patagonia, Argentina. USFS Condon Work Center, 7:00 -8:30 p.m. **Sign up deadline, August 14.**

September 20, History Bus

Salmon Prairie history bus tour. See and hear about homesteads, schools and sawmills in the valley including the Salmon Prairie School, used continuously since its origin in 1921. Meet at the USFS Condon Work Center 9:30 a.m.- 2:30 p.m. bus tour, bring a lunch. **Sign up deadline, September 15.**

Bear Affair continued...

Raft Company, pottery by Bob and Ruth Korn, and many other items.

Raffle tickets cost \$10 each or four tickets for \$30. Funds will be used to purchase more bear resistant containers for SEC's loaner program to help residents secure their garbage. Tickets can be purchased by mail to Swan Ecosystem Center, 6887 Highway 83, Condon, MT 59826. To purchase by credit card, call SEC at 406-754-3137.

The Bear Affair is a cooperative project among SEC, Northwest Connections, Seeley Lake Bear Aware, US Fish and Wildlife Service, MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Flathead National Forest and other partners.

Special thanks to Dan Larsen for donating garbage pick up, transporting a bear resistant container, and helping to prevent bear problems at Condon's July 4 O-Mok-See and festivities.

Montana Legacy continued...

cently logged resulting in limited supply. Yet a "fiber supply agreement" will deliver timber products at market rate to Plum Creek's Montana mills over the next 10-15 years. Independent loggers will have opportunities to harvest the materials. Proceeds will be used to cover management costs and may be locally reinvested.

No one knows how Montana's timber economy will fare with global competition and high fuel prices. Given it is more efficient to manage large blocks of land than smaller residential parcels, the Montana Legacy Project offers some opportunities for mill workers, loggers and log truck drivers in the Swan Valley.

As the forests regenerate they will provide "ecosystem services" such as clear running streams, carbon sequestration, and wildlife habitat for native species.

Visit TheMontanaLegacyProject.org for more information.

Geology field trip...

Dr. Lex Blood, Kalispell, led SEC's June 28 geology workshop and field tour. The group visited several sites in the Swan Valley.

The Mission Mountains, Swan Range, and valley floor were formed from mud sediments, much of it laid down before life got its start.

The rock layers were then uplifted through faulting and the movement of tectonic plates.

The red, blue and yellow rock layers are argillites, or mud stones. Ripple marks and crack lines where



mud dried are evidence of ancient sea beds. Loose rocks also tell stories. Rivers and streams sort rocks by size and weight, while mixed rocks of all sizes indicate glacial activity.

2008 Budget

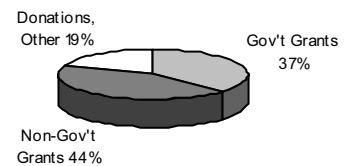
Projects: \$339,287

- 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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If you would like to use your credit card to make a donation, please call SEC at 406/754-3137.

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*Respecting each other.
Sustaining the land.*

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