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Spring 2012

Dear Friends of Flathead Land Trust,

The recent switch to Daylight Savings Time was a reminder of spring and the 'natural changes' that take place in Flathead Valley.

Melting snow gives way to brown earth, revealing the state's very best soils. Grey skies are darkened further by thousands of waterfowl migrating through to nesting sites here and further north. Our streams, lakes, and the Flathead River swell with runoff from the highest peaks in Glacier National Park, carrying nutrients and continually forcing regeneration of cottonwoods and shrubs along its course.

All of us who live or vacation here are impacted by these 'natural changes.' And I'm absolutely convinced that seasonal visitors who come principally to experience Glacier National Park, spending over \$109 million dollars and supporting 1,600 local jobs, also see Flathead Valley and its natural amenities as key to their experience of western Montana.

But I am also reminded of other changes here in the Flathead. **In the past 10 years Kalispell grew 40% in population and doubled in land size. Traffic has tripled from 14,000 to 40,000 trips per day.** There is no question that growth and change can be beneficial, but these statistics (from a recent *Success in the New West* conference in Kalispell) highlight that there are many types of change that can dramatically and forever impact a community.

What won't change here at Flathead Land Trust is our commitment to voluntary conservation of private lands that keep the Flathead special. Those lands that support traditional agricultural livelihoods, the waters that provide us clean water for drinking, fishing, and floating, and those majestic views of open spaces and treasured wildlife that are the envy of every visitor to the Flathead. And in 2012, we'll be increasing the opportunities for our members to get out and connect to nature on the properties they've helped protect.

Thanks to all of our supporters who make land conservation in the Flathead and the rest of northwest Montana a reality. On the following pages, read a message from our new President, Alison Young, and see photos of how your membership made a difference on the ground in 2011! And I challenge you to help us achieve even more in 2012 by asking a friend, a colleague, a neighbor to join us in this important work.

Best regards,

Marilyn Wood
Executive Director

P.S. With 49 conservation easements under our belt, we are really excited about the 50th project expected to be completed about the time this report comes out. Keep your eyes open for news about this unique land transaction which will protect acres and acres of critical wetlands, keep farm land in production, and create greater access for the public.

10,000 ACRES & COUNTING: 2011 IN REVIEW

It's FLT's mission to conserve the healthy lands and waters of the Flathead right now, before the opportunity slips away forever. With this goal in mind, FLT partnered with landowners, members, businesses and foundations to add 524 acres in 2011, reaching the milestone of 10,000 acres protected! We also worked to increase our public outreach in the community and with private landowners. We know from experience that the relationships we build today are what lead us to the farms and forests we protect tomorrow. Our staff and volunteers worked hard in 2011 to accomplish effective, lasting, science-based conservation aimed at getting the most conservation value for every dollar spent. We hope the images on these pages make you feel good about your investment and inspired by what can be accomplished when we work together.



“THIS FARM HAS TAKEN
CARE OF OUR FAMILY FOR
GENERATIONS.”

— Jerry and Aileen Brosten

Fourth Generation Family Farm

In December, Jerry and Aileen Brosten signed a conservation easement that will forever conserve the Diamond B, a fourth generation family farm in Lower Valley. Sitting on **192 acres with nearly 1 ½ miles of Flathead River shoreline**, the Brostens primarily raise wheat, barley and canola. They also operate Diamond B Weddings on the property, with events limited to the barn area and wedding site along the river. The easement establishes a 100 foot riparian buffer along Flathead River where no development of any kind is permitted. In 2011, a work party of *River to Lake Initiative* volunteers installed wildlife fencing and protective wire around trees on a portion of the property to discourage beavers from cutting down large cottonwoods and to promote regeneration of riparian trees and shrubs.

Personally recognized by Governor Brian Schweitzer for “helping preserve land for future generations,” this purchased easement project brought federal Farm & Ranch Land Protection dollars and Bonneville Power Administration mitigation funds to the community, as well as a grant from Montana’s homegrown *Travelers for Open Land* program.

2011 Barn Party & Wetland Awards

Over 130 members and guests attended FLT’s 2011 Barn Party and Annual Membership Meeting at Jerry and Aileen Brosten’s Diamond B Farm (pictured with FLT’s director, Marilyn Wood). For members, it was a chance to experience first hand their role in preserving the valley’s farming heritage on this conserved property. We also honored families who were co-recipients of the **2011 Wetland Stewardship Award given to FLT and River to Lake Initiative partners** by the Montana Wetland Council. Over the years, dozens of long time valley families have worked with FLT, Montana Land Reliance, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks and others to privately conserve over 6000 acres of farm and river lands in the *River to Lake Initiative* focus area.



The Diamond B is on a section of the river that is a conservation focus for FLT and our River to Lake Initiative partners. Visit www.flatheadrivertolake.org to learn about landowner incentives and more.



Family Forest is Safe Haven

To honor the memory of her father, Valerie Beebe requested her conservation easement be made official on December 22nd, her father's birthday. On that day, she and FLT signed the easement that is dedicated to both her parents, Emmett and Lorraine Beebe. Valerie has completed a stewardship conservation plan under the Montana Forest Stewardship Program, and after implementing a number of practices such as fuel reduction and ongoing noxious weed control, the **Birdsong Tree Farm was certified as an American Tree Farm** in 2006. Valerie has planted hundreds of trees to replace mature forest as needed, erected 40 birdhouses and 2 bat boxes on the property and houses 16 bee hives in the summer. The 28 acre donated easement is adjacent to and **provides a buffer for the federally protected Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area** in Kila. Among the many conservation values of the property, its location also contributes to scenic views seen from Hwy 2, the Great Northern Historical Trail, and Smith Lake.

“I FEEL SUCH RELIEF & JOY KNOWING THIS SPECIAL PLACE IS NOW PROTECTED.”

— Valerie Beebe

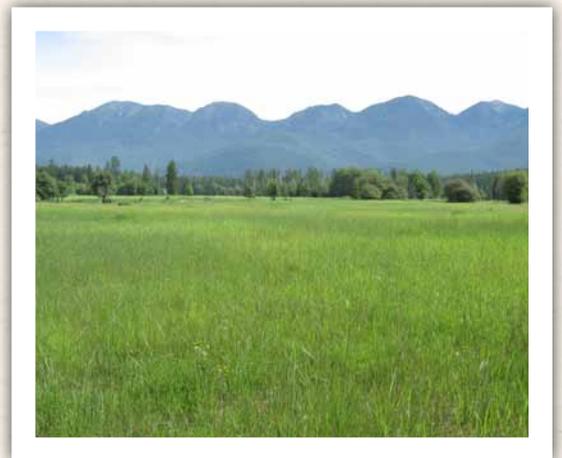


Little Bitterroot Beauty

This incredible 183-acre donated easement bordering Little Bitterroot Lake in Marion is also bordered by Plum Creek and U.S. Forest Service land. Primarily upland forest habitat managed by the owners to promote a healthy forest and improve wildlife habitat (for example, removing diseased trees and leaving snags), it also includes some scattered areas of grassland and a small amount of lake frontage. Under the terms of the easement, only a few small recreation-related structures are allowed. **Rising 900 feet from lake level to a high point of 4,800 feet in elevation** with a ridge top overlooking the lake, this view will remain intact for recreationists using the lake. From the high point of the easement, Little Bitterroot Lake, the Swan Mountains, and Pleasant Valley-Fisher River drainage come into view.

A “Small Piece of Montana”

In a 2010 letter announcing their desire to place a conservation easement on their Creston property, Jack and Judy Moses wrote, “It is our intention to preserve this small piece of Montana largely as it is at the present time and has been for many years.” By the end of 2011, they signed official paperwork to accomplish just that, permanently protecting prime agricultural soils, scenic views from Hwy 35 and an incredible range of wildlife habitat on their 121 acres. Situated next to the Creston Fish Hatchery and adjacent to another FLT protected property, the **donated easement offers a mosaic of forestland, wetlands and open meadow**, including an Engelmann spruce/skunk cabbage plant community listed as “Imperiled” by the Montana Natural Heritage Program. Jack and Judy Moses have put significant effort into preserving the health of the forest on their land and into controlling noxious weeds. A portion of the land will remain leased for agricultural production.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

FLT leaves 2011 behind with a satisfied feeling of accomplishment. Under Jim Regnier's able board leadership, the Land Trust celebrated its 25th year, increased land conserved in the Flathead Valley to over 10,000 acres, passed a federally-mandated audit with flying colors and hired a conservation director.

Now 2012 is quickly underway as I take over as board chair. There are many plans ahead: increasing our public visibility and membership, partnering with other organizations, celebrating the upcoming 50th easement, applying for national accreditation and as ever, working hard with the Valley community to conserve land.

As I listen to the news and read magazines and newspapers, I am dismayed over the worldwide onslaught to the natural environment and I feel powerless to stop such degradation. However, I remind myself of what we can all do locally by working together for land, water and habitat conservation in our valley.

We may not be able to save the world but we can have a positive effect on our small piece of it. I invite you to join our board, our staff and me in supporting the Flathead Land Trust to accomplish this important work.

Alison Young
Alison Young



DONOR THANKS

Due to space constraints in this abbreviated 2011 wrap-up, we regretfully can not include a full donor listing. But we want to thank everyone personally for your membership and the many contributions you make toward conserving the special places of Flathead Valley. We extend a special thank you to the following grantors and foundations for their operating grants in 2011:

AGL Foundation
Alderson Family Foundation
Cadeau Foundation
First Interstate BancSystem Foundation
Heart of the Rockies Initiative-
Wilburforce Foundation
Ila B. Dousman Fund, Inc.
James and Wanda Hollensteiner Foundation
Kramer Family Fund of the
Whitefish Community Foundation

Land Trust Alliance
SahanDaywi Foundation
The Bibler Foundation
The Carlson Charitable Fund
The Cinnabar Foundation
The Sustainability Fund of the
Flathead Community Foundation
Turner Foundation
Whitefish Community Foundation
Wilburforce Foundation

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

(AS OF 12/31/2011)

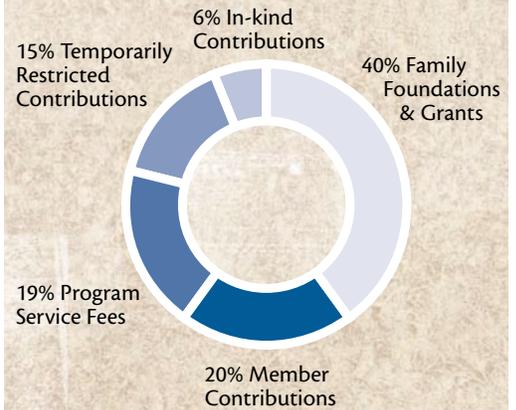
Our Assets

Cash	\$71,404
Projects Fund	\$60,109
Land Protection Assistance Fund*	\$31,973
Stewardship/Legal Defense Fund*	\$208,133
Endowment Fund*	\$51,488
Other (Pledges, fixed assets)	\$6,084
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Total	\$429,191

*These funds carry either temporary or permanent restrictions on their use and may not be used for general operations.

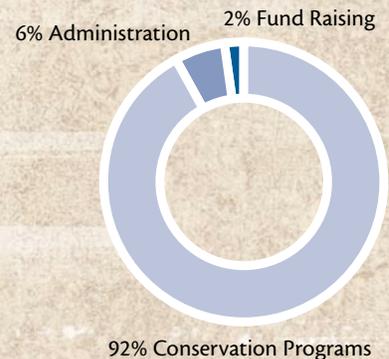
Where Our Support Came From

In 2011 FLT raised \$239,000 for operations and stewardship.



What We Did With That Support

We had operating expenses of \$272,000. We spent an additional \$557,000 on conservation projects using \$525,000 in project restricted grant funds. Below is a breakdown of how the funds were spent.



NOTE: Summaries depict unaudited financials. Most recent audited financials available on our website or by request.