



# PROTECTION OF A WILDLIFE HAVEN

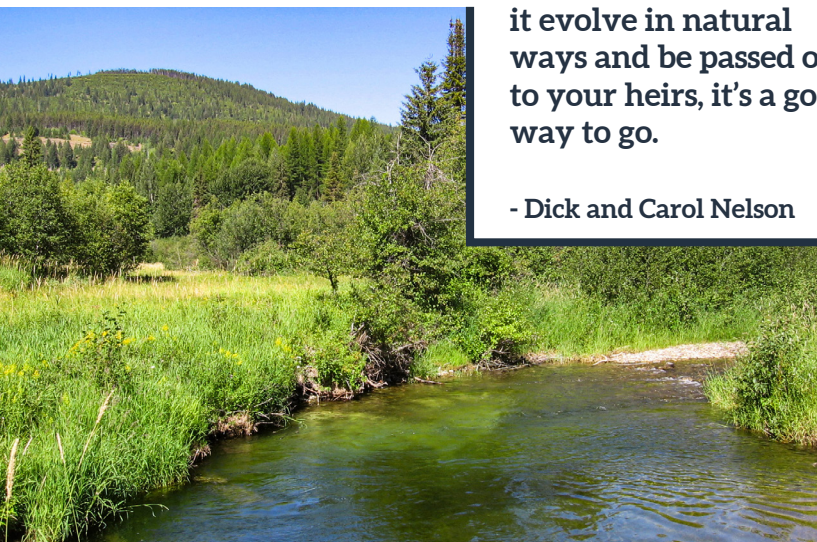
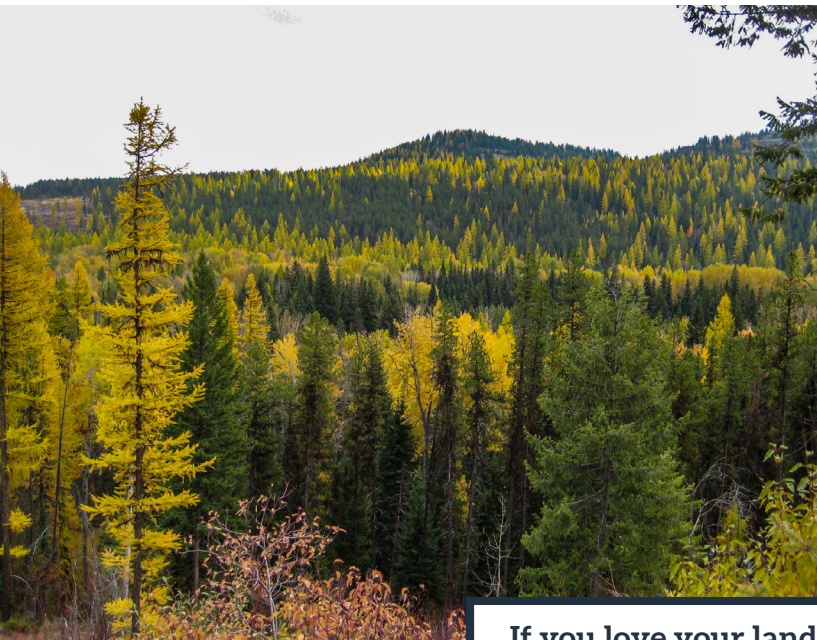
Imagine a series of large meadows with a gently gurgling stream meandering through them. Along the stream is an undisturbed wet forest with backwater areas flooded by beaver. A pair of playful whitetail deer fawns scamper across a grassy open area. A family of mergansers fishes nearby in the crystal clear creek. A black bear and its cub nap in the cool, moist forest. In the distance, is a grey wolf.

You are envisioning the Nelson conservation easement property – a 301 acre wildlife haven surrounded by Forest Service land northwest of Whitefish. About 1.5 miles of Good Creek and part of Miller Creek flow through the property. Much of the parcel contains wet forest communities including those dominated by cedar, spruce, and cottonwood. Flooded backwater areas are prominent on the landscape and many small wetlands are scattered throughout the property. The parcels contain a total of 90 acres of stream corridors, wet forests, and wetlands. Several large grassy meadows are also found on the property.

“I fell in love with this place the first time I saw it,” says Dick Nelson. “I am amazed at the diversity of wildlife on the property.” Dick and his wife Carol have seen wolf, mountain lion, bear, coyote, moose, elk, deer, beaver, skunk, and a variety of birds including spruce and ruffed grouse on the property. Many other small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles make their home on the property as well.

The property has a rich history. Old structures in the upper meadow are the remains of an original homestead. A future ranger for Glacier National Park built the homestead and conducted some logging activities. The park was still





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**- Dick and Carol Nelson**

years away from being established. The property later transitioned into a cattle ranch, utilizing the homestead and the expansive meadows. Dick and Carol bought the property in 1969. While they have grazed some cattle on the property, they have largely kept it in its natural state.

Dick grew up in Portland and spent his professional life in California as a writer for television shows. Dick was known for his work in the television movies “The Challenger”, “Mayday at 40,000 Feet”, “One More Train to Rob”, and “Shootout in a One-Dog Town”. He wrote episodes for “Murder She Wrote”, “Falcon Crest”, “Dynasty”, “CHiPs”, “Wonder Woman”, “Gunsmoke”, and “Hawaii Five-O” among many others. Carol was born in Boston, but grew up mostly in Miami. She began her career as a dancer in Broadway shows in New York and later moved to California and worked as a Montessori teacher. When Dick retired in 1988, he and Carol moved to their Montana property to live full time.

Dick and Carol started thinking about a conservation easement for their property after they hosted a wedding in the upper meadow of their property. One of the wedding guests was a realtor and mentioned the sale and development potential for the property. Dick could not stand the thought of someone subdividing and commercializing the property. Shortly after the wedding, Carol saw a New Yorker cartoon that showed a place just like the upper meadow with a caption that said “What a wonderful place for a city!” This incited Dick and Carol to protect the property; they wanted to keep their property in a natural state and felt a conservation easement would be the best way to do so. Dick and Carol placed a conservation easement on the property through Flathead Land Trust in 2009.

What advice would Dick and Carol give to others considering a conservation easement? “If you love your land and would like to see it evolve in natural ways and be passed on to your heirs, it’s a good way to go.”