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FLATHEAD  
LAND TRUST  
Conserving Our Legacy of Land and Water

# View Points

Spring 2008

## A Family Tradition of Conservation

On January 13th of this year, the Daily Inter Lake ran a front page headline, "Saving Land for the Future." The story featured Dr. Glenn and Hazel Johnston's decision to place a conservation easement with Flathead Land Trust on 682 acres of their ranch on Columbia Falls Stage Road. They donated development rights in order to permanently preserve the land for farming, wildlife, recreation, and education. But Glenn and Hazel's conservation vision is not only about the future; it is deeply rooted in the past and five generations of Johnstons who loved this land.

### Pioneer Settlers

Glenn's family history is a study in the early days of homesteading in the Flathead. His grandfather Lee, a young pioneer in the 1870s, crossed the plains with his family, finally settling in the Gallatin Valley. In 1883, after completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad, Lee and his brother Reuben headed north to the Flathead Valley.

A resourceful and ambitious man, Grandfather Lee took on tough jobs to earn a living in those days. Using oxen, he plowed up the sod in the Creston area and freighted over primitive roads along Flathead Lake and through Bad Rock Canyon, using tow ropes on steep hills. In 1885, no stranger to hard work, Lee homesteaded 160 acres of the current Johnston ranch property. He built a cabin on the river with a dirt floor and sod roof, and frequently shared a meal with the Indians passing by.

Reuben, Lee's brother, homesteaded 160 acres just north of Lee's. Lee and his wife Alberta eventually built a ranch house and raised five children there. One of those children was Glenn's father, also named Glenn.

"My Dad especially deserves the credit for preserving this piece of property," said Glenn. Glenn Sr. loved nature and the out of doors, and took every opportunity to trap, hunt and fish. He began to dream of acquiring more river



Photo: Marcy Mahr

The Johnston family ranch is the largest single-ownership easement ever executed in the Flathead Valley bottom.

bottom land.

During the 1920s and 30s, Glenn Sr. was a fur buyer. In 1934, he started his own fur business and managed to prosper during the Depression. Around that time, Glenn Sr. had the opportunity to buy 160 acres of wooded river

**"A conservation easement takes away the option we wanted taken away--subdivision. There are still plenty of options."**

islands and bottom land from the Somers Lumber Company. He also bought the original ranch from his siblings, along with other parcels of bottom land. Throughout his life, his wife, Harriet, worked hard to support his efforts.

"We ended up with 700 acres as our family ranch," said Glenn. "When my Dad died in 1965, he knew every

Continued on page 5

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## River to Lake Initiative



Map: Susannah Casey, American Bird Conservancy

This initiative is a partnership between private landowners, land trusts, conservation organizations, corporations, counties, tribes, and public agencies to conserve, enhance, and maintain our Flathead River and Lake natural heritage - excellent water quality, outstanding scenic and recreation values, and abundant fish and wildlife.

### An Ecological Treasure

Within the Crown of the Continent ecosystem and the northern Rockies landscape, the Flathead River and Lake provide habitat for threatened native fish, critical nesting and migratory stopover areas for thousands of waterfowl, habitat for bald eagles, and wetlands and sloughs that support unique plant communities.

### Conservation Success

Nearly 5000 acres have been conserved along the Flathead River, including miles of river frontage, river islands, and waterfowl production areas. Over 1300 acres in the river corridor were protected in 2007, including 682 acres of the Johnston property and 670 acres of the Siderius family's farmlands.

### Public and Private Partnership

Our partners include: Flathead Lakers, American Bird Conservancy, Montana Land Reliance, The Nature Conservancy, the Salish and Kootenai Confederated Tribes, Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Montana Dept. Natural Resources and Conservation, among others.

Ken Siderius  
President

Jim Regnier  
President-Elect

Susan Sherman  
Secretary

Dawn Oehlerich  
Treasurer

Diane Conradi

Bill Dakin

Mike Fraser

Alison Young

**Flathead Land Trust Staff**

Marilyn Wood  
Executive Director

Marcy Mahr  
Conservation and  
Stewardship Associate

Anastasia Allen  
Conservation Programs Manager

Dawn Tacke  
Office and Communication  
Manager

Dan Vincent  
GNESA Director

Flathead Land Trust  
33 2nd Street E,  
PO Box 1913  
Kalispell, MT 59903  
Phone: 406.752.8293  
Fax: 406.257.3523  
flt@bigsky.net  
www.flatheadlandtrust.org

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. We collaborate with family farmers and ranchers, with foresters and outdoor enthusiasts, indeed with people from all walks of life, as thoughtful stewards of the Flathead.

# Message from the President

It seems in each new issue of View Points, there are lots of exciting projects and changes to report, and this issue is no exception.

First of all, I want to welcome two new staff members—Dawn Tacke, our new Office Manager, and Anastasia (Stacy) Allen, our new Conservation Programs Manager. They bring a wealth of experience from their respective backgrounds and have already been instrumental in moving important projects forward. We also say good-bye to two retiring Board Members, Tom Bengtson and Myrt Webb. They contributed much to this organization over the years and their presence will be missed.

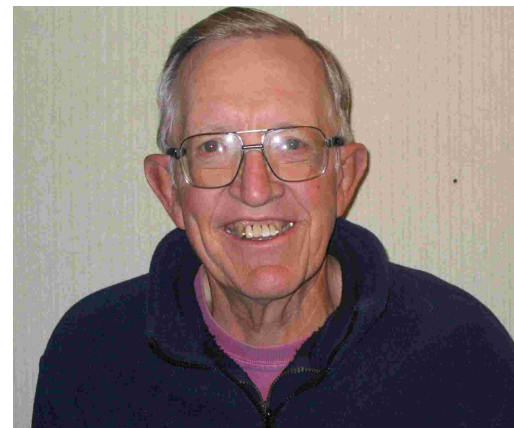
As many of you may have read in the local papers, the Glenn and Hazel Johnston easement was finalized in December 2007. This incredible 682-acre donated easement is the largest single owner easement in the Flathead Valley and one that we are very proud to be affiliated with. This project is a shining example of the vital work we've been doing under our River to Lake Initiative.

The primary goal of the River to Lake Initiative is to protect large parcels of critical habitat within the river corridor and on the north shore of Flathead Lake. Both the Board and staff of FLT have been working tirelessly with area landowners and our partners to create viable conservation alternatives to the development pressure threatening this sensitive area. Stay tuned for exciting announcements on the progress of this initiative.

I want to extend a personal thank you to all those who supported our work in 2007 (see a list of donors on pages 6-7). We mean it when we say we could not succeed in our work without the financial support of individual and business members, and the foundations and organizations which help support us through grants. As you look through our donor list, take a close look at the business members who have made a commitment to the land and the people of this community by supporting Flathead Land Trust. Keep them in mind the next time you are making decisions about where to spend your hard earned money.

Lastly, I have talked with many people recently who have heard about Flathead Land Trust and are inspired by landowners like the Johnstons who choose to permanently protect their land under a voluntary conservation easement. But time and time again, I hear those same people say they don't know how they can personally help promote this conservation work.

Well, supporting Flathead Land Trust



is one simple way to help shape the destiny of your local community. We encourage anyone who cares about this valley—and would like to see a portion of it remain productive and pristine for future generations—to become a member. Flathead Land Trust and our members are positive catalysts in the effort to preserve the heritage of our valley, and we invite you to join us.

Ken Siderius  
Board President

## Sincere Thanks to Retiring Board Members

With regret, we say good-bye to two retiring Board members, Tom Bengtson and Myrt Webb.

Raised in the West Glacier area and a longtime employee of Montana DOT, Tom joined the Board in the early 90s when GNESA and Flathead Land Trust became affiliated. He brought a thoughtful, resource-oriented Montana perspective to our work. Over the years, he pitched in to help FLT in a variety of ways, including important committee and project work.

Myrt joined our Board in 2005, and served us well as our Vice President. With a varied background as retired military man and Columbia Falls City Manager (among other pursuits), he brought to the Land Trust a real penchant for operational efficiency, resource stewardship, and community involvement.

We will miss their input and insights, and hope they continue to stay involved with our activities!

# Thank you to our generous donors!

Peter and Karen Saunders  
Richard H. Schaus  
Richard Schleicher and Joan Morgan  
Sun and Franklin Schroeter  
James and Christine Scott  
Jill Seigmund  
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### Business Members

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Alba Capital Management-Dawn Oehlerich  
Bruce Boody Landscape Architect, Inc.  
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D.A. Davidson-Kalispell/Whitefish  
EarthSong  
Eisinger Auto Group  
Flathead Bank of Bigfork  
Forestoration  
Fraser Management & Consulting  
Freedom Bank  
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JTL Group, Inc

Johnson, Berg, McEvoy, & Bostock  
LC Staffing Service  
Lion Mountain, Inc  
Merlin Data Publishing Corporation  
Montana Academy  
Moose's Saloon  
North Country Builders  
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Provident Financial  
Re/Max Mountain View  
Roger K. Newman, DDS  
Schwarz Construction, Inc.  
Snappy Sport Senter  
Third Street Market  
Thomas, Dean & Hoskins, Inc.  
Whitefish Credit Union

### Foundations/Other

The Bibler Foundation  
Cadeau Foundation  
The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation  
The Cinnabar Foundation  
First Interstate BancSystem Foundation  
Flathead Community Foundation  
Flathead Lake Protection Association  
Heart of the Rockies Initiative  
Homer A. and Mildred S. Scott Foundation  
The Sustainability Fund  
Turner Foundation

We apologize for any errors or omissions that may appear in this listing. Please contact us at (406) 752-8293 to report any changes or corrections. Thank you!

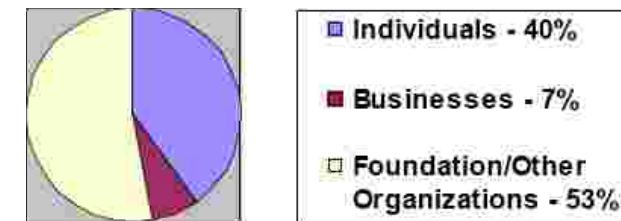
## Operating Funds

This chart breaks down our operating funding sources for 2007:

The money we receive for operating expenses is critical to the success of our projects and overall mission. Our well-publicized conservation easements in 2007 resulted in a great deal of interest from area landowners considering easements on their own land. This increased interest also requires an increase in funding so that we can help more landowners get the job done.

During this time of intense development pressure in the valley, please continue to support our work through annual membership and consider making an additional gift throughout the year.

A special thanks to The Bibler Foundation, The Sustainability Fund, Cinnabar Foundation, Cadeau Foundation and Turner Foundation for supporting our work with operating grants in 2007. We would also like to thank those individuals, including an anonymous donor, who contributed to our Land Protection Assistance Fund in 2007. The LPA Fund assists landowners with some of the transaction costs associated with voluntary conservation easements. Money from this fund was utilized on the Glenn and Hazel Johnston easement.



**A sincere thanks to all the individuals, businesses, foundations and other entities that supported Flathead Land Trust's work in 2007. Your support is critical to our success in protecting Flathead Valley's legacy of land and water.**

**Individuals**

Anonymous (5)  
 Fred and Julie Adkins  
 Rick Anfenso  
 Jennifer and Jamie Armstrong  
 Jennifer Asebrook and Richard Menicke  
 Gordon Ash and Susan Kemper  
 Will and Margaret Baird  
 David and Chet Barclay  
 Donald Baughman  
 Randy and Rayne Beach  
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 Bill and Ann Jones  
 Gael Bissell and Rick Mace  
 Scot Blair  
 D. Linnell Blank  
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 Kathryn and Michael Britton  
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 Hi and Mary Gibson  
 Monte and Samantha Gilman  
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 Allen Rodgers  
 Steve and Sue Rolfig  
 Ed and Marge Rothfuss  
 Mark Salansky  
 Horace and Patricia Sanders  
 John and Carol Santa

**Staff News**

**Meet the newest members of the Flathead Land Trust Team**

Our new Conservation Programs Manager is Anastasia (Stacy) Allen. She has over fifteen years of experience in natural resource assessment and management. Most recently she worked as an ecologist with the Rocky Mountain Research Station on Forest Inventory and Analysis, based out of Salmon, Idaho.



Anastasia (Stacy) Allen

Stacy received her M.S. in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development from the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 2004. Her thesis focused on riparian restoration along a river in west-central Mexico, an area with tropical deciduous forests of very high biodiversity. She surveyed intact riparian forest that could be used as reference sites for restoration. She worked with students and volunteers to plant trees along sections of degraded riverbank. She earned a B.S. in Forest Management from the University of California, Berkeley in 1993.

Dawn Tacke became our new Office and Communication Manager in October 2007. She comes to Flathead Land Trust from a background in human services and case management—most recently as a case manager with the Flathead One-Stop Workforce Center and prior to that, a Production Supervisor and Employment Specialist with Flathead Industries.

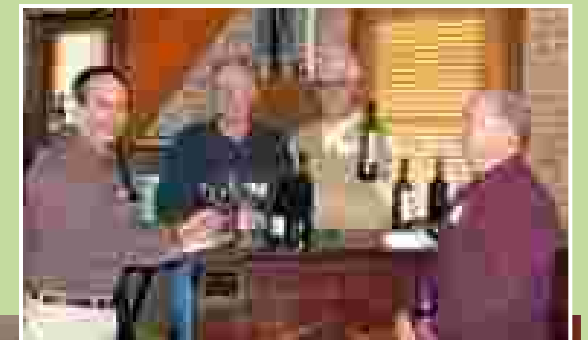


Dawn Tacke

From her human services work, she brings valuable management and organizational skills, along with a strong desire to continue doing work that is meaningful to the community. When not busy in the office, Dawn spends time with her animals and her boyfriend, attends college, works as an advocate with Special Friends, and travels around the great state of Montana as often as she can.

**FLT Thanks Business Members**

In April, Flathead Land Trust held a Business Member Appreciation Party in the historic KM Building. It was a way to say thank you to local businesses whose support has made such a huge difference in our ability to help protect the special places of Flathead Valley and beyond.



Attendees also got the inside scoop on our River to Lake Initiative during a presentation by Executive Director, Marilyn Wood.

If you are interested in learning more about the benefits of Business Membership with Flathead Land Trust, call us at 752-8293.

Stay tuned for an announcement about our upcoming general membership appreciation event.



Marilyn Wood talks to business members about the River-to-Lake Initiative

**Want to Save Some Trees?**

**Would you like to receive our newsletter by email instead of paper? Let us know! Email us at [flt@bigsky.net](mailto:flt@bigsky.net) or call 752-8293 to give us your email address!**

## Conservation Vision for Flathead Lake's North Shore

"Imagine the North Shore from Somers to Sportsman's Bridge remaining as scenic, productive farmland with a few rural home sites, a new state park with more boating access, additional wildlife habitat with increased hunting opportunities, a trail system connecting the trail in Somers towards the village of Bigfork, and a native American interpretive area explaining the importance of the lake and shore lands to the Salish and Kootenai peoples," testified FLT's Executive Director, Marilyn Wood when she spoke in front of the Flathead County Planning Board.

In late March, the Planning Board reviewed the application for the 290-home, North Shore Ranch Estates subdivision.

"Just imagine that sort of future for the seven miles of shoreline and 2,000 acres of the North Shore. This conservation vision is an alternative to high density residential development. Your decisions are critical in determining what the future will look like on the North Shore and which way the dominos will fall: towards high-density residential development or towards conservation of one of the valley's irreplaceable landscapes," added Wood.

While the planning board approved the preliminary plat for the development, the County Commissioners denied the application in April.

Over the last few months, FLT and our partners have been in the news promoting this conservation vision as part of our larger River to Lake Initiative (see back page).

We believe a conservation vision for the North Shore showcases how we can protect all the amenities that make the Flathead Valley special and still provide landowners with financial incentives that work for them. Over the past year, FLT, North Shore landowners, public agencies, sportsmen, and other organizations have been



Photo: Marcy Mahr

North shore of Flathead Lake

working to make that vision real - and we already have some financial commitments to begin putting these pieces into place.

"We also are continuing to talk with the developers of North Shore Ranch Estates to find a solution that works for them and fits with the larger vision," said Wood.

"It's going to take a private-public partnership to raise funds necessary to protect this special place," Wood continued. "Our efforts just received a huge boost with a grant of \$200,000 from the Doris Duke Foundation. This grant provides seed money for matching state and federal funds needed for our conservation efforts."

## McWeneger Slough Fishing Access

Final preparation is underway for the new and improved fishing access at McWeneger Slough. Flathead Land Trust owns 12 acres on the slough, as a result of a generous donation by Jim and Donna Buechle. This spring, the Siderius family will be donating materials and construction time to put in a parking area, boat launch site and restroom facilities. Flathead Land Trust will then donate the acreage to the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, who will maintain the site.

The Siderius family has been steadfast in seeing this project through to completion in memory of their parents, Pete and Louise.

Doing what we can to enhance and promote access to our public spaces is important to Flathead Land Trust. We are proud to have our name on this project alongside the Siderius family and our partners at Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.



View of McWeneger Slough

## Johnstons secure family land for grandchildren

(cont. from page 1)

tree and was so proud of the ranch." In 1961, Glenn Sr. had the bottomland designated a wildlife sanctuary. It was officially recognized at the time by Montana Fish and Game, and is perhaps the first such sanctuary of its kind in Montana. "His pioneer spirit made him a Republican in his political philosophy, but he was very much an environmentalist."

"My Dad really inspired me," said Glenn. "I fell so much in love with the place." During his college years in Salt Lake City, Glenn Jr. studied pre-med and said he sometimes found it difficult to remove himself from the ranch. "Periodically, I couldn't stay away from it."

Glenn used to worry that he might not own the ranch someday. However, his dream came true when his sister and mother graciously allowed him and his wife Hazel to buy them out. They took full ownership in 1982. "Then, the worries turned to whether I could hold onto the place," Glenn said. "It was important to me to keep it intact," he added.

"I spend a lot of time taking my granddaughter, Katie, down by the river. My son Mark and his wife Joan love this place, too; so there was no issue in doing a conservation easement. It was just a matter of timing. Recently I thought, 'What better time to do a conservation easement than when I am alive,'" said Glenn.

As Glenn and Hazel were doing their estate planning, and as land values in the valley exploded, Glenn worried about being able to hang onto the ranch. The improved tax benefits of 2007 helped inspire him and Hazel to get it done last year. "It was a motivator but not a big one. The big motivation was to conserve the place intact."

When asked whether he sees their conservation easement taking away options from his heirs, Glenn responded, "This notion is contrary to my point of view. A conservation easement takes away the option we wanted taken away, subdivision. There are still plenty of options." Glenn acknowledged there is a burden that goes with property ownership. "I talked about the stewardship responsibility with Mark, and he's ready to carry on."

Building a cabin, one of their family traditions, has been preserved in their conservation easement. Both grandfather Lee and Glenn Sr. built cabins on the land, so in their easement Glenn and Hazel reserved the option for their son Mark to build a cabin some day.

"One of the values of the ranch for me is that it provides a sense of being rooted in something wonderful

and real. Even while living in Utah I felt a close tie to the land. When I was feeling stressed I would often find myself imagining I was back along the river, and such thoughts were comforting." Not only is the ranch Glenn's touchstone, he hopes it becomes his



Chris Peterson: Hungry Horse News

Hazel and Dr. Glenn Johnston

granddaughter Katie's as well. He smiled as he recollected how Katie likes to collect shepherd rocks from the river. One year Glenn made Katie a necklace for her birthday from those cherished stones. Glenn sent her the necklace and the card he wrote included these words:

*You will immediately recognize these are precious stones. Not diamonds or rubies but precious nevertheless... Now you will have a piece of your Ranch with you no matter where your future travels take you. In an artificial world filled with stress and confusion you can grasp an anchoring connection to a natural world and there find peace and strength.*

"In placing a conservation easement on our place I have reduced Mark, Joan and Katie's financial inheritance, but I think I am giving them something that is more valuable," said Glenn.