

Spring 2009

Swan Valley grizzly returns, a story of risky existence

Swan Ecosystem Center has a new grizzly bear mount on permanent display at the visitor center. This 450 lb. male was hit by a pickup truck in October 2007 on Highway 83 near Grace's Greenhouse.

The bear was traveling the highway apparently seeking road-killed deer in the early hours of the morning. He had recently been fitted with a satellite collar that tracked his movements hourly.

Bears lead a risky life sharing the Swan Valley's rich natural habitat with humans. Not only are they occasionally hit by vehicles, but we also lure them into our backyards by careless management of pet food, garbage and other attractants, forcing wildlife officials to kill the bears for our protection.



Swan Valley grizzly mounted by Mountain Creek Taxidermy and funded in part by Neil and Dixie Meyer and Rob Henrekin.

Nearly 300 private land acres treated for forest health; grants passed on to landowners; more planned

Swan Ecosystem Center is fortunate during this time of poor timber markets to have funding for local landowners wanting to develop forest stewardship plans for their property.

In recent months SEC has helped eight landowners complete stewardship plans and treat a total of 292 acres. These projects were designed to remove trees weakened or killed by insects and disease, improve tree growth in the remaining stands, protect wildlife habitat and water quality, and reduce the risk of wildfire near homes.

In turn the landowners who received grant funding provided prod-

Continued page 2

Montana Legacy

Massive conservation effort well on its way

The first quarter of 2009 may be noted in Swan Valley history as a momentous time when much was accomplished to ensure little would change.

In February, Plum Creek Timber Co. sold over 44,000 acres of Swan Valley timberlands for temporary ownership to The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy. These lands will eventually be transferred to the Flathead National Forest.

This giant land purchase promises to continue life as usual by supporting a viable local timber economy and keeping our forests available for wildlife and recreation.

The purchase is part of the Montana Legacy Project's Phase II. Phase III in 2010, if completed as planned, will include timberlands intermixed with the Swan River State Forest totaling about 16,000 acres.

(For more on the 310,000 acre Montana Legacy Project visit TheMontanaLegacyProject.org.)

The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy will own various parcels of former Plum Creek land not destined for federal or state ownership that may be available for community purposes.

Representatives of TPL and TNC are working with the Community Council and other local groups to achieve some community goals. The Upper Swan Valley Historical Society is looking for land to build a his-

Continued page 5

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.org (Web)

Private land stewardship, continued

ucts for local mills and employed local logging contractors and haulers.

An additional eight landowners have had their plans approved for funding. Their projects on over 100 acres may be completed later this year.

The grant dollars come from the U.S. Forest Service National Forest Stewardship Program administered through Montana DNRC, and other grants.

SEC's Land and Forest Steward Mike Palladini and Kathy Koors, working with DNRC's Service Forester Allen Branine, are available to help people develop forest stewardship plans and apply for grant funding through SEC. Landowners can be reimbursed for 50 percent of the costs of removing the non-merchantable materials.

The landowners are responsible for selecting and contracting with the logger of their choice. SEC has a list of local contractors available upon request.

Contractors who may not be on the list are invited to provide SEC with their contact information and details about their equipment and the types of services they offer.

MSU Forest Stewardship Workshop to be at SEC

An MSU Forest Stewardship Workshop for private landowners will be held at SEC July 10, 11 and 18. The workshop is designed to help landowners learn about their land and create forest stewardship plans.

The cost for the 3-day workshop is \$75 per land ownership. Additional

family members. Applications are available at SEC and at the MSU Extension Forestry Web site, or by calling 406/243-2773, or e-mailing: extfor@forestry.umt.edu.

Weed grants still available

Swan Ecosystem Center still has over \$9,000 available from a Montana Weed Trust Fund grant for landowners to treat noxious weeds and re-establish desirable plant communities. Participating landowners can receive 50 percent of the cost of approved

herbicides, applicator contractor expenses, and grass seeds. Landowners will need to submit their receipts and fill out a reimbursement form at SEC to receive funding, which will be available on a first come, first serve basis as long as the dollars last.

The funds must be expended by September 2009. Contact SEC for more information, 754-3137.

Find new invaders; help map noxious weeds

We can stop new weeds before they are widespread. While still in small patches, weeds can be eradicated or controlled. The first step is to mark their locations on a map that SEC will pass on to the Missoula County Weed District (includes weeds in Lake County). Knapweed, oxeye daisy and Canada thistle are already widespread (unless in the Mission Mountains or Bob Marshall Wilderness). We are looking for the noxious orange and yellow hawkweeds, tansy ragwort, purple loosestrife and other new weeds. **More on weeds Page 5.**



Swan Valley contractor Jim Webb processing lodgepole pine for a private land forest stewardship project.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 23 Fire Behavior

Pat Andrews, fire research specialist, USFS Missoula Fire Sciences Lab will give a presentation on wildland fire research and behavior and the implications for homeowners, 7-8:30 p.m. Sign up deadline April 20. Donations appreciated.

April 30 Bear Wake Up Social

Learn about the latest bear research, enjoy delicious hors d'oeuvres, 6-8 p.m. at Swan Valley Community Hall.

May 9 Geology

Lex Blood, retired geology professor, Flathead Valley Community College give a presentation on basic concepts of geology as it relates to the Swan Valley 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Sign up deadline is May 1. Donations appreciated.

May 14 White bark Pine

Bob Keane, research ecologist, USFS Missoula Fire Sciences lab and Rocky Mountain Research Station, will present on white bark pine lifecycle and its role in the Swan Valley ecosystem. 7:00-8:30 p.m. Donations appreciated.

May 24 Loon and Fish Festival Wildflower Walk

Hikes to view native plants along the Holland Falls Trail. Times and sign up deadlines to be announced.

May 30 Insects and Disease

Ken Gibson, forest entomologist for the USFS, Region 1, and a forest pathologist will give a presentation on forest health. Landowners will learn to recognize and treat tree diseases and insects common to the Swan Valley. Includes classroom and field presentations. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sign up by May 22. Donations appreciated.

June 13 Noxious Weed ID, Mapping & Calibration

Lindsey Bona and Jed Little of Missoula County Weed District will present a workshop on Swan Valley noxious weed identification and treatment options. Includes classroom presentation and field trip 9 a.m. to noon. Sign up by June 9. Donations appreciated.

July 6-11 Y-Camp

A five-day outdoor camp at the USFS Condon Work Center, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Fee and ages to be announced.

July 10, 11 & 18 MSU Forest Stewardship Workshop

Three-day workshop for landowners to learn about land management options for their property. Fees are \$75 for the workshop and \$45 for extra workshop manuals.

July 11 Foot Race

Distances: half-marathon, 10K, 5K, 5K walk, 1 mile fun run. Registration begins at 8 am. Race times are 9 a.m. for the half-marathon, 10 a.m. for the 10K, 5K, 5K-walk and 1-mile fun-run. Registration fee is \$18 for runners 13 years old and older and \$9 for runners 12 years old and younger. Pre-registration available at SwanEcosystem-Center.org.

Thank You SEC Volunteers

We honor and appreciate all volunteers. Below are the

Larrine Abolt	Emma Hipkins	Nan Nelson
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Thank You SEC Supporters

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Wetland project underway

The Swan Valley has more wetlands than anywhere else in Montana. Our thousands of potholes, marshes, seasonal ponds, and lakes increase property value, purify ground water, recharge aquifers, provide flood control, and support a rich diversity of native plants that in turn provide foraging, hiding, and breeding habitat for nearly all the wildlife species native to northwestern Montana.

Working with several partners, SEC has recently launched a program designed to help local landowners develop wetland restoration and conservation projects and achieve these benefits. More information about how to be involved will be available soon.



Seeley Swan High School students and staff helping to construct pollinator garden beds.

Massive conservation, continued from Page 1

torical museum. A Swan Valley Community Council committee is considering whether to establish a transfer site for trash and recycling. And Swan Ecosystem Center, along with others in the community, is exploring the possibility of setting aside land for workforce housing.

Section 31: community options

Swan Ecosystem Center plans to work in partnership with community groups, The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy to help secure a portion of Section 31, the square mile of land that corners on Highway 83 across from the Swan Valley Community Hall, as a potential site for the community projects noted above.

Private land stewardship: weed grants available

Swan Ecosystem Center has over \$9,000 in grant funding from the Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund for private landowners. SEC can provide 50 percent of the cost of approved herbicides, applicator fees, and seeds for re-establishing desirable plants. The

Protecting Elk Creek

SEC also plans to continue working with partners to protect Section 3 on Elk Creek, an important bull trout stream. The land abuts the Elk Creek Conservation Area. It would provide a place near the community where people could learn about and practice community-based forestry.

Mill legislation supported

In early April the Montana Legislature was considering legislation to enable a revolving loan fund to help small timber mills survive during poor timber markets. Pyramid Mountain Lumber and many other local businesses and individuals, including SEC, testified in support.

funding will be available on a first come, first serve basis as long as it lasts. Participating landowners will need to provide receipts to receive reimbursement. Contact SEC for more information, 754-3137. **More on weeds Page 2.**

Seeking volunteers for pollinator garden

Swan Ecosystem Center's After School Club and members of Seeley Swan High School's Biology II class mixed and transported new garden soil last fall for the native plant beds at the Condon Work Center

Now it is time to set rock in place for the beds' walls and help with planting. Volunteers are invited to participate, including Swan Valley 4-H club members, local home-schooled students and adults.

The plants will be native to the Swan Valley and noted for their ability to attract bees and other pollinators. Terry Divoky of Wind Flower Native Plant Nursery in West Glacier has designed the beds. She will be with us June 11 to direct the effort and share her knowledge of native plant gardening.

The goals are to make people aware that pollinator species are declining and to encourage residents as they contemplate landscaping and management for their property to include more native pollinator-friendly shrubs and herbaceous plants. To do so is good for wildlife, and it requires less maintenance by the landowner.

Those volunteers who sign up by early May will be offered a fieldtrip to Glacier National Park's native plant nursery and a visit to the Wind Flower nursery. While at Glacier Park, students and adults will work on a science project with the nursery staff. Students will help with a restoration project.

On that field trip 4th-6th grade Swan Valley students, Seeley Swan High School Biology II students and adult volunteers will leave Swan Ecosystem Center at 8:30 a.m. and return at approximately 4:00 p.m. If you are interested or would like to know more, please call Diann as soon as possible at 754-3137.

Funding for the project was provided by the U.S. Forest Service Native Plant Program.

Bear social; bear-resistant containers available

The 2nd annual Spring Wake Up Social will be April 30, 6-8 p.m. at the Swan Valley Community Hall. Bear specialist Tim Manley, MT FWP, and Chris Servheen, US FWS grizzly bear coordinator, will talk about our bears. Hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served. To sign up call 754-3137.

Sixty new personal-use, bear-resistant garbage containers will be arriving this spring for residents to purchase, rent-to-own, or borrow. Tested by captive bears at the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone, these containers have proved effective in keeping bears out of trouble.

Funding was made possible by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Defenders of Wildlife, American Wildlands and Predator Solutions.

Coming soon: online stewardship handbook

Swan Ecosystem Center, in partnership with the National Network of Forest Practitioners, has begun developing an online forest stewardship handbook for Swan Valley landowners. The first chapter, which will focus on noxious weed management, will be available in May on the SEC web site, SwanEcosystemCenter.org. This project is funded in part by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

2009 Budget

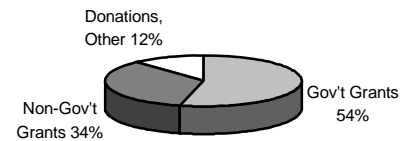
Projects: \$486,641

- 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: \$59,550

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

Anticipated Funding Sources



YES, I can help

please clip and mail

Send checks to Swan Ecosystem Center

6887 Highway 83, Condon, MT 59826

Name _____ Business _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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