A bear walks through it: 20 years of habitat conservation in northwest Montana

Kris Tempel
Habitat Conservation Biologist
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks - Region One

Photo Credit: @kestrelaerial.com
First state park 1935

Lewis and Clark Caverns
First habitat conservation 1940

Sun River
Judith River
Gallatin

focus on critical winter range.
Continued through 1987
Primarily federal funding & state license dollars
1987 House Bill 526, Habitat MT

Conserve Montana’s wildlife resources for current and future generations

- Consistent funding
- Hunter license dollars
- 92% from nonresident
- $5-6 million per year
- $750,000 maintenance
- Priority habitats
- Prioritize conservation easements

Wetlands
Intermountain Grasslands
Shrub grasslands
Conservation Easements

What is a conservation easement?

• A voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that limits certain uses of the land in order to protect its specific conservation values

Objective of FWP-held conservation easements?

• Protect vital fish and wildlife habitat
• Retain working lands for forestry and agriculture
• Maintain open space and managed public recreational access
FWP Regions
Federal programs through FWP

Forest Legacy Program

Goals and Objectives:
Identify and protect environmentally important forest lands that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund

Program Goals and Objectives:
Support the recovery of federally-listed threatened or endangered species
Where we started...
First Forest Legacy Program Project

Early 2000s

Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement

142,000 acres
Low Elevation Winter Ranges
Swan Valley Project
9,300 acres CE
600 acres Fee
Part of the 320,000 acre MT Legacy Project

Pre-2007 before MLP  Post-2010 after MLP

Plum Creek Timber Company
Kootenai Valleys Conservation Easement
28,000 acres
Haskill Basin CE, Trumbull Creek CE, and the Whitefish Lake Watershed Project

23,400 acres
Water, Economy, Wildlife, Recreation
Whitefish Lake Watershed Project
GRIZZLY BEAR TELEMETRY LOCATIONS
March 5, 2016. Copyright © The Trust for Public Land. The Trust for Public Land used Public Lands Dayembly to symbolize the Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of disclosure and illustration only.
Kootenai Forestlands Conservation Easement
22,300 acres
Research Article

Grizzly Bear Connectivity Mapping in the Canada–United States Trans-Border Region

MICHAEL F. PROCTOR,1 Birchdale 1
SCOTT E. NIelsen, Department of Resource
WAYNE F. KASWORM, US Fish and
CHRIS SERVIEEN, US Fish and Wildlife
THOMAS G. RÁDÁNT, US Fish and
A. GRANT MACHUCHON, 817 Mount
MARK S. BOYCE, Department of Biology

ABSTRACT Fragmentation is an important issue for many species, with impacts on species' populations and distribution, which is particularly important for large mammals across the trans-border region of the United States and Canada.
Lost Trail Conservation Easement
7,256 acres
Lost Trail Conservation Project

FY20 FOREST LEGACY PROPOSAL

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Weyerhaeuser announces Montana land sale finalized

Winter 2019-Spring 2020:

New large landowner in northwest Montana

~630,000 acres of timberland purchased
LAND PARTNERS YOU CAN TRUST
As of the end of 2020 ...

Just over **230,000 acres** of public recreation access and valuable fish and wildlife habitat permanently secured
The future ...
Kootenai Forestlands Phase II Conservation Easement
27,289 acres
Bad Rock Canyon Wildlife Management Area
772 acres
Rapidly changing landownership...
"We see this as a generational asset. It is our intent to manage these lands as working forests going forward."

-Green Diamond President Douglas Reed
Questions and Discussion