

Church Slough is for the Birds

First project completed with North American Wetlands grant funding



Church Slough as seen from the Louden's dock. Thousands of migratory birds call this place home every spring.

Swan photo: Dan Casey



It was a memorable spring on Church Slough, the location of a new Flathead Land Trust conservation easement. Tens of thousands of birds graced the slough and the Flathead as they made their annual migration northward to their nesting grounds. It was an astonishing display that brought out newspaper reporters to cover the show, volunteers and biologists to perform counts, and members of the public who wanted to see a spectacle the likes of which hadn't been seen in decades.

According to Dan Casey with American Bird Conservancy, Church Slough featured prominently this year. "It's one of the most important wetlands in the Flathead Valley. Thousands of Tundra Swans, Northern Pintails and American Wigeon feed here from late March through April."

Situated along the Pacific Flyway, Flathead Valley is blessed with abundant water sources and stretches of un-

developed land that provide much needed food and resting areas for migratory birds. Thanks to landowners Ben and Maureen Louden we know that another piece of this critical habitat will remain intact.

In July, FLT wrapped up a conservation agreement with the Loudens to permanently protect 295 acres of their land situated primarily within the interior of Church

Slough. It includes Flathead River wetlands, riparian habitat, and farmland. Located in Lower Valley, the property provides critical habitat for numerous species of migratory birds and other wildlife, and helps maintain the water quality of the river and of Flathead Lake. "The Loudens and the Flathead Land Trust are to be commended for taking these steps to protect the wildlife habitat value here," said Casey.

FLT worked with partners such as Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, American Bird Conservancy, and

"It's one of the most important wetlands in the Flathead Valley."

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OUR MISSION

Flathead Land Trust is dedicated to the conservation of northwest Montana's land and water legacy through voluntary agreements with private landowners.

Message from the President

Parting Thoughts from Ken Siderius



So many great things have happened over the summer, it's hard to know where to begin.

First of all, our hard work to secure millions of dollars for landowners to protect wetlands and farm and ranch lands is paying off. We wrapped up a wonderful project to protect nearly 300 acres along Church Slough using funds from our North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant.

We also worked to conserve several hundred more acres of prime farm land in Lower Valley, thanks to the USDA's Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program. All these projects involved members of the Louden family, a long time farming family in the valley and great people. We also held our Annual Member Meeting one perfect summer evening at Glenn and Hazel Johnston's place. Thanks to all of you who attended and especially to the Johnstons.

I joined the Board in 2003, and have been proud to be its President since 2004. I'll be retiring from the Board at the end of the year and it's people like the Johnstons and the Loudens that made the time so worth while.

It was an honor to be part of the many projects we finished during my time. I look around and see places where my kids used to play, places I explored as a boy and I feel good knowing that future generations will have the same opportunity to make lasting memories there, too.

In representing the Land Trust, one thing I always tried to do was help people understand that you can agree to disagree

and still accomplish your mission. I think one of the ways that Northwest Montana has changed over the years is there's a much better understanding now that families have options when it comes to their property—whether it's a subdivision, an easement, or somewhere in between. If you want to hold on to some of your family's legacy, there doesn't have to be "winners" and "losers," everyone can gain. And I think Flathead Land Trust has contributed to that increased understanding.

Jim Regnier will be taking over as President in January. Jim currently serves as President Elect—he's already done great things for the Land Trust and will continue as President. He thinks, as I do, that you get things done by listening and working with people, so I know he'll do a great job.

It is humbling to think about all the members and foundations, all the Board members and staff and volunteers we've had over the years, who helped us get where we are today. To all of you, thank you—you have a lot to be proud of.

It will be an emotional day for FLT when Ken steps down from our Board. Lucky for us and for the valley, he will continue to put his considerable energy into our Lands Committee, helping to shape the projects we pursue in the future. Ken brings so much to this organization—his knowledge of the valley, his connections to its people, and his passion for conservation.

But the most important quality he brings, as anyone who's met him knows, is his generous and gentle spirit.

He makes all of us feel valued, both for who we are as people and for what we try to do as a conservation organization. He is a man of action, of unwavering optimism, always dedicated to standing up for what's right. We owe him much for his volunteer service, and thank him from the bottom of our hearts.



Photo: Harley Mumma

Meet the Newest Staff Members at FLT

Ryan Hunter became Flathead Land Trust's new Land Protection Specialist in July, 2009. Ryan is responsible for annual monitoring of our conservation easements, as well as working with landowners to develop new projects. He earned a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning, with an emphasis on environmental and community development planning, from Portland State University in 2004. Prior to moving to Montana with his wife Eve, Ryan worked as an Assistant Planner for Jefferson County in Port Townsend, WA.

Ryan brings a wealth of experience to FLT, having also worked for other non-profits, including forest conservation and salmon recovery organizations.



Brad Seaman joined FLT as Outreach & Development Director in June, 2009. Among his many duties, Brad will be involved with helping to promote and educate others about the work of the Land Trust. A retired dentist, Brad moved to the Flathead with his wife Susan in 2000 and quickly became involved in the community.

Brad was Development Director of the Humane Society of NW Montana for several years, and now serves on their Board. He is actively involved with a number of non-profit organizations throughout the valley.



FLT Board Grows by Three

We are happy to welcome to our Board of Directors three new members, each of whom has a long history of involvement in the community and a commitment to conservation.

You may know **Dennis Hatton** as the owner of the popular Somers Bay Café. Born and raised in Somers, he has been a strong supporter of Flathead Land Trust's efforts to promote a conservation vision for the North Shore and has served as a volunteer Board member for a number of community nonprofits.

Allan McGarvey lives and works out of Kalispell, where he grew up. He is an attorney with McGarvey and Sullivan and received his law degree from the University of Montana. Among other interests, he has served on the Board of the Glacier Symphony and Chorale and currently performs with the Chorale.

Laura Nugent is the owner of Outback Ski Shack, which she founded in 1989. Prior to that she owned

and operated Timberline Landscaping and Arboresque Tree Service. She has been a great supporter of the Land Trust for several years as one of our business members, and along with other pursuits, has been involved with a number of ski related programs locally.

We thank them for volunteering their considerable talents and experience to help further the mission of Flathead Land Trust.

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Johnston Family Honored at FLT Membership Meeting

On June 24th, Flathead Land Trust combined its Annual Membership Meeting with a celebration at the site of a spectacular easement on Flathead River donated by Glenn and Hazel Johnston.

Three generations of the Johnston family—Glenn, son Mark, and granddaughter Katie—spoke movingly about their history with the land and this valley, a history stretching back to 1885 when Glenn’s grandfather homesteaded the first 160 acres of the current property.

During his speech to the attendees, Glenn Johnston said, “My grandfather homesteaded this place.... My father and mother spent their whole lives working here. I grew up here, loved it so much, that it was something I couldn’t bear—the thought of having it subdivided.” The Johnstons donated the 682 acre conservation easement in 2007.



Guests take a tour of the Johnston property along Flathead River.
Photo: Harley Mumma



Mark and Katie Johnston perform Mark’s original composition, Carillon, with members of the Glacier Symphony. Photo: Harley Mumma

FLT members and other guests enjoyed a great picnic dinner, heard from speakers on the state of the Land Trust and its finances, and were there for a surprise musical performance of *Carillon*. The piece is an original composition by Mark Johnston, written in honor of his parents, and was performed by Mark, Katie and several members of Glacier Symphony.

Our 2008 Annual Report can be viewed on our website www.flatheadlandtrust.org.

FLT/Cal Tassinari Scholarship Awarded

Congratulations to Jarek Bernt who was awarded the Flathead Land Trust/Cal Tassinari Endowed Scholarship award for the 2009 – 2010 academic year. He will be pursuing an Associate of Science degree at FVCC, with plans to transfer to the University of Montana to earn a Bachelor’s degree in Wildlife Biology. Jarek also does a lot of volunteer work, including the past five years with the Montana Hunter Education Program where he teaches aspiring hunters firearm safety and hunting ethics.

The endowment was established with FVCC in 2005 to honor the late conservationist, educator, and friend of the Land Trust, Cal Tassinari. Scholarships benefit college students studying natural resource management, forestry, biology, wildlife biology, environmental science or a related field. Contributions to carry on Cal’s legacy are welcomed and can be made by sending a check to FVCC Foundation-Cal Tassinari Scholarship Fund.

2009 Sees Major Gains for River to Lake Initiative

The Flathead Land Trust and our River to Lake Initiative partners have had extraordinary success this year, protecting 1152 acres of farmland, wetlands, riparian habitat and associated fish and wildlife habitat in the Flathead Valley.

The goal of the River to Lake Initiative, to create a network of protected critical lands along the main stem of the Flathead River to the North Shore of Flathead Lake, has been advanced with six land transactions completed from July to September 2009. These projects were funded with grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service through the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP), and with funds from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Resident Fisheries Mitigation Program. The Flathead Land Trust played a key role in all of these transactions.

FLT acquired four conservation easements on Louden family farmland off Lower Valley Road south of Kalispell using BPA, FRPP, and NAWCA funding. A total of 837 acres of Louden family property have been placed under easement. The project areas include land owned by Bernice (Bunny) Louden and her son and daughter-in-law, Ben and Maureen, as well as property owned by Elizabeth (Betty) Louden and her sons, Bruce and Ken. Bruce and Ken Louden farm all of the cropland on the properties. These conservation easements will help the Loudens maintain their productive family farms, while at the same time protecting water quality, environmentally sensitive wetlands, and wildlife habitat for future generations in the Flathead Valley.

Two other projects were initiated by Flathead Land Trust and wrapped up by other entities. Marilyn Wood and Ken Siderius of the Land Trust first contacted Cap



Foy's Bend along Flathead River has nearly two miles of riparian riverbank. Photo: Gravity Shots

and Bonnie Ingham and the Mattson Family about conservation options for their land. These early negotiations ultimately led to purchase of the properties by Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP). Approximately 245 acres of the Ingham property at

Between public and privately held lands, nearly 9000 acres are now permanently conserved in the River to Lake corridor.

Foy's Bend on Flathead River was purchased, along with 71 acres of the Mattson property immediately adjacent to the federal Waterfowl Production Area along the North

Shore of Flathead Lake. MFWP made these purchases using funds from BPA. The BPA funds were provided for the express purpose of protecting and enhancing resident fish habitat to help mitigate fish habitat losses associated with the construction of Hungry Horse Dam.

Between public and privately held lands, nearly 9000 acres are now permanently conserved in the River to Lake corridor, protecting migratory waterfowl and other wildlife habitat, our water quality, and the rural and outdoor heritage of the valley. Additional projects along Flathead River and Flathead Lake are in the works, including the protection of additional farmland in Lower Valley. We continue to seek out funding sources that will allow us to offer more conservation-friendly options to local landowners.

River to Lake Initiative partners include Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Flathead Lakers, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bonneville Power Administration, American Bird Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, among others, as well as private landowners.



Autumn view along Flathead River from one of the Louden properties under conservation easement with FLT.

Photo: Flathead Land Trust

Farm Lands Conserved Under Easement

continued from page 1

Flathead Lakers to secure funding for the project. Money from a recently awarded North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant was used to purchase part of the easement, with the Loudens donating the remainder.

The property, known for its agricultural productivity, has been in the Louden family since 1911. Ben’s great grandfather, Hugh Baird Louden, purchased the land from the original homesteaders, one of whom was Christopher Church, namesake of Church Slough. It has remained in the family ever since.

The property was mostly forested when the Louden family took it over, but Ben’s father, Calvin Louden, cleared many of the island’s acres in the 1950s and 1960s for cultivation of wheat, barley and alfalfa, along with some pasture land. The traditional uses of the land are protected within the easement.

The Louden property offers some of the best wild-life habitat in Lower Valley, a region of the Flathead that is still rural, but which has faced increased development pressure over the years. There are 165 wetland acres and 130 upland acres in the Louden easement providing habitat for white-tailed deer, mountain lion, coyote, fox, wild turkey, Canada Geese, beaver, river otter, Bald Eagle, Great Blue Heron, Tundra Swan, and many other species of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

This project is an extraordinary example of the

work being done under the River to Lake Initiative, a collaborative effort between conservation organizations, landowners like the Loudens, agencies and others to protect critical lands along the main stem of Flathead River to the North Shore of Flathead Lake. To learn more about River to Lake Initiative projects, see page 5, and check out our website at www.flatheadlandtrust.org.



Crops grown on the Louden property include wheat, barley and alfalfa. Photo: Flathead Land Trust

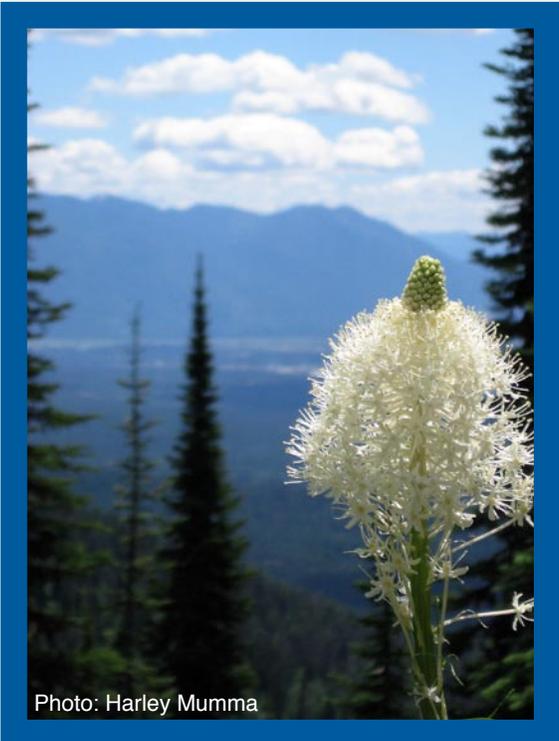


Photo: Harley Mumma

“Conservation and preservation of our most precious amenities was and will always be the people’s business, the people’s battle.”

– Leonard Sargent, co-founder of Cinnabar Foundation

Thank you to everyone who got involved and helped us raise \$10,000 for the Cinnabar Foundation Challenge Grant. We couldn’t have done it without you!

How does FLT select its projects?

The heart of any land trust is the land that it protects and the landowners who make it possible. We have easements that vary widely in size, location and habitat being conserved, but the process for choosing which projects we pursue is the same.

Most importantly, the needs of the landowner and the priorities of the land trust must coincide. When a landowner first expresses interest in an easement, a member of the conservation staff gathers basic information about the property, such as acreage, location, and current uses of the land. They talk with the landowner about his or her goals—for example, do they want to donate an easement or are they looking for a land trust to purchase development rights? Because money to purchase development rights is not always available and is often earmarked for particular habitat protection—wetlands or ag land for example, this information is critical.

Each request then goes through

a preliminary assessment based on FLT selection criteria. For example, what are the property's special conservation features? Are there adjacent land uses that may conflict with the easement? If the project meets the



FLT staff visit prospective easement properties as part of the project assessment process. Photo: Flathead Land Trust

criteria, staff will arrange a visit to the property. Then, if both FLT and the landowners want to continue to pursue a conservation easement, it is put before our Lands Committee.

The Lands Committee is made up of a number of community advisors and several members of the

Board of Directors; meetings are also attended by FLT conservation staff. The Lands Committee has many responsibilities within Flathead Land Trust, and one of the most important is the review of these proposed conservation projects, determining whether they are in line with our Conservation Plan objectives, and which to recommend to our Board of Directors for approval. We would love to be able to work with all landowners who contact us, but in the end we must prioritize based on time and resources available. If the project is recommended and approved by the full Board, then the real work begins!

If you are thinking about conservation options for your land, please visit our website at www.flatheadlandtrust.org and click on Conservation Easements to learn more about the process. Or call us at 752.8293 to get more information.

Introducing Coins for Conservation at Snappy's

Coins for Conservation is an innovative new partnership with locally owned Snappy Sport Senter. A longtime business member of Flathead Land Trust, Snappy's is a beloved institution in the Flathead. They are a great choice for sporting and recreational equipment, clothing and more—plus they have an art gallery upstairs and a great gift shop with lots of Montana made gifts.

With the Coins for Conservation program, Snappy's customers now have the opportunity to donate to Flathead Land Trust at the register—whatever amount they like. It's entirely voluntary and will show up on your receipt if you decide to donate. 100% of the proceeds are then directed to FLT.

Founded in 1947 by B.J.'s Lupton's father Verne, Snappy's and their employees have given much to our community over the years and care about the quality of life we enjoy in the Flathead. We're proud to be affiliated with Snappy's and hope you'll stop in soon to say hello.

coins for conservation This Business supports the conservation projects of Flathead Land Trust

Protecting River and Agricultural Lands

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North Shore of Flathead Lake Critical Habitat

Lone Pine State Park Addition

FLATHEAD LAND TRUST
Conserving Our Legacy of Land and Water

If you would like to donate to this local non-profit, just tell your cashier. It's Fast and Easy!
Or visit www.flatheadlandtrust.org

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From the North Fork to the North Shore Flathead Land Trust is There

*Flathead Land Trust is a membership organization dedicated to voluntary conservation and thoughtful stewardship of private lands. If you value the great outdoors, our agricultural heritage and the irreplaceable scenic wonders of Flathead Valley, visit www.flatheadlandtrust.org and choose **DONATE** from the main menu.*

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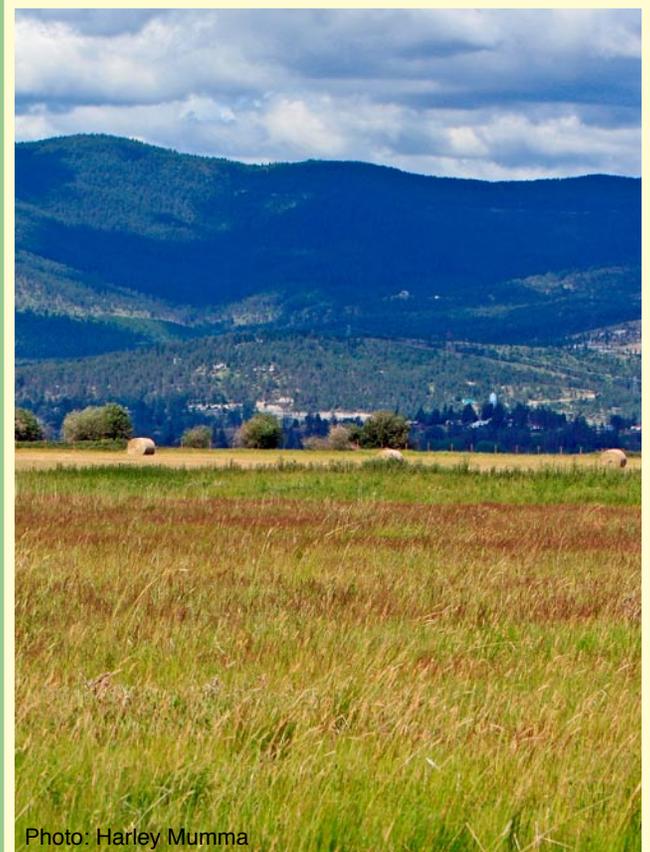


Photo: Harley Mumma