



Important Habitat Protected in the North Fork



Garnet Lake, looking toward the Whitefish Range. (photo by Jen Asebrook)

Flathead Land Trust is finalizing another conservation easement in the North Fork on a property adjacent to the 225-acre Foreman Family Trust easement we featured in our last newsletter. FLT was asked by The Nature Conservancy to arrange and hold an easement on what is known as the Garnet Lake Property, which TNC currently owns but plans to sell.

Near the Canadian border, this 52-acre piece includes a portion of Garnet (a.k.a. Mud) Lake. The undeveloped nature of the acreage and its proximity to other undeveloped forestland adds significantly to the rural character and wildlife values of this pristine area. Because it is adjacent to other protected areas, it forms a contiguous block of protected land, helping to preserve the surrounding landscape on both sides of the North Fork of the Flathead.

The original 160 acre property was purchased in 1957 by William and Ann Matteson while honeymooning at Glacier National Park. In 1973, both William and Ann were among the initial signers of the North Fork Compact, an innovative, grassroots, land use planning agreement. The Compact was, and remains, a tool for North Fork landowners to address a common concern—that excessive subdivision and commercial development could ultimately destroy the very qualities that make the North Fork so unique. As we reported in our last newsletter, Orville Foreman, whose descendents still own the adjacent property, was one of the founders of the North Fork Compact.

Over the years, the original 160-acres was split into

smaller parcels and deeded to family members. This particular parcel was sold to The Nature Conservancy in August 1996 and remains in their ownership. The easement allows for building one residence and associated outbuildings, with all structures being restricted to a 5-acre footprint set back from Garnet Lake.

This land and the surrounding area have had little development, so it has long been an important wildlife corridor. The habitat includes diverse, maturing forest, a portion of Garnet Lake, as well as associated wetlands. They combine to provide important linkage habitat from Glacier National Park to the east, the North Fork River, and the Whitefish Range to the west. As anyone who lives or has recreated in the North Fork knows, the area provides an exceptional environment for black

“This land and the surrounding area have long been an important wildlife corridor.”

bear, grizzlies, gray wolves, coyote, elk, moose, deer, mountain lions, badger, beavers and more. Many species of birds also utilize this habitat, including the common loon which is listed as a Sensitive species in Montana and has been observed on Garnet Lake.

Flathead Land Trust has a strong interest in conservation in the North Fork, and we are happy The Nature Conservancy turned to us for assistance with the beautiful Garnet Lake property. We have already begun work on another easement in the North Fork, so stay tuned for more news in the coming months.

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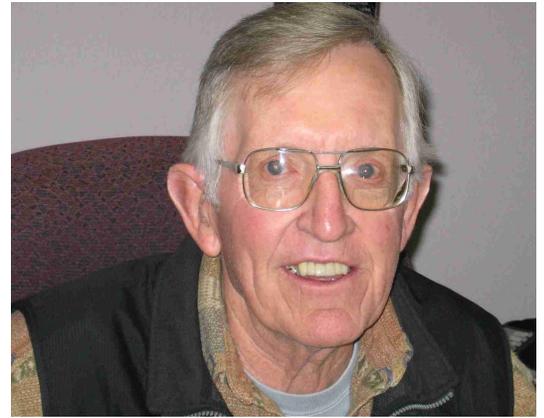
*Flathead Land Trust is
dedicated to the
conservation of northwest
Montana's land and water
legacy through voluntary
agreements with private
landowners.*

Well, we've made it through another winter and there's been a lot happening at Flathead Land Trust since I last wrote in October.

As you all know, the Land and Water Conservation Bond on the November ballot was unsuccessful, in part because of the downturn in the economy that hit before the election. Though not the outcome we hoped for, I believe some real good came out of the attempt. The issue brought out nearly 18,000 people who voted YES, proving there are a lot of citizens of Flathead County concerned with protecting our most cherished places. For the first time in a long while, I heard people from all different backgrounds, some of whom disagree on almost every issue, agree on one thing—that we need to conserve part of the Flathead while we still can. Yes, we're disappointed the bond didn't pass, but making friends and finding things in common with your neighbors is always worth the effort.

Speaking of friends, long time Board member and friend Bill Dakin retired from FLT's Board in December of 2008. He has such a long perspective about the work of FLT and is such a stickler for details that we're already missing him at our Board meetings. We talked him into remaining on one of our committees, though, so he will remain a trusted advisor, one who always has the best interests of FLT at heart. He agreed to write some words about his experiences on the Board and you'll find them inside.

I also wanted to thank everyone who took the time to vote on the by-law amendments we sent your way—48% of

**Ken Siderius**

the membership returned ballots. In the end, the proposals to amend Article V of the by-laws were approved overwhelmingly. We hope our members will also consider coming to our Annual Meeting, planned for June 24th at the site of the Glenn and Hazel Johnston easement. We'll be sending members an invitation as we get closer, so stay tuned.

Finally, this newsletter often highlights some of our bigger projects and this edition is no exception. But one thing you might not know is that we also are involved behind the scenes with many significant conservation achievements you read about in the paper, projects that mean great things for the people who love the Flathead. Though we may not always seek credit, we want you to know that FLT works hard with our partners and public agencies to support projects that protect water quality, hunting and fishing access, and the farming heritage of the valley. Thank you to all our members and supporters that help make that possible.

Annual Member Meeting and Easement Celebration**Join Us June 24th, 2009, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m., 970 Columbia Falls Stage Road**

This year, Flathead Land Trust plans to combine an Annual Membership Meeting with a celebration at the site of a spectacular easement donated in 2007 by Glenn and Hazel Johnston. We'll send our members an invitation with more information as we get closer to the date, but please plan now to join us at the Johnston ranch to enjoy food and drinks, take care of some FLT business, and thank the Johnstons for their generous easement donation. Members, stay tuned for more information. We look forward to seeing you there!

Adios, Flathead Land Trust

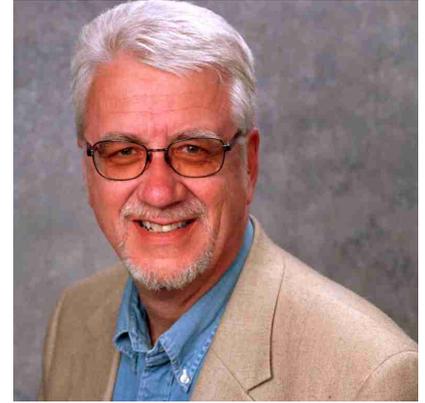
By Bill Dakin

It was my privilege to serve on this Board for 14 years. The Land Trust was a toddler when I started; now it's a robust young adult, with an unbounded future. We had no phone, no office space, no anything but some big ideas. I was the one who always fretted over the budget, worried that we would overstep our means into calamity. Others with more vision pushed us beyond our comfort levels, and we always found a way to survive, do the task, and grow.

My 10 years on the County Planning Board taught me that in the Flathead we would never accomplish land conservation through regulation. We had to find ways to enable visionary landowners, large or small, to voluntarily preserve parts of this wonderful place for future generations...like the legions of visionaries before us who set aside parks and wilderness and public spaces to benefit the people for all time. I volunteered to join the Land Trust in its fledgling years because it held that promise—to be an enabler for land protection. I knew that generations to come would benefit from anything we could achieve.

When we got to where we could have a part-time staff person, momentum gathered. I think back to JoAnn and Don and Susan and Warren and Doc and Milt and Tom and the many other wonderful people who gave so much (never forget Cal Tassinari). They enabled us now to stand on their shoulders, and I thank them for their vision and drive and for all they taught me and proved could be done. Nothing can match the love for this

Valley that President Ken Siderius brings to every topic; I am in awe of his conviction and example and feel lucky to have been on his team. With the incredible Board now steering us, and the energetic staff so task-driven, I couldn't feel more confident while shuffling into the sunset.



Bill Dakin

The only thing I don't get is how anyone who loves this incredible place could NOT BE A MEMBER of Flathead Land Trust!

Bill's contributions to FLT have truly been great, from guiding our Board and Staff Development Committee to his efforts on projects such as the Cal Tassinari land donation. His "watchdog" qualities with our finances (and our grammar) are also legendary! It is rare indeed to find a volunteer who cares as much about financial stewardship of the Land Trust as he does about thoughtful stewardship of the land.

We agree with Tom Bengtson, a former FLT Board member, who said, "Bill is the type of Board member you hope to serve with." We are thankful Bill will remain on our Finance Committee, and we wish him well as he devotes more time to volunteering in the Columbia Falls community, including serving on the Board of the Columbia Falls Food Pantry.

FLT Completes Fishing Access Improvements!



Major improvements at the McWenneger Slough Public Fishing Access are complete, and the popular fishing hole has been seeing more visitors everyday.

The commemorative sign reads: " This site was donated in 2003 to Flathead Land Trust by the heirs of John and Melissa Logan and developed jointly by Flathead Land Trust and Montana Department Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Construction of the Public Access was completed in 2008 by the Siderius family in memory of Pete and Louise Siderius."

Grant to Fund Conservation Projects within the River to Lake Initiative

The Flathead Land Trust and our partners have been awarded a \$1 million dollar grant from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The grant, funded through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, aims to protect habitat for migratory birds. The majority of funds (85%) from the grant will go directly to conservation projects along the mainstem of Flathead River and the north shore of Flathead Lake. The balance will be used on wetland restoration projects in Mission Valley. FLT will administer the grant and work to complete the projects.

This proposal, entitled “Glaciated Valleys of Northwest Montana,” is the second phase of an effort to protect riparian/wetlands and associated fish and wildlife habitat in the Flathead Valley, and areas surrounding Flathead Lake.

Within the project area, the Flathead and Mission Valleys support one of the highest levels of bird diversity in the Lower 48. The funding will permanently protect hundreds of acres and help to restore significant wetland complexes and riparian areas. These areas are highly important to threatened and endangered species, species of special concern, migratory birds, other important fish and wildlife resources, as well as outdoor recreation.

The conservation projects will be undertaken over the next two years. These voluntary agreements, which are still being negotiated with interested landowners, will complement the River to Lake Initiative goal of contiguous protection along the mainstem of Flathead River. Through FLT efforts and the efforts of our partners, nearly 5000



The riparian wetlands and black cottonwood habitat of an oxbow slough on Flathead River can support thousands of waterfowl during spring migration. (Photo by FLT)

acres have already been protected on the river corridor.

Partners include Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Flathead Lakers, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, among others, as well as private landowners.

We were able to leverage successful projects like the Glenn and Hazel Johnston conservation easement, completed in 2007, to achieve the second phase of this project. The first phase of the grant, which was awarded to FLT and our partners in 2004, helped fund the protection of Weaver Slough through voluntary conservation easements, as well as other projects.

Thank You to our Community Advisors

Flathead Land Trust relies on many people to help get our conservation work done and we're afraid we don't always say thank you often enough. Below is a list of our Community Advisors—local residents who serve in a volunteer capacity on FLT committees, or that we otherwise turn to for opinions and insights. Bringing diverse experience and perspectives to the table, these folks are an integral part of the work of Flathead Land Trust. When you hear about a significant FLT conservation achievement in these pages or on the news, there is a good chance one of these Community Advisors helped make it a reality.

Walt Bahr
Lex Blood
Milt Carlson

Mike Conner
Bill Dakin
Don Hauth

Warren Illi
Dave McNutt
Don Murray

Land Conservation and Montana Legislative Update

By Marilyn Wood

It may come as a surprise to some, but there are many proposed legislative actions that could impact land conservation and conservation easements. This year, Glenn Marx, the executive director of Montana Association of Land Trusts (MALT), helped all of us be more aware of pending legislation. Glenn organized a "Land Trust Day" at the Capitol on February 5th. Nearly 40 folks representing ten land trusts spent the day in the Capitol holding individual meetings with representatives from their area. I attended on behalf of Flathead Land Trust. In addition, Glenn has been providing us with weekly updates on legislation and is extremely helpful in responding to questions on specific bills.

Here's a short list of some significant bills we've been following:

HB14 – Working Forest State Funding. Provides \$21

million bond to acquire portions of the Montana Legacy Project (Plum Creek lands in the Swan Valley). Supported by MALT.

SB129 – Fire Mitigation & Conservation Easements. Reduce potential for urban/wildlands interface fires through tax credits for conservation easements that limit development and provide for forest management. Supported by MALT.

HB249 – Tax conservation easements. Land Trusts would be required to pay taxes on conservation easements they held. Opposed by MALT.

SB478 – Eliminate perpetual Conservation Easements. An anti-easement bill opposed by MALT.

Several of our easement landowners provided testimony against SB478 and were instrumental in getting this bill tabled in committee. For more information about MALT and legislative news, visit www.montanalandtrusts.org.

Catching up with our Easement Donors

This issue of View Points is filled with thanks—to our members and grantors, to our Community Advisors and retiring Board members. But we want to make sure we don't forget to thank the people who are the foundation of Flathead Land Trust—our family of easement donors and landowners. These are people who have worked with FLT to permanently protect their land under easement, or the landowners who have since purchased land with an FLT easement in place.

Since our first easement in 1987, donated by Alice G. Sowerwine, conservation minded people from across the valley have followed in her footsteps. We now serve as land stewards on 36 easements. In upcoming issues we plan to spotlight existing easement donors from years past to catch up with them and their land, and to update our readers on the lasting impact these voluntary conservation agreements have made on the environment around us.

The Tassinari easement pictured is a great example of this. In the 1980s, Cal Tassinari donated to FLT a conservation easement on 10 acres fronting the Swan River in Condon. Upon his death in 2004, Cal willed the



Fall scene on the Cal Tassinari easement on Swan River. The easement was donated in the 1980s and FLT continues to monitor the property today.

land to FLT, directing us to sell the land to his neighbor. The proceeds are still used to fund FLT projects today, and were also used to establish the Cal Tassinari Endowed Scholarship with FVCC.

Thank you for your support!

Many thanks to all the generous individuals, businesses, and foundations who contributed to Flathead Land Trust in 2008! Your membership and financial support helps protect the Flathead Valley's legacy of land and water.

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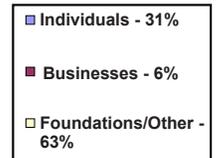
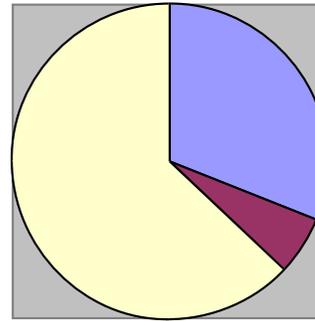


Quaking aspen on the Garnet Lake property.
 (Photo by Jen Asebrook)

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2008 Operating Funds

As a local non-profit, Flathead Land Trust knows that our members are the lifeblood of the organization. We consider them partners in our land conservation efforts, just as we do grantors, conservation groups, public agencies, and easement landowners. It takes all of us working together to bring about permanent protection for some of the most sensitive lands and threatened habitat in the Flathead. While our membership donations increased in 2008, the funding from foundations increased by a larger margin. As indicated on the graph, this resulted in an increase in the percentage of operations dollars coming from foundations.



The tremendous support from these foundations was critical to our work and helped us continue to provide a great service to local landowners interested in voluntary conservation easements. A special thanks to The Sustainability Fund, Turner Foundation, Cadeau Foundation, The Bibler Foundation, Hollensteiner Foundation, SahanDaywi Foundation, as well as two foundations that wish to remain anonymous, for their 2008 operating funds grants. They came at a critical time and greatly enhanced our ability to promote and pursue land conservation in the Flathead.

Thank you donors!

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Chances are you love living in the Flathead for the same reasons we do—because you value the outdoors, the scenic vistas, and the rural heritage that shaped our communities. Your membership helps preserve these qualities through the use of voluntary conservation agreements. As a member, you help us...

Protect the Flathead's lakes, rivers, farms and forests

Partner with others to increase and enhance recreation access

Promote a conservation vision for the Flathead

Visit www.flatheadlandtrust.org and choose **DONATE** from the main menu. You can set up a monthly, quarterly or annual gift, and make a one-time contribution. Or donate by check in the envelope inside. Help ensure that future generations will have just as many opportunities to live, work and play on this rich land.

Photo by Susannah Casey

