



KEEPING MONTANA THE LAST BEST PLACE

A report on the economic and community benefits
of the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Montana

Report updated in 2018







EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montana is renowned for its world-class outdoor recreation, blue ribbon trout streams, and family-friendly small towns. For the last 50 years, a little-known federal program – the Land & Water Conservation Fund, or LWCF – has helped to shape Montana’s vibrant communities and nature-based economy we enjoy today. The Fund’s passage by Congress remains critical to the future of Montana.

LWCF directs money from offshore oil-drilling federal royalties – not tax dollars – to conservation, public access, and recreation priorities across America. LWCF has provided direct benefits to Montana with over \$240 million dollars invested in the state over the last decade to support access to public lands, working forests, and clean water.

Congress created this program in 1964 to ensure that the American people would have access to nature and recreation. LWCF authorizes up to \$900 million per year, although actual allocations have fallen far short of that amount. The Fund has only received full funding once in its 54-year history and is currently in danger of being eliminated altogether.

LWCF investments carry real benefits for clean water, for our freedom to enjoy the great outdoors, and for jobs. In addition to timber and ranching, a myriad of professional, light industry, and outdoor-oriented businesses help make the fabric of today’s economy in the Treasure State. A 2013 poll conducted by Business for Montana’s Outdoors found 70 percent of businesses in Montana cite public lands and access to the outdoors as major factors in their decision to expand or invest in Montana.

Across the state, Montana families, sportsmen, land trusts, ranchers, city officials, and conservationists have come together to shine a spotlight on this important program. LWCF has helped conserve tens of thousands of acres of working forests in western Montana, keeping these lands in production, providing fiber to Montana mills and keeping loggers on the ground. At the same time, it has helped pay for more than 800 local community projects statewide –

including small town parks, swimming pools, tennis courts, bicycle trails, and water supplies. Roughly half of the 330 fishing access sites that dot the Treasure state were purchased with help from LWCF.

Montanans from all walks of life agree that the LWCF has been a tremendous success for Montana. This vital program:

- ▶ PROVIDES ACCESS TO PUBLIC LAND AND WATER FOR MONTANANS AND VISITORS ALIKE
- ▶ CONSERVES FAMILY RANCHES IN PLACES SUCH AS THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT, BLACKFOOT AND CENTENNIAL VALLEYS
- ▶ BUILDS CITY PARKS AND GREENWAYS, FROM HAMILTON TO GLASGOW AND BEYOND
- ▶ KEEPS FORESTS IN PRODUCTION AND UNDER MANAGEMENT IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC PRESSURE

The fate of the Land & Water Conservation Fund is uncertain. For the benefit of all Montanans and Americans, the LWCF must be permanently reauthorized with full, dedicated funding. However, the Trump Administration’s Fiscal Year 2018 Budget proposal would virtually eliminate the LWCF. In Trump’s budget proposal, funding for conservation at our National Parks, National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and other public lands would be gutted. If these cuts become law, expanded hunting and fishing access will remain closed to the public, and hiking, biking, climbing and paddling routes will become overcrowded or left vulnerable to development. The future of the Fund – and the future of Montana – is being determined today.



MONTANA BY THE NUMBERS: LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND

\$240.3 million | LWCF money invested in Montana between 2005 and 2014

800+ | Number of recreational sites such as city parks, trails, and ball fields across Montana purchased at least in part with LWCF dollars

96 | Percent of Montanans that think the outdoor recreation economy is important to the economic future of the state¹

70 | Percent of Montana businesses that cite access to public land and quality recreation as major factors in locating Montana¹

165 | Approximate number of fishing access sites in Montana purchased or improved with the help of LWCF

\$3.4 million | LWCF money spent to buy or improve river fishing access sites in the last 54 years

\$7.1 billion | Consumer spending in Montana's outdoor recreation economy²

2 million | Acres in Montana owned by the public but inaccessible due to adjacent private land holdings

87 | Percent of Montanans who consider themselves outdoor recreation enthusiasts³

\$73 million | LWCF money spent in Montana through the Forest Legacy Program between 2000 and 2017, keeping forests in production

7,500 | Number of jobs in the wood products industry in Montana, in 2018⁴

235,267 | Number of acres of working forest lands in Montana conserved through the LWCF Forest Legacy Program as of 2018

\$7.2 million | LWCF money spent to buy or upgrade state parks in the last 54 years

\$7.4 million | LWCF money paid to the state to buy or upgrade lakes, wildlife refuges, and other lands in the last 54 years

84 | Percent of the LWCF that the Trump Administration has proposed to cut

\$887 billion | America's recreation economy that is at risk if Trump's budget becomes law

78 | Percent that stateside LWCF appropriations have decreased since its highest level in 1979⁵

7.6 million | American jobs that rely on a healthy outdoor recreation economy

71,000 | Direct jobs generated by Montana's outdoor recreation industry⁶

\$38.1 million | LWCF grants to Montana school districts, state, county, and municipal parks departments in the last 54 years

1 | Number of times Congress has fully funded LWCF since 1964

¹Colorado College State Fact Sheet, 2018; ²Survey by Business for Montana Outdoors; ³Colorado College State Fact Sheet, 2018;

⁴Source: Montana Wood Products Association; ⁵Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks parks data; ⁶Survey by Business for Montana Outdoors

WHAT IS THE LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND?

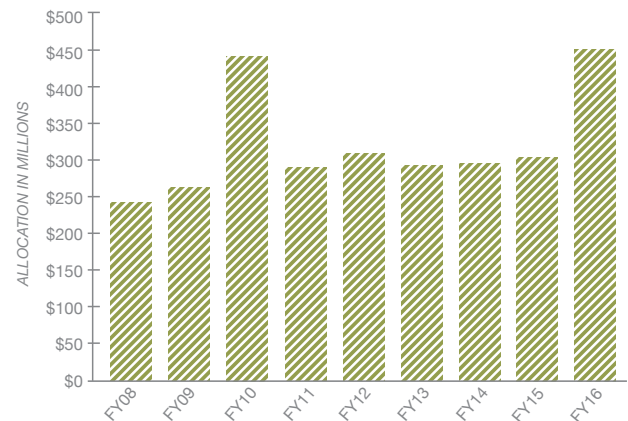
Congress passed the Land and Water Conservation Act in 1964. It is based on a simple democratic idea: invest a portion of fees paid by energy companies that drill federal offshore oil reserves back into the mainland, protecting important natural resources, and creating recreational opportunities for all Americans. In this way, the nation's natural resource bounty can help create a network of parks and conserved lands.

Congress's goal was to encourage recreation and strengthen the "health and vitality" of all Americans.

**LWCF IS NOT
FUNDED BY TAXPAYER DOLLARS.**

The act directs Congress to appropriate up to \$900 million annually into LWCF. Actual funding has only reached that level once, and usually has been far less. Nonetheless, Montanans have reaped the benefits from LWCF, shaping the modern Montana we know and love.

**FIG. 1
NATIONAL LWCF FUNDING
BETWEEN 2008 & 2016**



For five of the last seven years, LWCF allocations have reached less than \$300 million, less than one-third of full funding.

CORRECTING MANAGEMENT HEADACHES

Congress directs a portion of LWCF funds toward federal land managers such as the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service. These funds have helped public agencies improve efficiency and correct problems left as a legacy of outdated land policies from the frontier era.

Since the start of LWCF, almost \$435 million has gone to the four federal land agencies to acquire public land in Montana. More than half of that went to consolidate land and improve public access in Montana's national forests and national parks, a role LWCF has filled for half a century.

Glacier National Park used LWCF funds to buy privately owned inholdings within the park boundaries. These land deals satisfy the private landowner, protect natural and cultural features, and make park management simpler and more efficient.

LWCF has also been used to correct another management headache: the checkerboard land ownership patterns of private and public land. This pattern is a relic of Congressional policies to develop the frontier, dating back to the Civil War.

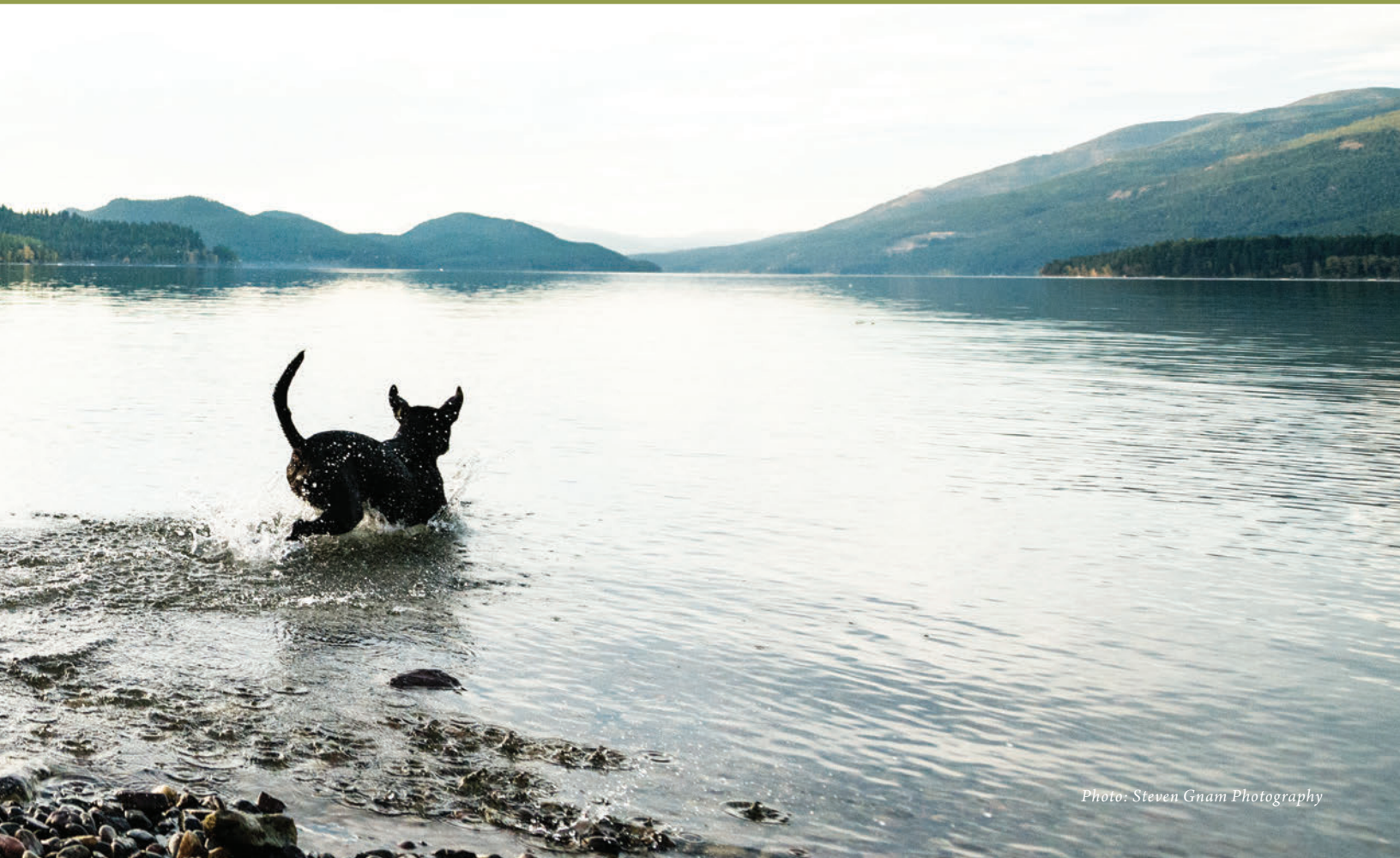
Congress created the "checkerboard" pattern of alternating public and private ownership through a series of laws passed in the late 1800s. To help finance the building of a transcontinental railroad, Congress passed the Union Pacific Act of 1862, which granted every other section (one square mile) of land within 10 miles of the railroad to the Union Pacific so it could sell the land to raise capital. The federal government retained the neighboring sections. When sales proved to be sluggish, Congress doubled the area to 20 miles on each side of the railroad, and eventually doubled the area again to 40 miles. Congress bet that the coming of the railroad would greatly increase the value of the land retained by the government, and it could be sold later for a profit. While successful in the East, this scheme was not practical in the vast, semi-arid rangelands of the West. Many sections remained unsold. Over time, ownership reverted to major timber companies. This pattern of alternating public and private land still exists, today, in much of the West. The fractured ownership pattern makes management of the intermingled land both difficult and costly.

PROVIDING PUBLIC ACCESS

As Montana grows and develops, poorly-planned development can limit access to many treasured places. In one mountain range after another, activities such as logging, fire management, hunting, and camping have become difficult to maintain as development, subdivisions, and trophy homes break up the landscape. Fire-fighting, for example, becomes exponentially more expensive and more dangerous when forests fill up with cabins and homes.

Equally troublesome, in 2013, the Center for Western Priorities found that almost 2 million acres of national forest and other public lands in Montana were inaccessible to the public, locked behind gates and no-trespassing signs.

Over and over again, LWCF has helped make Montana's public lands whole. This provides numerous benefits including preserving uninterrupted habitat for wildlife, reducing human-wildlife conflicts, allowing more effective forest management, and providing more opportunity for recreation.





PROVIDING PUBLIC ACCESS: TENDERFOOT CREEK

- ▶ 13 SQUARE MILES OF WILDLIFE HABITAT ADDED TO THE LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST
- ▶ \$10 MILLION IN FEDERAL LWCF FUNDS
- ▶ GUARANTEED ACCESS FOR HUNTING AND FISHING

In April 2015, a land deal finally closed which consolidated more than 30 square miles of prime wildlife habitat in the Smith River watershed northwest of White Sulphur Springs.

The former Bair Ranch spread over 30 square miles of big game winter range and trout spawning streams. The land ownership pattern was a complex jumble of checkerboard between the ranch and Lewis & Clark National Forest.

When the owners considered selling the ranch, they feared it would be split into scattered parcels, each surrounded with fences and no-trespassing signs. The leaders of the Bair Ranch Foundation didn't want that to happen.

A team, including the local Tenderfoot Trust and the Missoula-based Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), recognized the Bair Ranch as a high priority to protect public access and traditional use in the Tenderfoot drainage.

"Our interest was getting these properties into public ownership for all the benefits that they provide," said RMEF Chief Conservation Officer Blake Henning. "The next step

was always to talk to a land agency to see if they were interested in holding the property. We got the Forest Service to say they were interested."

THE FINAL DEAL WAS INKED WITH BIG HELP FROM LWCF. THE PURCHASE TOOK ALMOST \$10 MILLION, SIX YEARS AND NINE TRANSACTIONS TO COMPLETE. THE DEAL HAD THE SUPPORT OF 34 MONTANA SPORTSMEN'S GROUPS, THE MEAGHER COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND OTHERS.

"The landowner was hanging out there for six, seven years. We had to work hard to make sure we could keep them in the game. With the last phase, we had to really assure them that we could get the last \$2 million to close on the last 1,500 acres," Henning said. "You start these things with all kinds of good intentions, and everyone's on board, but because of lack of funding, these things can really stretch out."





PROVIDING PUBLIC ACCESS: MISSOULA'S MOUNT JUMBO AND MOUNT SENTINEL

- ▶ 1,600 ACRES CONSERVED ON MOUNT JUMBO WITH \$250,000 IN LWCF FUNDS PAYING FOR 140 ACRES
- ▶ THE COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTED \$3 MILLION TO PURCHASE MOUNT JUMBO
- ▶ 475 ACRES CONSERVED ON MOUNT SENTINEL WITH \$800,000 IN LWCF FUNDS
- ▶ THE COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTED \$100,000 TO PURCHASE MOUNT SENTINEL

Mount Jumbo and Mount Sentinel are two familiar landmarks framing the east side of Missoula.

On sunny days, hundreds of people scramble along trails through bunchgrass and wildflowers to reach the whitewashed “M” and “L” that brand these mountains. Hikers and cross-country skiers frequent the Forest Service trails and enthusiasts flock to the frisbee-golf course at Pattee Canyon. From downtown, residents watch elk graze Mount Jumbo in the winter.

Those scenes would not exist if some citizens and organizations not had the foresight to purchase the land in the 1990s. They saw the rapid changes in Missoula and wanted to preserve some of the city's natural treasures. They succeeded with the help of LWCF.

In 1991, groups including the Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT), the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Lolo National Forest, Missoula County, and the UM Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit partnered to spearhead the effort.

Support swelled to include schools, church groups, service organizations, and city and county governments.

As noted in the 2006 Missoula Urban Area Open Space Plan: “The rate of land development has grown even faster than the population. From 1970 to 2004, Missoula County's population grew by 70 percent, while the amount of land developed grew by 228 percent...As Missoula grew, so did the need for more parks and open space to maintain our quality of life.”

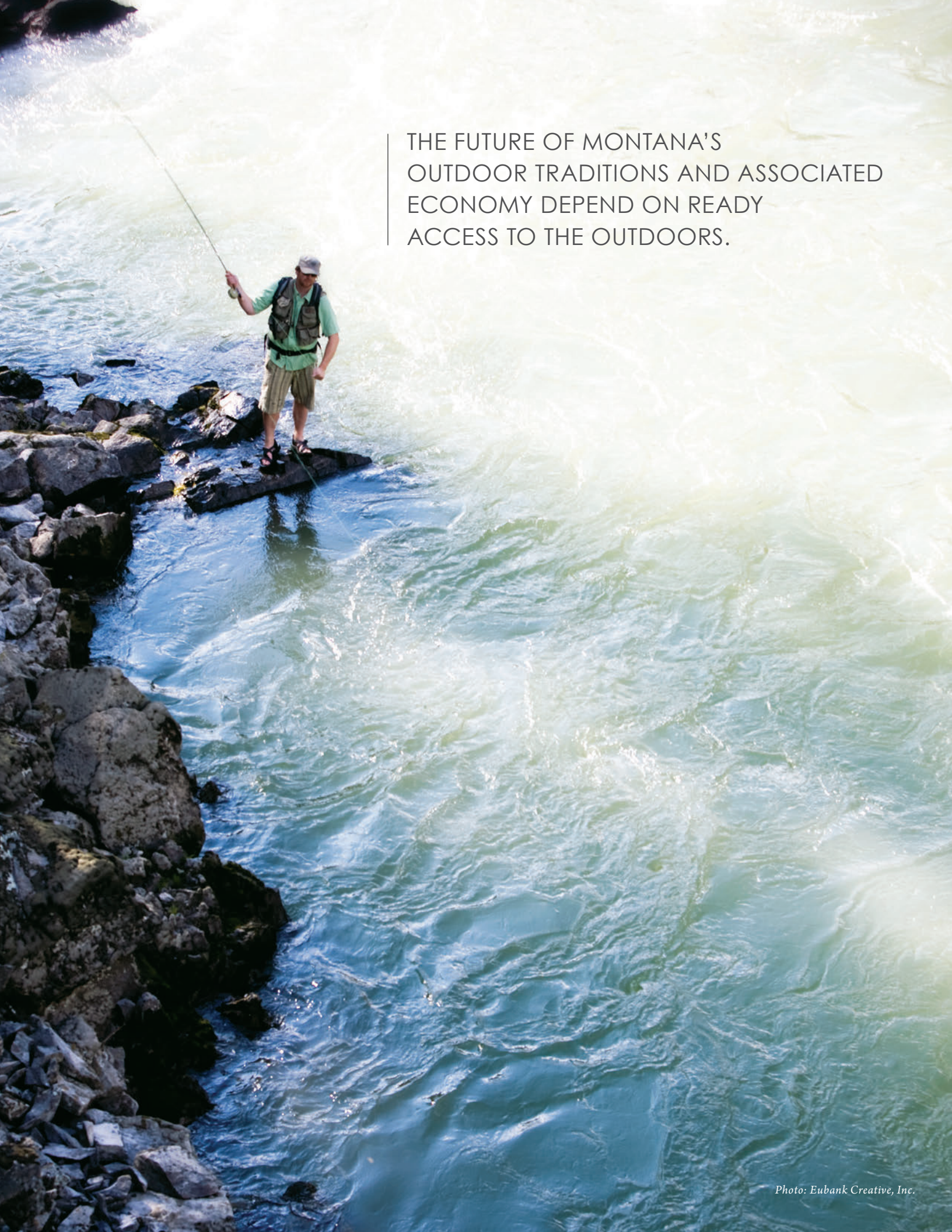
In 1995, Missoula voters passed an open space bond, which became the seed money that started a chain of purchases.

“Mount Jumbo was huge. The whole community got together. There were kids in schools that were doing fundraisers. They passed the open space bond,” said Pelah Hoyt, FVLT lands manager. “Jumbo laid the groundwork for other projects because people got to see the results and it built trust in the process.”

“LWCF WAS A KEY FUNDING SOURCE. WE COULD NOT HAVE DONE THOSE PROJECTS WITHOUT IT,” said Hoyt.

Missoula has also developed 12 city parks, including McCormick and Pineview parks, and a golf course thanks to more than \$1 million in LWCF grants.



A high-angle photograph of a fly fisherman standing on a rocky outcrop in a river. The fisherman is wearing a light green shirt, a dark vest, and shorts. He is holding a fishing rod and casting a line into the water. The water is turbulent and white with foam, indicating a fast-moving current. The rocks are dark and jagged. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

THE FUTURE OF MONTANA'S
OUTDOOR TRADITIONS AND ASSOCIATED
ECONOMY DEPEND ON READY
ACCESS TO THE OUTDOORS.

PROTECTING FAMILY RANCHES

As high costs and increasing development pressure put more strain on family-owned farms and ranches, LWCF has become an increasingly important initiative for keeping these agricultural lands in production.

Montana agricultural producers must be innovative to survive and LWCF-funded conservation easements are one important tool in the toolbox. Local nonprofit land trusts (such as the Flathead Valley Land Trust, Five Valley Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy) are critical allies in this relationship between producers, state and local agencies, and federal funding sources.

Many agricultural families understand the long-term value of productive soils and watersheds and want to provide a legacy for the future. At the same time, they want the land to stay in private ownership. Conservation easements are a powerful tool for helping landowners exercise these property rights.





PROTECTING FAMILY RANCHES: RAPPOLD RANCH, DUPUYER

- ▶ 8,000 ACRES ADDED TO THE RANCH PROPERTY
- ▶ 20,000 ACRES ADDED IN GRAZING ALLOTMENTS
- ▶ MORE THAN 12,000 ACRES PRESERVED THROUGH CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

West of the tiny town of Dupuyer, snug against the slopes of the Rocky Mountain Front, is the Rappold Ranch. The Rappold family has raised cattle here since 1882. LWCF helped keep that tradition alive.

Karl Rappold, 62, has a deep love of wildlife and the land where he grew up and wanted to pass it on to his children. But as more people discovered the beauty of the Rocky Mountain Front and started buying out old ranchers, land prices began to rise. Rappold watched his property taxes increase and didn't know whether his family could afford to stay.

By 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had identified around 170,000 acres along the Front as ecologically important wildlife habitat. The USFWS had the ability to use LWCF dollars to work with willing landowners on voluntary conservation measures, such as easements. Easements with agencies and non-profit groups such as the USFWS and The Nature Conservancy have proven to be powerful tools to help Rappold meet his management goals.

“LWCF HAS BEEN A GREAT TOOL FOR ME. IT HAS ALLOWED ME TO EXPAND MY OPERATION, FOR MY KIDS TO COME BACK HOME. BUT MORE THAN THAT, IT'S ABOUT DOING WHAT'S RIGHT FOR THE LAND - CONSERVING ACRES, PREVENTING DEVELOPMENT, CREATING WIDE OPEN SPACES AND LEAVING AVAILABLE HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE, PREDATORS, AND MY CATTLE. LWCF IS A WIN FOR EVERYBODY,” Rappold said.

“This ranch has been in my family since 1882, and I want it around for at least another 150 years,” Rappold said.

Photos below: The Nature Conservancy

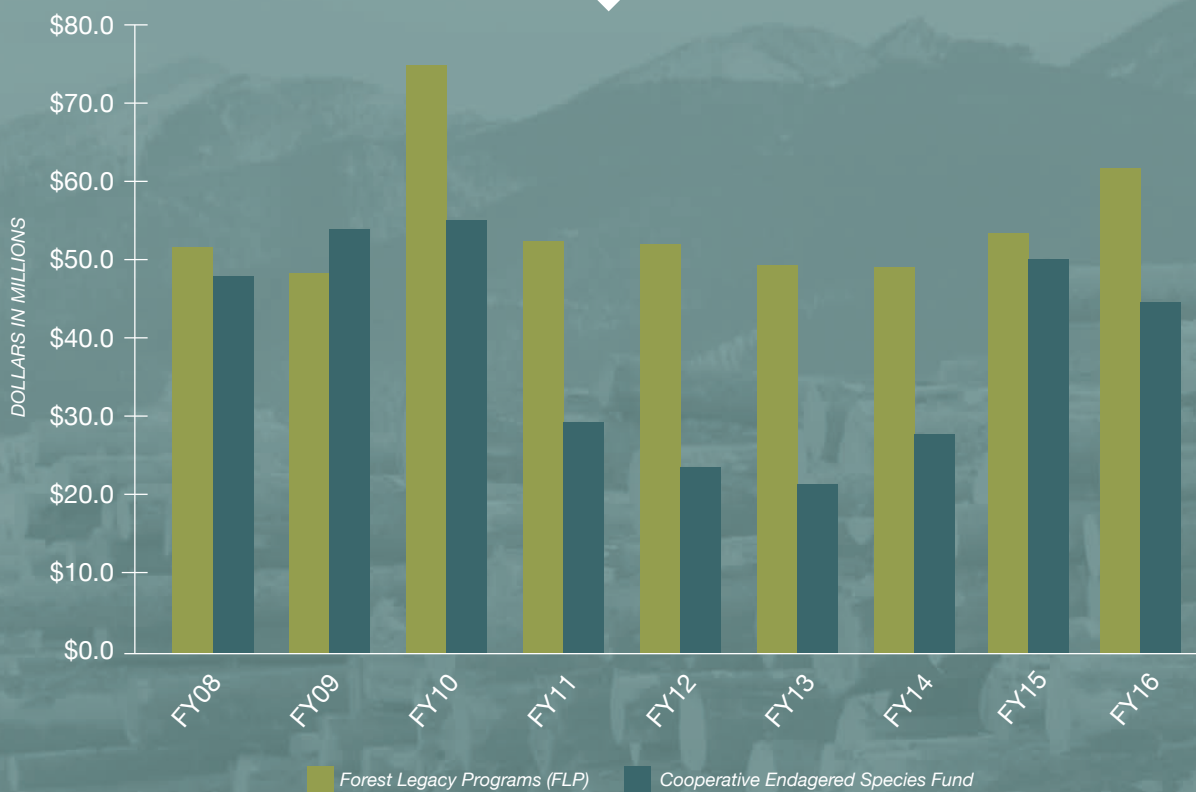


PROTECTING FOREST JOBS, HUNTING, AND FISHING

The Land & Water Conservation Fund supports two programs that help states buy conservation easements (and fee-title land where appropriate) for the twin goals of protecting America's wood supply and recovering imperiled wildlife. Competition for these funds is fierce, but Montana has come out on top with several nationally important projects.

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP), established by Congress in 1990, helps states and private forest owners keep working timberlands in production. It provides states with matching grants of up to 3:1 to conserve forests. The Forest Legacy Program helps timber companies and tree farmers keep jobs and sustainable forest operations while protecting air and water quality, wildlife habitat, recreation and other benefits.

FIG. 2 LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAMS



AS OF 2016, THE FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM HAS HELPED CONSERVE MORE THAN 2.37 MILLION ACRES OF PRIVATE TIMBERLANDS NATIONWIDE. SOME 235,000 WERE IN MONTANA. SINCE 2001, MONTANA HAS RECEIVED MORE THAN \$69 MILLION IN FLP MONEY.

The second program, the **Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund**, provides states with funding up to a 3:1 match for species and habitat conservation actions on non-federal lands. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks often

partners with land trusts to put these dollars to work. From 2005 to 2014, Montana received \$31.5 million in Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund money, mostly conserving habitats in the Blackfoot and Flathead valleys.



PROTECTING FOREST JOBS, HUNTING, AND FISHING: THOMPSON AND FISHER RIVER, KALISPELL

- ▶ 142,000 ACRES, MORE THAN 220 SQUARE MILES, PROTECTED UNDER EASEMENT
- ▶ \$9 MILLION IN FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM MONEY
- ▶ PLUM CREEK RETAINS FOREST MANAGEMENT AND HARVEST OPPORTUNITIES

One of the nation's largest private landholders, Plum Creek Timber Company manages its lands across 19 states for timber, energy resources, and real estate to return value to its shareholders.

Like much of western Montana, the Thompson and Fisher Valleys were in danger of being fragmented by subdivision, fences and no-trespassing signs, conflicting with traditional land uses, critical winter range for elk and popular trout streams.

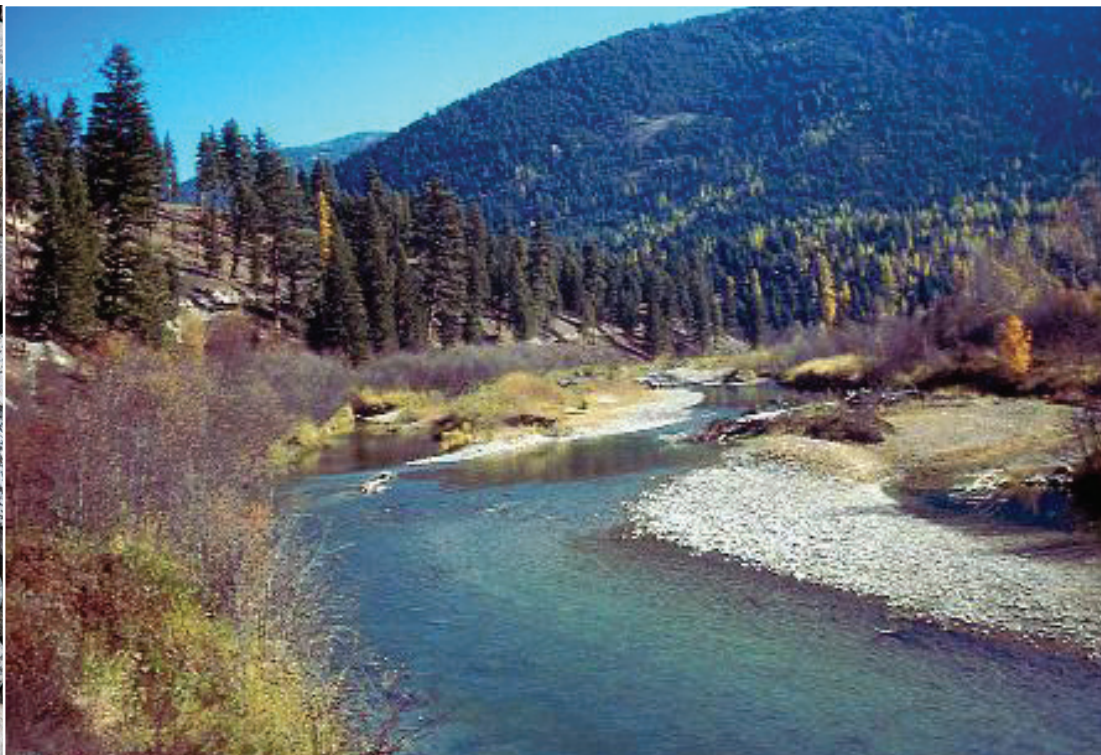
In 2000, Plum Creek started working with the Trust for Public Lands on what was, at the time, Montana's largest conservation easement in the Thompson and Fisher valleys west of Kalispell. This voluntary conservation agreement protects more than 220 square miles from development and guarantees continued public access, while allowing Plum Creek to continue to harvest timber. The land remains in Plum Creek's ownership.

"We were paid for a conservation easement that 1) provided perpetual public access to those lands – they're very popular for hunting, fishing, hiking, and similar activities – and 2) precluded any development," said Jerry Sorensen, Senior Director for Plum Creek's Lands Asset Management.

“IN THAT WAY, THE COMPANY GOT TO KEEP THE LAND IN THE TIMBER BASE; IT'S AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR WOOD SUPPLY FOR OUR MILLS IN COLUMBIA FALLS AND KALISPELL,” Sorensen said.

Former Montana Sen. Conrad Burns was a major supporter of the Thompson-Fisher package.

"This project will preserve a unique part of Montana's scenic beauty and wildlife habitat, and it will further assure jobs in the local timber economy over the long term," said Sen. Burns.





PROTECTING FOREST JOBS, HUNTING, AND FISHING: SWAN VALLEY

- ▶ CRITICAL WILDLIFE HABITAT AND PUBLIC ACCESS MAINTAINED
- ▶ ALMOST \$10 MILLION IN FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM MONEY USED
- ▶ HEART OF THE MONTANA LEGACY PROJECT WHICH PROTECTED 310,000 ACRES
- ▶ PLUM CREEK RETAINS FOREST MANAGEMENT RIGHTS AND HARVEST OPPORTUNITIES

The Swan River Valley is the low land between the Bob Marshall and Mission Mountain wilderness areas, productive for wildlife and timber alike. Plum Creek owned around 80,000 acres in the valley, but the sections were interspersed with national and state forestlands in the historic checkerboard pattern.

“In the late 1990s, skyrocketing land prices made much of the Swan more valuable for real estate than for timber,” said Jerry Sorensen, Senior Director for Plum Creek’s Lands Asset Management. As Plum Creek sold to a few private buyers, local residents became concerned about the future access, habitat, and land management.

Organizations including The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, Swan Ecosystem Center, and various landowners, foundations, local citizens, and the State of Montana began working with Plum Creek for solutions other than wholesale development.

Eventually, Plum Creek and conservation partners crafted a deal to conserve 2,500 acres around Lindberg Lake, made possible by LWCF dollars. That sparked a larger plan to conserve working forests in the Swan.

The Forest Legacy Program provided about half of the estimated \$26.7 million for the first two phases of the plan, which placed conservation easements on about 7,200 acres of Plum Creek land within the Swan River State Forest and purchased another 2,240 acres. The last transaction was complete in 2010.

Between 2006 and 2009, Montana Congressman Denny Rehberg secured almost \$10 million in FLP money for the North Swan Valley purchase.

“THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND IS VERY USEFUL BECAUSE IT CAN HELP COMPANIES LIKE PLUM CREEK BE COMPENSATED FOR THESE HIGH-VALUE ASSETS, GET THEM INTO CONSERVATION AND AVOID PRESSURES TO SELL THEM FOR PRIVATE USE,” said Sorensen.

As the North Swan Valley project advanced, The Nature Conservancy purchased 310,586 acres from Plum Creek. Called the Montana Legacy Project, this was one of the largest conservation projects in the nation at the time.

LWCF was critical for the completion of these projects. In Montana, Plum Creek has conserved more than 700,000 acres through land sales, easements, and land exchanges.

“We support the reauthorization (of LWCF),” Sorensen said. “We’ve done many transactions that have either directly or indirectly involved the Land and Water Conservation Fund.”





PROTECTING FOREST JOBS, HUNTING, AND FISHING: HASKILL BASIN, WHITEFISH

- ▶ 10,150 ACRES PRESERVED UNDER CONSERVATION EASEMENTS
- ▶ \$9 MILLION IN LWCF GRANTS
- ▶ \$8 MILLION LEVERAGED FROM THE COMMUNITY
- ▶ STOLTZE LUMBER RETAINS FOREST MANAGEMENT AND HARVEST OPPORTUNITIES

Just as LWCF can help ranching families stay on the land, the fund can help Montana's struggling family-owned sawmills and timber owners.

Two large easements being finalized in the Flathead Valley will protect a city's water supply and help Montana's oldest family-owned sawmill keep its 120 employees and 70 contractors working.

Haskill Basin covers 8,200 acres north of Whitefish, more than half of which is privately owned by F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co. Besides being popular for hunting and cross-country skiing, the basin provides most of the drinking water for Whitefish. Whitefish has boomed in recent years, and city planners could easily imagine Haskill Basin becoming developed with paved roads and seasonal homes. Under that scenario, Whitefish taxpayers would spend millions developing a new water supply.

INSTEAD, THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND SECURED THE FEDERAL FUNDING THAT HELPED STOLTZE LUMBER JOIN WITH THE TOWN OF WHITEFISH AND MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS TO CREATE A 3,000-ACRE EASEMENT, VALUED AT \$20.6 MILLION, IN THE HASKILL BASIN.

"Because of the provisions in the conservation easement, we can grow our trees and harvest our trees in perpetuity, just as the recreation and public access is in perpetuity," said Stoltze general manager Chuck Rody. "A week doesn't go by that a person or developer doesn't inquire about buying land from us, and I just say, 'No, thanks, that's not the business we're in.' If circumstances were to change, nothing in the easement forbids selling it. But the buyer has to agree to manage the forest, allow public access, and maintain the watershed."

In April 2015, Whitefish residents overwhelmingly passed a 1-percent increase in their resort tax to fund the remaining \$8 million.

Stoltze Lumber not only receives \$17 million for the Haskill easement, but the company also retains the rights to continue managing the forest, which benefits communities in the Flathead Valley. The details of the deal will be finalized at the end of 2015. It wouldn't have happened without the LWCF, Rody said.

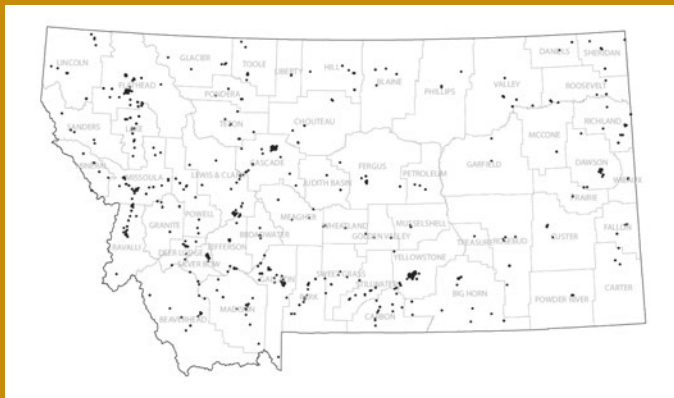
Plans are underway for conserving more timberlands between Whitefish and Columbia Falls.

Photos below: Steven Gnam Photography



BENEFITS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

FIG. 3 LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND STATESIDE PROJECT SITES



Source: Land & Water Conservation Fund, National Park Service. <http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/>

LWCF is not just about big forests and range lands. It is also about small Montana communities.

One glance at the map above (Fig. 3) shows how many Montana counties and towns have been able to secure parks, pools, tennis courts, and golf courses with the help of LWCF's State and Local Assistance Program.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks receives dozens of proposals every year from counties, cities, and schools requesting LWCF money to build recreational facilities. Mixed in with them are projects to upgrade state parks and recreational areas. At current funding levels, demand is high and the competition is fierce.

Visit a state recreation site – say a boat ramp on Flathead Lake – on a sunny day, and you can bet it will be packed with visitors, locals, and tourists alike. The money to support Montana State Parks' budget comes from entrance fees and a \$6 fee on Montana automobile registrations. This arrangement covers annual operating costs, but not park improvements or additions. LWCF money helps stretch those budgets to keep Montana's recreational properties attractive and safe.

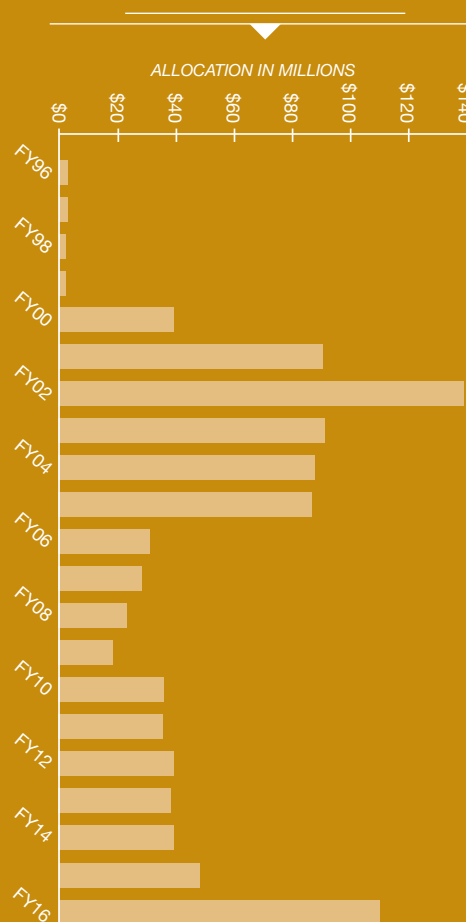
OVER 54 YEARS, MONTANA HAS INVESTED MORE THAN **\$22 MILLION** OF LWCF GRANTS TO UPGRADE STATE PARKS, WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS, AND FISHING ACCESS SITES.

LWCF has been key to developing Montana's network of state parks. More than 60 projects and \$6 million in grants have helped Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks preserve historic, cultural, and recreational sites. These include Travelers' Rest State Park near Lolo, Giant Springs State Park outside Great Falls, Chief Plenty Coups State Park near Laurel, and the Missouri Headwaters State Park near Three Forks.

LWCF has allowed more than 90 towns and 45 school districts in Montana to complete projects that they otherwise couldn't afford, according to Tim Burton, who represents 129 municipalities as the executive director of the Montana League of Cities and Towns.

At current funding levels, LWCF falls well short of demand. The unmet demand for outdoor recreation facilities and parks at the state level is \$27 billion nationwide, according to the National Park Service.

FIG. 4 STATE AND LOCAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ALLOCATIONS



Congressional appropriations for the State and Local Assistance Program nationwide between 1996 and 2016.



BENEFITS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES: FISHING ACCESS ON THE BITTERROOT RIVER AND BEYOND

- ▶ ALMOST HALF OF MONTANA'S 330 FISHING ACCESS SITES WERE BOUGHT OR IMPROVED BY LWCF
- ▶ \$3.4 MILLION IN LWCF MATCHING GRANTS OVER 50 YEARS
- ▶ ACCESS SITES HELP SUPPORT MONTANA'S \$2.75 BILLION ANNUAL OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY⁷

Access to Montana's blue ribbon fisheries is critical to maintaining the state's legendary trout fishing reputation. Thanks to the vast network of fishing access sites maintained by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), fishing is favored pastime and economic driver. The Bitterroot River is a golden example.

Montana FWP developed five of the eight fishing access sites on the Bitterroot north of Hamilton with the help of State Assistance Program grants totaling more than **\$167,000**.

Similar to counties, cities and school districts, FWP had to find other funding sources to provide the 50:50 match for each grant. All five sites are still heavily used.

Beyond the Bitterroot, almost half of the state's 330 fishing access sites were purchased or developed with LWCF money. Over the years, FWP received more than \$3.4 million in LWCF grants for fishing access. LWCF funding has also gone to help create special fishing ponds, specifically for youth anglers.

The return on investment comes in both dollars and in things that cannot be measured with dollars. Montana FWP economists estimate Montana's fishing economy is worth \$900 million annually. It is also estimated that 71,000 direct jobs come from Montana's outdoor recreation industry.⁸

“THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND HELPS TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN FISHING ACCESS SITES IN MONTANA THAT ARE ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL TO OUR INDUSTRY AND OUR PERSONAL ENJOYMENT. SO WE'RE VERY MUCH IN FAVOR OF REAUTHORIZATION.

~ ROBIN CUNNINGHAM, DIRECTOR OF THE FISHING OUTFITTERS ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA

BITTERROOT FISHING ACCESS	YEAR	GRANT AMT.
MISSOULA AREA FISHING SITES	1968	\$22,394
CHIEF LOOKING GLASS FAS	1969	\$3,073
POKER JOE'S FAS	1973	\$4,488
BELL CROSSING FAS	1978	\$23,506
TUCKER CROSSING FAS	1978	\$12,775
POKER JOE FAS	1978	\$2,363
TUCKER CROSSING FAS	1979	\$74,702
BELL CROSSING FAS	1981	\$14,431
WOODSIDE BRIDGE FAS	1989	\$9,401
		TOTAL: \$167,132



⁷Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks website, 2018

⁸Survey by Business for Montana Outdoors



BENEFITS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES: HAMILTON

- ▶ 11 PARK PROJECTS, INCLUDING A GOLF COURSE
- ▶ \$727,000 IN LOCAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Ever since Copper King Marcus Daley built his get-away in Hamilton, people have moved there looking for a great place to work, live, and play. The Bitterroot Valley has seen seam-splitting population growth in recent decades. LWCF grants have helped people here protect their way of life.

IN 1970, HAMILTON RECEIVED ITS FIRST GRANT OF MORE THAN \$14,300 TO DEVELOP A SPORTS COMPLEX, SPARKING LONG-TERM SYNERGY BETWEEN THE TOWN AND LWCF.

Throughout the 1970s, projects in Hamilton and the surrounding area received seven grants totaling more than \$700,000. The money helped pay for sports-complex expansions, a swimming pool renovation, and the development of three other parks. Starting in 1977, the biggest chunk of money – almost \$500,000 – financed the purchase and development of the county golf course.

Hamilton was fortunate enough to propose a final park project in 2005 during the last upswing in LWCF funding. The city received a grant of \$18,500 to build a 2-mile nature trail around Hieronymus Park.

Donated by the Hieronymus family, the 65-acre park sits along the highway at the north end of town, wedged between a hotel and a shopping area. Now it's home to a veteran's monument – installed in 2011 by Bitterroot Chapter 938 of the Vietnam Veterans of America – and a nature trail through meadows and marshes.

“The park was an area of great interest because it had been so widely used,” said Carol Schwan, former vice president of Hamilton's parks board. “Now that it has been opened, it's really fantastic to have all this access to the river and safely use it. And with the veteran's monument, it's really developing nicely.”

Planned improvements are presently on hold, but they could move ahead if LWCF is reauthorized.

PROJECT	YEAR	SPONSOR	GRANT AMT.
HAMILTON SPORTS COMPLEX	1970	HAMILTON	\$14,312
HAMILTON SPORTS COMPLEX	1971	HAMILTON	\$1,657
HAMILTON POOL RENOVATION	1979	HAMILTON	\$29,491
HAMILTON ARMORY PARK	1979	HAMILTON	\$28,988
HIERONYMUS PARK TRAIL	2005	HAMILTON	\$20,177
HAMILTON WESTVIEW PARK	1975	HAMILTON SD #10	\$14,965
HAMILTON SD #10 COURTS		HAMILTON SD #10	\$27,160
HAMILTON SCHOOLS SOFTBALL COMPLEX		HAMILTON SD #3	\$67,553
RAVALLI COUNTY BLODGETT PARK	1974	RAVALLI COUNTY	\$20,786
RAVALLI COUNTY GOLF COURSE	1977	RAVALLI COUNTY	\$499,800
GOLF COURSE IMPROVEMENTS		RAVALLI COUNTY	\$2,492
			TOTAL: \$727,381



BENEFITS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES: GLASGOW

- ▶ 7 PARKS AND PLAYGROUND PROJECTS
- ▶ \$217,000 IN LWCF STATE ASSISTANCE GRANTS

Depending on demographic trends and cycles in the energy industry, eastern Montana communities face budget strains due to dwindling populations or overwhelming demands from surging populations. Fortunately, the LWCF was available, both when times were fat and lean.

Glasgow exemplifies these changes. With a population that today hovers around 3,000, it has limited resources. In 2002, the city wanted to improve its aging parks, but didn't have much money to invest.

Glasgow Public Works Director John Bengochea applied for a \$25,000 LWCF grant in 2003 to install new playground equipment in Centennial and Hoyt parks. The city was able to apply a donation of \$4,500 from Century Construction and a donation of about \$5,500 from the Hill/Heckner Trust to assist the city in meeting their matching amount, according to a story in KLTZ Radio.

Glasgow subsequently received two LWCF awards of \$25,000, each between 2004 and 2005, to make additional upgrades to Centennial Park.



BENEFITS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES: SIDNEY

- ▶ 9 PARK PROJECTS
- ▶ \$232,000 IN LWCF LOCAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

The town of Sidney, which is close to the Bakken oil fields, illustrates a different picture. The energy boom made it hard to keep up with the growing infrastructure needs. But thanks in part to LWCF, residents now have new tennis courts and an arboretum.

From 1966 to 1984, Sidney was awarded eight LWCF grants totaling more than \$156,000. It wasn't until 2002 that the city received another \$75,000 LWCF grant to purchase land and build the Sunrise City Tennis Courts and Arboretum at Hansen Park, west of Sidney High School.

The \$182,000 Sunrise City project started with the tennis courts because Sidney already had an active tennis group, the Sidney Tennis Association.

The park and arboretum were added starting in 2004, and the whole project was completed in 2007 with the assistance of 20 agencies, organizations, and individuals who put up money for the LWCF match.

"The new courts are the result of a lot of planning, effort, and the dedication of a wide range of people," Leif Anderson of the Sidney Tennis Association told the Sidney Herald. "The new facility has been engineered and constructed to provide a quality playing surface for many years to come."



BENEFITS FOR SMALL CITIES: BOZEMAN

- ▶ 16 PARKS
- ▶ \$676,000 IN LWCF LOCAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS
- ▶ MORE THAN \$1 MILLION IN LEVERAGED COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

Residents of Bozeman take great pride in the network of trails and parks that help make the city special. Many of those amenities were made possible by LWCF.

Bozeman was able to use more than \$676,000 in grants to expand its collection of parks, especially during the 1970s. Eleven of the city's 16 park projects received LWCF grants prior to 1980.

The city band plays weekly summer concerts in the Bogert Park band shell and summer festivals and a weekly farmers market take advantage of the park's shelter. The Sweet Pea Festival, one of Bozeman's biggest events which attracts thousands from around the state, has long called Lindley Park its home, expanding to use almost every inch of the grounds.

Adjacent to Lindley Park is another area popular with hikers, cross-country skiers and dog owners: Burke Park.

As is often the case, the local land trust – Gallatin Valley Land Trust (GVLTL) – played a key role in protecting these parks and trails and leveraging LWCF dollars with matching city dollars and private donations.

"This was one of our first projects," said Penelope Pierce, executive director of the GVLTL. "Without LWCF money, we wouldn't have some of these iconic projects. Burke Park is a good example...Imagine Bozeman without that open space right in the middle of town – it would be a different place."

A \$58,000 LWCF grant helped pay for the land that became Sundance Springs Park in 2000. GVLTL has a couple of projects in the area that would add lands that link into Bozeman's trail system. Both are still in the early stages but, as deals are hammered out, the Trust will be on the hunt for funding.

“FEDERAL FUNDING IS AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE PUZZLE, AND IT MAKES OUR LOCAL TAX DOLLARS GO A LOT FURTHER. AS GROWTH CONTINUES, WE NEED TO KEEP PACE,” said Pierce.

PROJECT	YEAR	SPONSOR	GRANT AMT.
BOZEMAN - KIRK PARK	1966	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$29,749
DOWNTOWN SOROPTIMIST PARK	1971	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$4,462
BOZEMAN RECREATION COMPLEX	1971	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$105,576
BOZEMAN HYALITE PARK	1972	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$17,904
BOZEMAN - BOGERT PARK	1973	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$9,067
SCHOOL DISTRICT PLAYGROUNDS	1973	SCHOOL DIST. 7	\$31,458
BOZEMAN - MUNICIPAL SWIM. POOL	1974	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$113,973
BOZEMAN - LINDLEY PARK	1975	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$20,822
BOZEMAN - BEALL PARK	1975	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$7,836
BOZEMAN - BOGERT PARK	1975	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$88,159
CITY/SCHOOL TENNIS COMPLEX	1977	SCHOOL DIST. 7	\$61,232
JOBS BILL PARKS IMPROVEMENTS	1983	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$13,357
BOZEMAN JARRETT PARK	1988	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$10,158
BOZEMAN BURKE PARK	1993	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$56,850
SUNDANCE SPRINGS PARK	2000	CITY OF BOZEMAN	\$58,000

TOTAL: \$676,580

AS THE AMERICAN POPULATION
GROWS LARGER AND MORE
URBANIZED, HUNGER FOR ACCESS
TO NATURE HAS EXPANDED AS WELL.





Photo: Mike Harrelson

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF LWCF AND THE FUTURE OF MONTANA

For more than 50 years, the Land & Water Conservation Fund has been a national success story – funding public access, wildlife habitat protection, clean water, and traditional land uses without tapping into tax dollars.

| BUT ITS FUTURE IS FAR FROM SECURE.

LWCF appropriations have been erratic over the years because Congress siphons royalty money to other parts of the federal budget. Each year, the fund is credited with \$900 million in revenues, but this money can't be spent unless appropriated by Congress. Over the past 54 years, Congress has diverted some \$20 billion intended for LWCF projects to other areas.

America's population has grown by more than 135 million people in the 54 years since Congress passed LWCF. Montana's population has grown by 33 percent during that same time frame, particularly in the western part of the state, putting more pressure on traditional outdoor access and amenities. What's more, the number of visitors to Montana

has increased even faster, with record numbers of people arriving annually to visit natural wonders such as Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks.

As the American population grows larger and more urbanized, hunger for access to nature has expanded as well.

According to a 2010 national telephone survey, 85 percent of Americans said offshore oil and gas money should be used to protect rivers, lakes, wetlands, forests, and other wildlife habitat.¹

In 2018, a Center for American Progress survey found, by a margin of more than 3-to-1, voters believe that the current Administration should emphasize conservation, rather than energy production, on public lands.

¹Survey conducted in May 2010 by the bipartisan research team of Public Opinion Strategies and FM3

Across America, parents and health experts are increasingly concerned that our children are experiencing “nature deficit disorder” – spending too much time indoor and inactive, at computers or in front of television. Lack of outdoor free time and physical exercise carries long-term physical, emotional, and psychological risks for children, which continues on into adulthood.

Montanans cherish their freedom to hunt, fish, camp and otherwise roam the outdoors. But traditional access has been steadily eroding. Landowners such as timber companies or family farmers have sold thousands of acres, the net result being more “no trespassing” signs and more lands open only to those who can afford to buy them. The future of Montana’s outdoor traditions and associated economy depend on ready access to these special places.

To meet the full potential of the Land & Water Conservation Fund – and to reach the demands of the future – Congress needs to break its habit of diverting LWCF monies to pay for other budget items. It is often said that budgets reflect priorities. Congress’s willingness to fund and reauthorize LWCF reflects how highly our elected officials value our freedom to enjoy the outdoors, the strength of Montana’s economy, and a healthy future for our communities and families. It is critical that LWCF be permanently reauthorized with full, dedicated funding.

FIG. 5 PERCENTAGE OF FULL FUNDING LWCF RECEIVED FY00-FY16

