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FLATHEAD
LAND TRUST
Conserving Our Legacy of Land and Water

View Points

Fall 2007

Protecting Land to Benefit the Entire Community

In 2006, Flathead Land Trust began talking to Charles and Sandra Van Riper about a piece of property, owned by the Van Riper Living Trust, which they were interested in protecting through a voluntary conservation easement. The property is 40 acres located approximately 1.5 miles southwest of Kalispell and immediately adjacent to Lone Pine State Park.



View from the top of Lone Pine State Park. Photo: Karen Nichols

prominent business people helping Kalispell and indeed the entire Flathead Valley grow. The 40 acres had been a part of old sheep ranch and then used for cattle grazing and logging when my Mom and Dad bought it in the 1950's. It became part of our ranch west of town, providing limited grazing for our horses, but more importantly it was a small piece of "wilderness" where I grew up.

Not a summer day passed and few winter days when I did not climb the hill on my horse or on foot to seek the solitude and peace that was present amongst the trees. Each place and area had a name such as Sun Valley, Shadow Vale, Little Rockies, or Vanilla Tree and some mossy knolls assumed an almost shrine type reverence for me. I knew where the Bitterroot bloomed and where the first Crocus would peak through the spring snow patches. I picked wildflowers for our dinner table and afternoon wild strawberries from the forest floor. I knew the best places to see a coyote, a bobcat

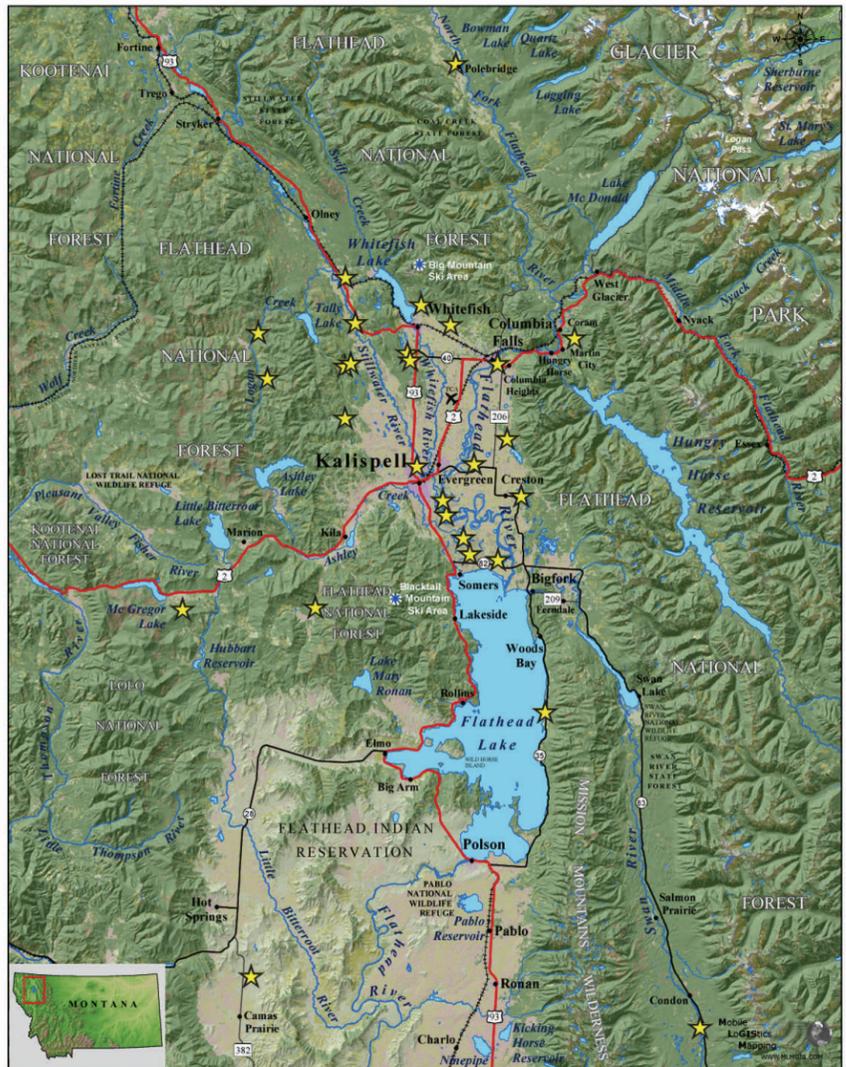
Van Riper continued on page 5

Lone Pine State Park is a day-use-only park overlooking the magnificent Flathead Valley. It provides residents and visitors with information about the Valley's cultural and natural history with a visitor center providing nature and interpretive programs. There are several informal hiking trails, as well as horse trails, and three scenic overlooks that provide views from Flathead Lake to Big Mountain.

(406) 752-8293

www.flatheadlandtrust.org

FLATHEAD LAND TRUST Private Land Conservation in Northwestern Montana since 1985 Existing Easements 36 Projects 7,948 Protected Acres



Have you considered the Flathead Land Trust in your will?

The Flathead Land Trust Conservation Legacy Society recognizes supporters who have invested in the future of the Land Trust with a planned gift. A planned gift is the ultimate expression of commitment to private, voluntary land conservation in the Flathead Valley.

Your planned gift can be as simple as a sentence or two in your will.

Other ways are life income gifts which can take the form of a charitable lead trust or charitable gift annuities. Many other gifts can take the form of life insurance, retirement accounts, or real estate. We recommend that you talk to your financial advisor about the best option for you.

For more information about including the Flathead Land Trust in your future plans contact Marilyn Wood at (406)752-8293. Some of you may have already included us in those plans and if that's the case, please let us know. Thanks for your support!

It's a beautiful piece of property encompassing important forest and wildlife habitat and well as scenic

If we can send our children into the wildness to touch nature and respect it and understand it, our planet will be a better place. -Sandra Van Riper

views for the entire community. As the community concern for public access increases, this area has also been identified as an ideal place to protect for outdoor recreation. The conservation easement was finalized and this fall, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will officially own the property.

This project is a great example of how Flathead Land Trust can work with local landowners and public agencies to increase public access and conserve the special places in the Valley.

Some History and Thoughts from Sandra Van Riper

The 40 acres west of town recently incorporated into Lone Pine State Park has been in my family for over 50 years and has been an integral part of my life for at least that long. My grandparents were among the earliest pioneers in the Flathead, with their roots in first Demersville and then Kalispell. My parents were

2007

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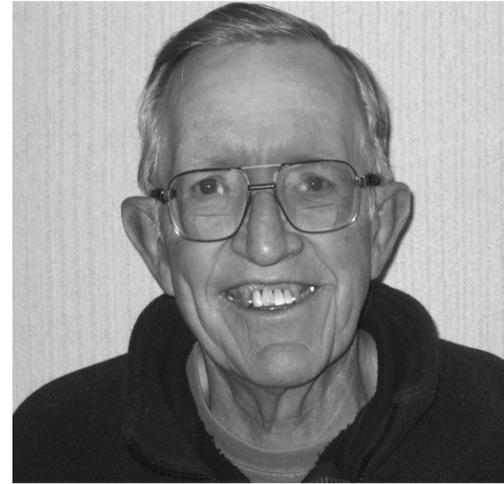
Message from the President

Change is inevitable and can often be seen as both good and bad, depending on the issue and perspective being considered. Flathead Land Trust has seen a lot of change in recent years and so has the Flathead Valley in general. Times are changing whether we like it or not. Growth is occurring and while we can all agree that growth is good, we can't all agree on how that growth should happen.

Flathead Land Trust provides an important service to the Flathead Valley as we provide another option for local landowners that are interested in protecting their land instead of seeing it developed. In our 22 years, we have worked with over 40 landowners to help them protect their property through voluntary conservation easements. These easements are adjusted for the needs of the specific landowner while keeping the conservation values of the land in mind. It's a win-win situation for the landowner and the community when it's the right piece of property.

I am pleased to announce that as of May, Marilyn Wood is our new Executive Director. She brings with her a wealth of knowledge on land conservation specific to this area from her years with The Nature Conservancy and Fish, Wildlife and Parks. She has also an intense passion for this Valley and seeing that the "special places" are protected before it's too late. We are very excited that she is our new Executive Director and have no doubt that she will continue to ramp up the work of Flathead Land Trust.

Our River to Lake Initiative is creating



quite a buzz around the community because of its focus on such an important area of our Valley, the mainstem of Flathead River and north shore of Flathead Lake. We will continue to update you as projects happen in that area and let you know if there's a way for you to help.

We are always looking for dedicated community members to serve on our Board of Directors or Board committees. The main qualifications are a passion for land conservation and the ability to donate your time for the cause. Call if you want to get more involved in our work.

Thank you for all your support!

Ken Siderius
Board President

Staff and Board Changes

There are many changes going on at Flathead Land Trust these days and we wanted to take a moment to thank a few people who are leaving. Stay tuned for information on new staff in the next few months.

Lindsay Biedel was hired on as our Development Director in August 2005 and has done a great job of leading our fundraising and communication efforts. We appreciate all she has done and hope she knows how much she will be missed.

Gail Cleveland has been our temporary Office Assistant since the beginning of this year and we really appreciate her

willingness to help us out as we went through some transitions. We hope she'll still be willing to help us out in the office from time to time!

Alan Elm has decided to step down from the Flathead Land Trust Board after three years. Alan still strongly supports the work of Flathead Land Trust but his busy schedule has not allowed him to devote as much time to the organization as he had hoped. We thank him for his energy and insight the last few years and hope he will stay connected to our organization!

The Magic North Shore of Flathead Lake

The spring afternoon was gorgeous, and as geese and swans flew overhead, 34 people boarded vans and trucks to begin a field tour along the North Shore of Flathead Lake. Flathead Land Trust staff along with our partners organized this event to raise awareness about the uniqueness of the area, and to explore options for sustaining both the agricultural and natural landscape. Interested neighbors, landowners, county planning and natural resource people participated. While standing on Pike's Peak overlook in Somers, everyone was struck by the integrity of the landscape of the North Shore as it still retains its beautiful historic and rural character. The view captured everything that was at stake. And it redoubled our resolve to find ways to keep this area special while still meeting the needs and respecting the rights of individual landowners.

The participants spoke powerfully about what they cherish about the North Shore—values that include wildlife habitat; wetland and upland buffers for water quality; the unique hydrology; important agricultural soils; a rich Native American heritage; and, a contributor to a robust economy and quality of life. The landowners present voiced concerns about agricultural viability, the desire to keep the area much as it is, and yet recognized the financial potential of their property. In closing conversations, it was apparent that we have a fleeting and rare opportunity to determine a future for the nearly 1,500 acres along the North Shore—a future that will be determined by the people who live there and have the most to gain or lose.

Since that field trip, Ken Siderius (our Board Chair) and land trust staff have been meeting with each landowner from the Sportsman Bridge to Somers south of the "cut across" road (Highway 82). From almost everyone we've heard the deep appreciation for this landscape and its rural character. We have also sensed the frustration that the horse may be already out of the



North shore view from Pikes Peak overlook in Somers

barn as high density developments are proposed. We've heard a full range of ideas about what people think about the future of this area. We've talked with landowners who sold their farms reluctantly because they felt they had no other alternative. Others said they are waiting to see what happens with proposed developments near Somers. One thing we haven't heard is that landowners want to see full development of this area. Instead, we've heard a desire to see what other opportunities might exist and a willingness to listen to options.

The message came through loud and clear: the North Shore of Flathead Lake is a special place in Montana. People want to keep it that way if they can. As the next step, we will continue working with the landowners along the North Shore to identify a common vision for this area. We believe a shared vision would provide a compelling story attracting the attention of regional, statewide, and possibly federal support.

North Shore Important for Migrating Birds

Flathead Lake's 7 miles of remote north shoreline has a patchwork of habitats including extensive shallows and wetlands, cottonwood galleries, grasslands, and highly productive agricultural lands—making this area an aquatic bird paradise. Add another 27 miles of meandering river, sloughs, and associated spring creek habitats, and we have one of the most productive riverine and lake/wetland ecosystems in the West.

Flathead Lake's North Shore is an important refueling stop for thousands of Central and Pacific migratory birds moving to nesting grounds to the north or wintering grounds to the south. Thousands of Tundra Swans, and tens of thousands of Pintails, Mallards and Canada Geese use the flooded spring fields and shallow lake shore. The North Shore also provides important and productive spawning and rearing habitat for fish that provide an important food source for predatory fish and birds such as Osprey, Bald Eagles and Great Blue Herons.



Tundra Swans stop in for refueling on Flathead Lake's North Shore. Photo: Karen Nichols.

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Flathead Land Trust is dedicated to voluntary conservation and thoughtful stewardship of private lands. We initiate and support conservation easements that enhance Northwest Montana's working and scenic landscapes, open spaces, river corridors, wetlands and vital wildlife habitats.

2007 Tassinari Scholarship Recipient Named

Kimberly Blonshine is the Fall 2007 recipient of the Cal Tassinari Memorial/Flathead Land Trust Scholarship at FVCC.

Lindsay Biedel, Development and Communication Director, had the opportunity to meet Kimberly at the Student Scholarship Award Reception hosted by FVCC in the spring and was very impressed with this bright, young woman.

Kimberly graduated from Eureka High School in May 2007 and this will be Kimberly's first year of college and she hopes to study forestry. Kimberly has always had a love of the woods and participated in the YCC program during high school, which truly cemented this passion. Kimberly's father was a logger who started taking her into the woods when she was very young.

Flathead Land Trust is thrilled to be involved with FVCC through this scholarship and to help continue Cal's legacy of thoughtful stewardship of the land in the Flathead Valley and surrounding areas.



Kimberly Blonshine and Lindsay Biedel at the FVCC Scholarship Awards Reception

North Shore of Flathead Lake in winter. Photo: Karen Nichols



Population Growth in Flathead County

Flathead County population in the 2000 Census was 74,471. The U.S. Census Bureau estimate for July 1, 2006 was 85,314. This is a 15% increase in five years. From 1970 to 1980 we experienced a 32% increase and from 1990 to 2000 the population increased 26%. Population is projected to increase 71% by 2030; the only other county in Montana which may see a larger increase is Gallatin County with a projected 86% increase.

The U. S. Census Bureau estimates population growth of incorporated towns in the Flathead from 2000 to 2005 as follows: Columbia Falls at 21.8%, Kalispell at 29.9% and Whitefish at 40.4%. Rural growth is only 3.1%.

Since 1990 in Flathead County, nearly 70,000 acres have been subdivided or approved for subdivision. While this growth is inevitable and good for the economy, there are places that are appropriate for development and others that are not.

Growth in inappropriate areas can affect water quality, wildlife habitat, recreation access, scenic views and overall quality of life. It can also greatly affect our economy because our natural resources

are what make Flathead County unique and what keep visitors coming back in droves every year. This is why Flathead Land Trust continues to be involved in the implementation of the new county growth policy and continues to work with local partners to direct growth to the most appropriate areas.



Environmental Award Presented to Former FLT Board Member

Milt Carlson received the 2006 Great Northern Environmental Stewardship Area Conservation Award for his steadfast commitment to the mission of GNESEA.

Milt was acknowledged at the GNESEA Annual Meeting, held Tuesday, May 22, 2007 at the Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish. Dan Vincent, Director, said that Milt "faithfully attends and participates in all meetings, has kept good order of accounting and other important records on behalf of GNESEA and the Flathead Trust AND responds to important documents like the Habitat Conservation Plan for Grizzly Bears in the Middle Fork."

Randy Wolff, Co-chair of GNESEA, reiterated these points, and said "Milt is a strong supporter and citizen member of GNESEA." He was unanimously selected to be a lifetime member of the GNESEA Steering Committee at the July meeting.

For more information on GNESEA visit the Website www.gnesa.org



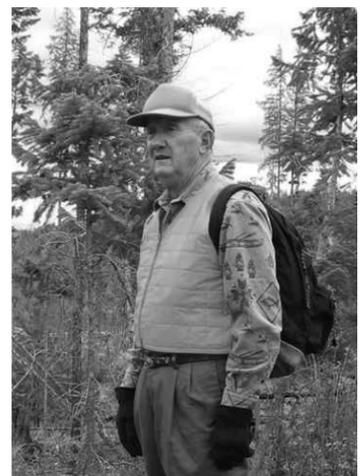
Pictured left to right, Dan Vincent, Milt Carlson and Randy Wolff



North Shore geese. Photo: Karen Nichols

A special thank you to Walt Bahr for another great season of being our monitoring volunteer extraordinaire. We appreciate your many years of dedication to Flathead Land Trust!

At right, Walt Bahr in the field.



Marcy Mahr named Conservation and Stewardship Associate



Marcy Mahr received her M.S. in Plant Ecology from the University of Vermont (1995) and a B.A. in Sociology/Anthropology-Northern Studies from Middlebury College, Vermont (1986).

Before joining the Flathead Land Trust, Marcy spent 8 years as Science Director and then Consulting Scientist with the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative. In Marcy's work with Y2Y she helped support research projects studying wildlife corridors throughout the Rockies.

Prior to joining Y2Y, Marcy spent 1993-1998 as a plant ecologist coordinating field work and GIS mapping for the Craighead Wildlife & Wildlands Institute's Grizzly Bear Recovery project in central Idaho, the University of Montana's Montana GAP project, and the US Forest Service Upper Columbia Basin Assessment.

She lives in Kila with her husband and daughter on an organic farm.

Providing Options for Rural Landowners in the Flathead Valley

Through the work done in the creation of the county's growth policy, community residents said over and over that they are concerned about water quality and loss of open space.

How to address those concerns, respect property rights, and find incentives for long time landowners who see their property as their retirement plan is the crux of the Flathead puzzle - balancing growth with conservation.

It's important that there are options that are compatible with the landowner's and community member's desires to protect farmland, wildlife habitat, riparian areas and other special places in the Flathead Valley.

Recently, Flathead Land Trust convened a group of community leaders and like-minded organizations to think about what options we can provide for rural landowners in the Flathead Valley.

We have been encouraged by successes in other communities. After the Land Trust Alliance Northwest Conference in Missoula in May, FLT staff members Lindsay Biedel and Marcy Mahr had the opportunity to get a quick tour of Mt. Jumbo, a fabulous recreation area right in Missoula that was protected with funds from an open space bond that passed in 1995.

The benefits to the community are endless and as the hike continued, you felt like you were in the middle of nowhere until you turned to see the town of Missoula below with Grizzly Stadium off in the distance.

The community of Missoula has worked hard in recent years to maintain important natural resources and wildlife habitat as the city experiences rapid growth. The open space bonds passed in 1995 and, most recently, in

2006 have helped the City of Missoula and the surrounding areas protect special areas by creating a pot of money to be used to buy these properties and protect them forever.

Mt. Jumbo is a perfect example of how an open space bond can benefit the entire community and make a town like Missoula an even more "livable" city because of the endless opportunity for outdoor recreation at your fingertips. Gallatin County, Ravalli County and Helena County have all passed similar open space bonds in recent years and have their own success stories because of it.

We are still working on a strategy and building a coalition of community and business leaders to help us with our efforts. If you are interested in getting more involved in this initiative, please contact us at (406) 752-8293.

One thing is clear, we have an opportunity to provide options to rural landowners that will benefit all of us by maintaining the character of the Flathead Valley and protecting land that is important for water quality, wildlife habitat, farming and scenic views. It is this land that defines our area and makes it unique.



View from Missoula's Mt. Jumbo

Trails Group Works to Secure Gateway Property above Herron Park

In July, the Montana Conservation Corps began three weeks of work building a trail on an easement donated by John and Myron Chase on their 160-acre ridge top property above Herron Park. This trail easement was donated to Foys to Blacktail Trails project as a first link in a trail system with plans to stretch from Herron Park to Blacktail Mountain.

FtBT is a volunteer, non-profit organization which is raising money to buy 320-acres of land located above Herron Park to the west. It is the gateway to the Chase trails and adjacent Plum Creek lands.

A Conservation Fund is acting as a "bridge buyer" for FtBT by purchasing this key 320 acres. FtBT seeks community support by raising \$2.5 million to purchase this gateway

property over the next two years.

To contribute or learn more, please visit the FtBT Website: Foystoblacktailtrails.org or call Liz Seabaugh at 752-3318.



Jim Lehner (right) of Plum Creek presents a check for \$4,000 to Cliff Kipp (left) of Montana Conservation Corps to construct trails on the land of John Chase (center). Plum Creek's donation funded one week of trail construction by MCC's Youth Engaged in Service Crew. All of the young people in the work crew were local.

Flathead Land Trust has a new and improved website! It has lots of great pictures and good information for landowners and community members who are interested in our work. Check it out at www.flatheadlandtrust.org

Field Monitor Finds Peaceful Lands, Hopeful Future

By Marcy Mahr

As this year's field monitoring season comes to a close, I am filled with hope for the future of the Flathead Valley. As I've zig-zagged through the valley, dodging road construction and re-routes around new subdivisions, I found myself taking a deep breath every time I entered a driveway of one of our easement holders. Some peace and quiet away from all the activity going on these days.

Meeting each landowner and experiencing each property has been such a treat. These annual visits are a great way to reconnect with the purposes and conservation values of each landowner's easement and

to discuss changes to land uses and activities. I have enjoyed walking or driving through fields and forests; skirting along wetlands and springs; seeing interesting plants; hearing red tail hawks; talking about weeds; hopping over bear poop; and learning about secret fishing holes.

There is no cookie-cutter FLT easement holder; no way to pigeon-hole the group of landowners by profession or politics. This diversity made each visit unique, informative, and very inspiring. I've enjoyed all of the stories—such a wonderful cast of characters have entrusted our land trust with protecting their land.

McWeneger Slough Project

Flathead Land Trust currently owns 12 acres along McWeneger Slough, after a generous gift from Jim and Donna Buechle. We are currently leasing it to Fish, Wildlife and Parks as a fishing access for the general public to use. In the spring, a group from the Flathead Junior Bass Club did an annual clean-up of this area. Eventually, the Siderius family will donate their time to make this into a more accessible and user-friendly fishing access. Stay tuned for more information!



Van Riper Conservation Story (cont. from page 1)

or a deer. I counted the stars at night from the meadows and watched the valley pass by from the cliffs. In short, I grew up on that hill overlooking the Flathead Valley. No life problem was ever too large to face on that hill, under a tree, under the sky, inside my soul.

My parents began to divide their ranch and eventually passed the 40 acres on to me. My mother explained when she gave it to me that although it was of lesser economic value than other parts of the ranch, it was perhaps their most precious piece. She told me that she knew that "I would take care of the forest and land".

Life carried me far away from my forest on the hill, but through the years just knowing that small piece of land remained pristine and intact was so often a salve for my soul. The trees grew and matured and are now approaching "old growth" stages, and there are few such pockets of forest left unscathed in the valley. Over the years, neighbors logged their land, homes were built on adjacent pieces, and civilization encroached. Offers to buy the land have been numerous. But this special piece of land is in my trust. The conservation easement that we have placed on it allows me to know that it will be protected into perpetuity.

As I have reached a point in my life where I must make some decisions on the dispersment of the property,

I could think of no better way to pass it on than to have it be incorporated into Lone Pine State Park.

It is my sincere wish that every child that grows up in the Flathead Valley will make a pilgrimage into the forest and spend a little time under those trees. When I grew up, I considered the Flathead to be the center of the world, and so it has remained in my heart all these years. But the world is a very different place now as

urban centers have expanded and globalization has occurred. A way of life is passing, even in Montana. There are fewer and fewer wilderness experiences to be encountered by our youth. But if we can send our children into the wildness to touch nature and respect it and understand it, our planet will be a better place. If we can raise our children to be grounded and sensible, with bit

of the forest in their heart, it can reverberate throughout the world. This land, being close to Kalispell as the city grows, will hopefully serve as a respite for generations to come. To that end, I pass this small piece of land into the Park for the use and enjoyment and enrichment of all the future generations to come. To that end, I leave the conservation easement as a protection for the land in changing times.

...I could think of no better way to pass it on than to have it be incorporated into Lone Pine State Park.- Sandra Van Riper