

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

VIEW *Points*



**FLATHEAD
LAND TRUST**
Conserving Our Legacy of Land and Water

"Everything is connected! Carefully chosen human ways can be interwoven with nature's wisdom to our mutual benefit." – Words featured on the business card of the late George Darrow



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OUR MISSION

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



Protecting Access and Habitat

On April 9, Flathead Land Trust accomplished something that seemed nearly impossible just a few years ago—something that will have a lasting impact on both conservation and public recreation in the Flathead Valley. But we certainly didn't do it alone.

Thanks to a strong partnership among Flathead Land Trust, Foys to Blacktail Trails, Whitefish Community Foundation, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Trust for Public Land, and the Griffith Family Foundation, we successfully acquired 1,131 acres of forested land just five miles west of Kalispell, adjacent to Herron Park.

The Foys to Blacktail Community Forest project is a remarkable example of what can be achieved through persistence, creativity, shared vision, and community support. Its success depended on our collective ability to raise the funds needed to purchase the property within a very limited timeframe. Whitefish Community Foundation and eleven generous donors recognized the opportunity and stepped forward to make it possible. We are deeply grateful for their commitment and generosity.

This extraordinary property contains valuable wildlife habitat, stunning views of both the Flathead and Smith Valleys, and more than 12 miles of existing roads and trails for non-motorized recreation, including a key segment of the ridgetop Foys to Blacktail Trail. Although the land had been publicly accessible for decades under agreements with private timber companies, that access was never guaranteed and was at risk of being lost.

Now, as the property owner, Flathead Land Trust is working with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to place a conservation easement on the land. This easement will permanently protect the property from development while securing permanent public access for future generations. Once the easement is completed, ownership of the property will be transferred to Foys to Blacktail Trails for long-term stewardship and management. The enthusiastic response from our community has been overwhelming and underscores how important it was to protect this special landscape.

The momentum doesn't stop there. In addition to the Foys to Blacktail Community Forest, Flathead Land Trust has completed three other land protection projects so far this year, with more underway. It is an exciting time for conservation in Northwest Montana. Meaningful conservation happens when communities come together around a shared purpose. Thank you for making this work possible through your continued support.



Paul Travis
Executive Director



Welcoming New Landowners to the Flathead Land Trust Community

When landowners establish a conservation easement on their property with Flathead Land Trust, they do so with the assurance that we will uphold the terms of the agreement with future landowners in perpetuity. Fulfilling this obligation is both our duty and one of the ongoing challenges of our work.

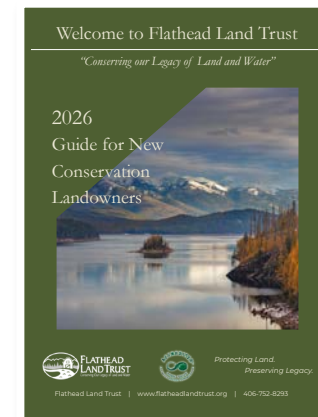
New landowners who were not involved in drafting the original agreement may be unfamiliar with conservation easements and may not fully understand the intent behind the terms or Flathead Land Trust's commitment to upholding them. When a conserved property changes ownership, we make it a priority to reach out to new landowners and introduce ourselves as partners in stewarding the property's conservation values.

To support this effort, Flathead Land Trust has developed a welcome packet for new conservation easement landowners. The packet explains our role and encourages

landowners to ask questions rather than make assumptions about their easement. It highlights why northwest Montana is so special and worth protecting - and underscores that our work is rooted in collaboration with landowners. We emphasize that each conservation easement is tailored to

reflect the unique values and characteristics of a specific property and that we are committed to providing ongoing guidance and support. The packet also outlines what landowners can expect during our annual visits and reinforces that open communication is key to a successful partnership.

Flathead Land Trust is a dedicated, long-term partner in conserving the special places of northwest Montana. Each new landowner becomes part of the land trust community, helping to carry forward the conservation legacy established by the generous individuals who first chose to protect their land.

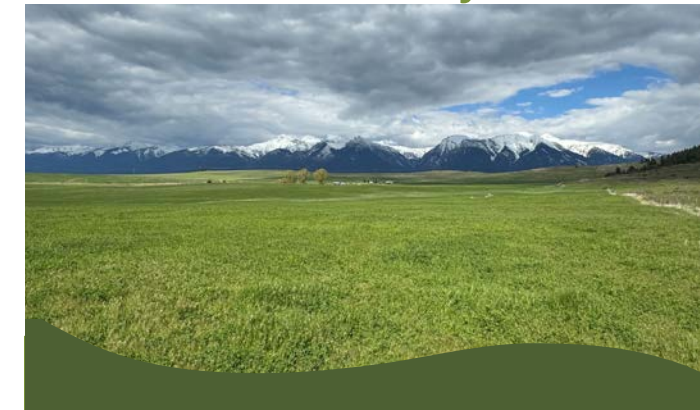


NRCS Grants Obtained for Two Conservation Projects



We successfully obtained grants for two purchased conservation easement projects through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Land Easement program (ALE) in April. This program aims to protect the nation's food supply by keeping rich farmland available for agriculture through conservation easements. The funding goes directly to the landowners to compensate them for keeping their farmland intact. Within the next year, we will work to complete purchased conservation easements with this funding on 379.2 acres of rich farmland south of Creston and 671.5 acres of productive agricultural land south of St. Ignatius.

The property south of Creston contains a mile of Rose Creek, wetlands, and seasonally wet areas important to birds and wildlife. A few of the species that use the property include grizzly bear, elk, wood duck, and hooded merganser. The project will add to an interconnected



network of open space and quality habitat along the Flathead River at a landscape scale. It is near the focus area of Flathead River to Lake Initiative as it is only a tenth of a mile from the Flathead River.

The property south of St. Ignatius contains an important travel corridor on a forested ridge between the Pistol Creek and Sabine Creek drainages used by grizzly bear and other wildlife. The property is also used by black bear, bobcat, mountain lion, fox, wolf, coyote, deer, and a variety of birds. It provides important winter habitat for birds of prey and is used by bald eagle, golden eagle, rough-legged hawks, and red-tailed hawks in winter. The project also protects scenic open space as it is in the foreground of the Mission Mountains as first seen when traveling over the divide on Hwy. 93 north from the Jocko Valley.

We are excited to begin work in earnest to bring these great conservation projects to completion.



THE COLLATERAL BEAUTY OF HOLDING ON: WHY THE FOYS TO BLACKTAIL PROJECT IS PERSONAL



By Liam Diekmann, Land Protection Specialist

The first time I stood on the ridgeline above Herron Park, on what is now Flathead Land Trust's newest property, and looked out across the Flathead Valley to Glacier National Park, I remember thinking that places like this rarely stay unchanged for long. Having been born in Montana, and fortunate enough to grow up here, it felt like a stark contrast to what I remember as a kid. I vividly remember being able to look across the Gallatin and Flathead Valleys and seeing farmland stretching from one side to the next. Now, I sometimes find myself looking out and wondering how much longer landscapes like this will remain recognizable.

Before moving back to Montana, I was finishing my master's degree at CU Boulder. There were moments there, walking across town, driving through the city, or taking the bus to the airport, when I would unexpectedly find myself in tears. Not because Boulder isn't beautiful, but because I felt something difficult to explain. These tears came from a profound sense of change, from witnessing the apparent loss of nature and wilderness. It felt like a place where open space had slowly given way to rooftops and roads, where nature had become something, you visited rather than something woven into everyday life.

Now I am not your next Christopher McCandless, but I have spent more time than most people exploring what true wilderness can feel like. I have wandered above the Arctic Circle, explored the wilderness of Alaska, and traveled to the

far reaches of the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia. Places where landscapes still feel vast enough to remind you how small you are. And when you get to have that experience, that feeling can never be fully explained in mere words. There is a collateral beauty in wild places. Something beyond mountains, rivers, or scenery itself. It changes how you think, how you feel, and ultimately who you become.

As the newest member of Flathead Land Trust, I had only been in my role a short time before I found myself stepping into one of the largest projects in our organization's history. Throughout this process, I often find myself thinking of my late father, Alex Diekmann. Before he passed away in 2016, he worked as a Senior Project Manager for the Trust for Public Land, leading projects much like this one. More often than not, while working on the Foys to Blacktail project, I catch myself wishing I could call him, ask for guidance, or simply hear what advice he might have for taking on something that at times feels so monumental.

But while I have not been able to turn to him, I have realized that I have not had to carry this alone. Although so much of this work is still new to me, I have found guidance in my coworkers, in my boss Paul, and in every person who has helped shape this project along the way. Conservation has a way of reminding you that no one protects a landscape alone. I never would have been able to step into this work, and I certainly would not be continuing in it, without their support.

What has struck me most as I learned more about the property was not simply its size, but how many stories already intersected here. Before I ever touched a map, sat in a meeting, or helped move paperwork across the finish line, this landscape

was already deeply woven into people's lives. For some, these trails were once part of a morning routine before work. For others, it was a place to ride bikes, walk dogs, watch wildlife, or introduce their children to the outdoors for the first time. After a change in ownership years ago, that access and privilege was threatened. Knowing that this place can once again become part of people's everyday lives is something that fills me with an incredible sense of pride and gratitude.

Conservation work and success often get measured through acres protected, dollars raised, legal agreements signed, and maps drawn. I have already spent plenty of time immersed in those details during my short time at Flathead Land Trust. But standing on that ridgeline reminded me that conservation has always been something much more personal. It is about protecting the experiences that shape us, the places where memories are made, and landscapes that quietly become part of who we are.

Years from now, my hope is that most people walking these trails will never know the long meetings, partnerships, and leap-of-faith moments that helped protect this place. They will simply assume it was always here. And honestly, that may be the greatest success conservation can hope for.

"Sometimes I wonder if protecting a place is our way of holding onto the people and memories we are afraid to lose."

Learn more and donate to the project HERE: FlatheadLandTrust.org



PROJECT AT A GLANCE:

- ◆ In April 2026, **Flathead Land Trust** purchased the 1,131-acre parcel of forestland just south of Herron Park from **The Griffith Family Foundation**, protecting it from development.
- ◆ Its protection was made possible by a landmark collaboration. **Whitefish Community Foundation**, serving as the project's philanthropic advisor, convened eleven crucial bridge donors to secure essential funding.

WHAT IS SAFEGUARDED:

- ◆ **Permanent Access:** 12 miles of nonmotorized roads & trails (including the 3.5-mile ridgetop trail) for hikers, bikers, runners, hunters, and equestrians.
- ◆ **Vital Habitat:** and passageway for deer, elk, moose, wolves, black bears and a variety of birds.
- ◆ **Active Management:** Sustainable forestry to support forest health and wildfire mitigation.

A PHASED PLAN FOR PERMANENT PROTECTION:

- ◆ **Phase I:** Property Acquisition (COMPLETED)
- ◆ **Phase II:** Conservation Easement (UNDERWAY) - **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks** intends to hold a permanent conservation easement on the land, with funding secured by the **Trust for Public Land** through the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program.
- ◆ **Phase III:** Long-Term Ownership (FUTURE): Once the easement is finalized, Flathead Land Trust will transfer ownership to **Foys to Blacktail Trails** for perpetual stewardship and recreational growth.

THE PATH FORWARD:

Now, the land trust and Foys to Blacktail Trails are launching a joint public fundraising campaign to raise \$350,000 to establish a long-term stewardship and maintenance fund.



Where Waters Flow & Wildlife Thrives: Three New Conservation Easements Safeguard Connected Landscapes

By protecting diverse landscapes from critical river corridors to vast, contiguous wildlands, three new conservation easements secure crucial habitat and wildlife connectivity. These lands are an invaluable gift to the wildlife that relies on them and the community that loves them.

Expanding a Legacy: Kohrs Family Expands Stillwater River Conservation

Growing their conservation legacy along the Stillwater River west of Whitefish, Doug and Carolyn Kohrs permanently protected an additional 110 acres of critical habitat in partnership with Flathead Land Trust. Once slated for an eight-home subdivision, the Kohrs chose conservation over development. This new easement augments 655 acres protected by the family in 2022, creating a nearly 800-acre block of protected land that connects to the 1,560-acre Kuhns Wildlife Management Area and thousands of acres of contiguous public lands.

By securing an additional quarter-mile of riverfront, the agreement extends a contiguous protected riparian stretch to over three miles. This seamless, intact landscape serves as a critical wildlife corridor. On-site game cameras have captured grizzly and black bears, mountain lions, wolves, and bobcats navigating the property, as well as elk calves and deer fawns utilizing the forested riparian area as a safe nursery. By protecting this vital habitat, the conservation easement safeguards local water quality while also ensuring that the property's prime, high-quality farmland remains intact.

“Carolyn and I are excited to add this additional piece of wildlife-critical land to our existing easement. Secure and safe wildlife corridors are important for all the different animal species who live in the Valley, especially as the inevitable development creeps closer to their natural habitat.”

- Doug Kohrs



A Lasting Gift at Glacier's Edge: The Lane Conservation Easement

In partnership with Flathead Land Trust, Connie Lane has permanently protected her 105-acre forested property west of Coram. Located on the backside of Teakettle Mountain, just two miles south of Glacier National Park, this strategic conservation easement secures critical habitat and a key segment of a major wildlife corridor. By bordering existing easements and U.S. Forest Service land, the project strengthens a vast network of contiguous protected lands within the iconic Crown of the Continent Ecosystem.

The newly protected land encompasses a rich mosaic of diverse forest, including large mature spruce, cottonwood, and birch, alongside a vibrant meadow and a tenth of a mile of Flathead River frontage. Fed by multiple ephemeral streams, a large lush wetland extends from the property onto neighboring U.S. Forest Service land. This dynamic habitat offers essential

forage and safe passage for grizzly and black bears, moose, elk, mountain lions, and wolves. The property also serves as a thriving avian sanctuary for at least 86 bird species. The protected riverfront safeguards critical water quality and vital habitat for threatened bull trout, while permanently preserving a scenic, forested viewshed for recreationists floating the river corridor.

“The beauty of Mother Nature inspired me to find a way to buy some land on the river close to the Park. I am so grateful for Flathead Land Trust's help in taking all the steps necessary to protect this land and the animals and birds who use it. It gives me peace of mind.”

- Connie Lane

Gateway to Jewel Basin: 60 Acres Near Echo Lake Permanently Protected

A 60-acre tract nestled below the rugged peaks of the Jewel Basin is now permanently protected. Located just north of Echo Lake, this ecologically rich parcel creates a vital natural buffer to the Swan Mountains. Originally gifted to a local institution in 2013 with the express intent of long-term preservation, the property has spent the last decade serving as a quiet personal sanctuary and an outdoor educational resource.

The easement adds a critical layer of protection to a massive network of wild country, bordering state land on two sides and connecting directly to thousands of acres of the Flathead

National Forest. The land transitions from an open meadow to seasonal wetlands and dense forests of western hemlock, white pine, and grand fir. Also featuring a seasonal vernal pond, this diverse habitat offers excellent foraging and cover for iconic wildlife such as grizzly bears, moose, and deer.

Tucked away in the trees sits a small, unoccupied cabin and a rustic shed once used as a secluded writing studio, reminders of the quiet, creative inspiration this landscape provides. By keeping large-scale development at bay, the agreement permanently safeguards both its intact wildlife habitat and the sweeping Swan Mountain views enjoyed by the public.

“We greatly appreciate the parties involved in conserving this beautiful property below the Swan Mountains. Their commitment ensures that this property will remain welcoming to an abundance of wildlife.”

- Ryan Hunter





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Annual Report & Upcoming Events



In Case You Missed It: Our 2025 Annual Report

Discover how your support shaped a milestone year for conservation. Flathead Land Trust's 2025 Annual Report is now available online, featuring letters from our leadership, an updated land protection snapshot, and highlights of our completed conservation easements. Inside, you'll also find a recap of our 40th anniversary celebrations, updates on our programs, and the defining moments that secured land in perpetuity. Most importantly, we honor the incredible donors, supporters, and leaders who made it all possible. View the full report at:

flatheadlandtrust.org/about/financial-annual-reports, or scan the QR code to view the Flip Book:



Harrell Forest Trail Maintenance Day- Saturday, June 27 (9:00 a.m. - Noon)

Whether you're a seasoned trail worker or a first-time volunteer, we need your help tending to these beloved trails. We'll provide the tools and snacks, just bring your energy, work gloves, and a water bottle. It's a great way to spend a summer morning giving back to the wild places that give us so much. **Registration is Required!** Please email Paul at: ptravis@flatheadlandtrust.org for more information or to sign up.



The Land Affair, 2026: Giddy Up for Conservation! Thursday, June 30

Please join us for The Land Affair, Flathead Land Trust's Annual Benefit celebrating our open spaces and wild places! **Thursday, July 30, 2026**; doors open at **6:00 p.m.** Presented by [Corwin Auto Group of Kalispell](#), we are gathering at **The FARM Montana (Wrangler Springs Ranch)**, a stunning venue located just outside of Bigfork. The refurbished 1905 historic barn, nestled within a 500-acre working ranch, is both the centerpiece for the event and the home of Paladin Conservancy. Enjoy Exquisite Montana BBQ, featuring locally sourced ingredients, catered by **Forage** and live Americana/Country/Rock music by the dynamic **Radio Ranch**.

Learn more and order tickets at: FlatheadLandTrust.org, or scan the QR code:

