



FALL 2018

VIEW *Points*



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

"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower."
— Albert Camus



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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.



Help Us Conserve THE HEART OF THE FLATHEAD VALLEY

You can help to conserve an essential part of our landscape along the Flathead River before it's lost to development. The Flathead River Conservation Project will protect 155 acres of rich farmland along the Flathead River in lower valley with valuable wetland habitat vital for birds, fish, and wildlife that is part of a network of critical lands in the core of the Flathead Valley.

The project will add to a stronghold of conserved lands that are important to sustaining the Flathead River and Lake's excellent water quality, abundant fish and wildlife, rich farm soils, and the incredible quality of life we enjoy in the Flathead Valley. The project property is adjacent to 725 acres of conserved land and part of an almost 12,000-acre network of conserved lands along the Flathead River and north shore of Flathead Lake. The project borders a third of a mile of the Flathead River and contains 33 acres of wetlands and quality riparian area. Thousands of waterfowl use not only the river and wetlands on the project property, but also its farmland to feed and refuel on their migration. The project also protects water quality and the healthy function of the Flathead River and Lake as the land includes 34 acres of floodplain and 69 acres overlying shallow groundwater.

We have secured a grant for \$513,000 from the Natural Resource Conservation Service Agricultural Land Easement Program for this project but once again need to raise non-Federal match to keep the large grant, just as we did with the West Valley Wetlands conservation project. We have begun to obtain the needed non-Federal match and have \$105,000 left to raise to bring this valuable project to fruition. With your help, we can permanently protect it for future generations.

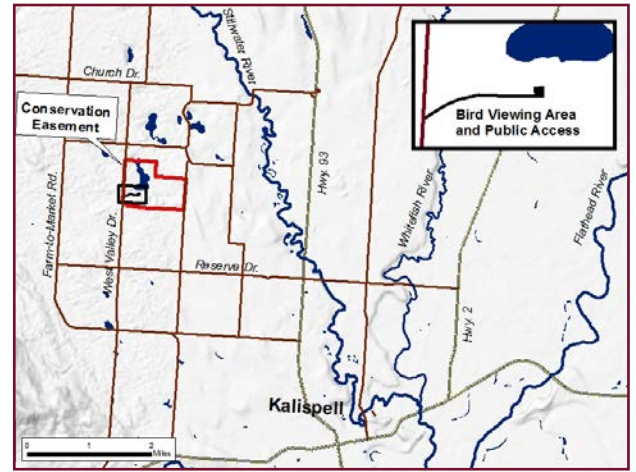
You can learn more and donate to the project at
www.flatheadlandtrust.org/flathead-river-conservation-project/



THE WEST VALLEY BIRD VIEWING AREA IS NOW OPEN

Thank you to MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, who holds and manages the new wildlife viewing site, the Grosswiler and Marvin families for conserving their land, and to Flathead Audubon for joining us to host a wonderful dedication and ribbon cutting on October 6th. Over 100 project supporters and community members came out to celebrate along with hundreds of birds and sandhill cranes, providing us with quite the show.

To access the bird viewing area from the intersection of Hwy. 93 and Reserve Dr. near Kalispell, go three miles west and then go north on West Valley Dr. about a mile and you will see a sign for the viewing area. The best time of year to visit the bird viewing area to view sandhill cranes is September and October. The best time of day to visit is at sunset and the half hour after sunset when the sandhill cranes are coming in to roost for the night in shallow water in the pothole wetland or around sunrise before they leave to feed in the fields during the day.



The Grosswiler and Marvin families, Flathead Land Trust, MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and project supporters cutting the ribbon to open the West Valley Wildlife and Bird Viewing Area on October 6.

Connecting You TO OPEN SPACES AND WILD PLACES



Photo 1: David and Linda Kurfess, North Shore conservation easement landowners on the North Shore Boat Tour, June 28.

Photo 2 & 3: The Land Affair on August 16th had over 120 people attend and was our most successful fundraising event to date.

The North Fork

How a rustic community of landowners helped to conserve a special landscape.

In the early 1970s, a group of North Fork landowners gathered at the cabin of Orville and Helen Foreman and did something remarkable; they chose to voluntarily conserve private land in the North Fork. This was the start of a decades long effort that continues today to conserve the phenomenal wildlife habitat and scenic beauty on private land in the North Fork of the Flathead River valley.

The North Fork is beloved as one of the most ecologically intact and wild river valleys of the lower 48 states. Nearly all of the original species, including all of the native predator species, that existed prior to European settlement still roam the woods of the North Fork, making it an especially unique place.

Contributing to the distinctive qualities of the North Fork is the rustic community of landowners who share this beautiful place. Beginning in the 1960s, new landowners with different ideas about land management began filter-

ing into the North Fork. Many of these newcomers were from more urban areas and understood what a lack of land use regulations in the North Fork could mean for its future. Plans in the mid-1960s for a massive 2,000-acre amusement park complex near Polebridge - complete with an airstrip, ski resort, motel, and housing - drove home those concerns. In the shadow of such unchecked development threats, landowners such as Baird and Esther Chrisman, Cecily and Ed (Mac) McNeil, and Tom Reynolds gathered at the Foreman cabin to plot an effort to limit subdivisions. It was from this meeting that the North Fork Compact, established in 1973, was born.

The North Fork Compact is an initiative through which landowners could voluntarily place a restrictive covenant on their property limiting subdivision to, in the beginning, no less than five acres. It was a radical idea at the time. Many of the old-time landowners, loggers and descendants of original

homesteaders, weren't too fond of the newcomers, and the feelings were reciprocal. But as Cecily McNeil put it, "In the North Fork, you can disagree with someone, but they'll be the one to help you with a flat tire." So, despite some mistrust, the idea behind the North Fork Compact gained support among newcomers and old-timers alike and 34 landowners ended up participating in the original Compact, protecting 2,500 acres of private land.

Compact members then began petitioning the County government to establish specific zoning regulations for the North Fork. In 1998, after more than fifteen years of planning, public meetings and petitions, the County adopted zoning regulations with a twenty-acre minimum lot size. The North Fork Compact was revised in 2005 to also have a twenty-acre minimum lot size. Realizing that the new zoning did not include restrictions on commercial development, Jon Cole and other North Fork landowners engaged in



Elk Photo by Jan Wassink | Fall Photo by Harley Mumma

another round of contentious planning and public meetings and in 2003 the County adopted commercial zoning restrictions.

The Compact and its work on land use planning was only the beginning for private land conservation in the North Fork and was indeed the first spark in a flurry of collaborative efforts in the community.

The North Fork Preservation Association (NFPA) was established in 1982, driven by the indelible “Mayor” of Polebridge, John Frederick, in an effort to stop, successfully it turns out, proposed coal mines in the North Fork drainage on the Canadian side of the border. The NFPA has since been the voice in the North Fork advocating for a plethora of conservation efforts.

The Inter Local Agreement was established in 1985 by North Fork landowners; such as Larry Wilson, Lynn Ogle and John Frederick; and the

various government agencies overseeing public lands, led by Mike Conner of the Forest Service, as a way to improve communications and relations between all North Fork stakeholders through twice annual meetings. It has been widely credited with doing just that and in helping to build greater community camaraderie in the process.

In 1976, the North Fork of the Flathead was designated a Wild and Scenic River by the federal government. This provided the impetus for the Forest Service, through the work of Mike Conner and Warren Illi, to use Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars beginning in the late 1970s to either acquire properties or place voluntary conservation easements on properties along the North Fork river. This work, often with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy, resulted in over 5,400 acres conserved and the

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“In the North Fork, you can disagree with someone, but they’ll be the one to help you with a flat tire.”

-Cecily McNeil

Mountain Kind Farm

New Community Supported Agriculture on Flathead Land Trust's First Conservation Easement

Owen Sowerwine is continuing in the footsteps of his great grandfather, his namesake. Owen's great grandfather was a conservation leader in the Flathead who initiated the fight to preserve the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, and his family protected their 157 acres of land on Fennon Slough with what became Flathead Land Trust's first conservation easement. **The land protects important fish and wildlife habitat, excellent water quality, and rich farm soil. Owen is working on the family land in a new endeavor in community supported agriculture.** Owen helps raise fruits and vegetables on his family's land and sell them through farm shares, local farmer's markets, and a farm store on the property near Bigfork. Ted and Julia Wycall were chosen by the family to lead the new farm enterprise, "Mountain Kind Farm".

Mountain Kind Farm grows and sells a wide variety of fruits and vegetables including peas, broccoli, onions, peppers, carrots, lettuce, squash, potatoes, sweet corn, garlic, mint, basil, strawberries, raspberries, cantaloupe, and watermelon. They offer a unique way for people to purchase their produce. People can purchase produce at the farm store or farmer's markets or can become a member. Members prepay a certain amount based on the membership level they choose and receive a debit card to use in the farm store and at farmer's markets. Members choose what, how much, and when they want produce and receive a 15% discount on their produce purchases. Other products are available at the farm store including beef and lamb raised at Cedar Mill Ranch in the lower Flathead Valley and fruit from local orchards. Some fruits and vegetables produced on the 14 acres associated with the community supported agriculture is being used by local restaurants such as the Bigfork Inn, Marina Cay, and Great Northern Gourmet of Bigfork. Other produce is sold to the Western Montana Grower's Cooperative which offers a wholesale marketing and delivery service to growers in western Montana that serves grocery stores, restaurants, and institutions across Montana and into Northern Idaho and Eastern Washington.

Ted is originally from Maryland and began farming his grandfather's farm there. He is a University of Montana graduate and decided to move back to Montana about three years ago to help with orchards in Rollins. He and his wife, Julia met Owen and were just the right fit to help the Sowerwine family with their community supported agriculture endeavor. Ted and Julia are also happy to be part of stewarding the Sowerwine conservation easement land and are strong supporters of land conservation. In the future, Ted would like to help support Flathead Land Trust with the profits from the farm. He said, **"We are wildlife, bird, and conservation enthusiasts. We feel strongly about good farming and land conservation."**

You can learn more about Mountain Kind Farms at mountainkindfarm.com or visit the farm store at 1803 Highway 82 which is open Monday-Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm.



Ted Wycall and Owen Sowerwine on the farm.



The North Fork, Continued



Photo by Jason Cohn

How a rustic community of landowners helped to conserve a special landscape.

public acquisition of such beloved locations as the Ben Rover, Schnaus, Ford and Wurtz cabins and the public river access at Polebridge and the Canadian border.

The Forest Service's conservation work along the Wild and Scenic Rivers generated landowner interest throughout the Flathead in conservation easements as a tool to voluntarily conserve their land. Mike Conner, recognizing the need and interest in private land conservation, teamed up with Jo Ann Speelman, Virginia Sloan, Larry Lee, Larry Wilson, Lex Blood, the Conservation District, national land trusts and other local conservation leaders to begin a public planning process that resulted in the formation of the Flathead Land Trust in 1985. In a very real sense, the Flathead Land Trust was born out of the conservation work that began along the North and Middle Forks of the Flathead River.

The Nature Conservancy, through the work of Marilyn Wood, who would later become Executive Director of the Flathead Land Trust, was the first non-profit land trust to hold conservation easements in the North Fork beginning in the early 1990s. Marilyn focused The Nature Conservancy's attention on the North Fork because she recognized the ecological value of the valley and because the engagement of North Fork residents in conservation efforts was unusual for the northern Rockies at the time.

One of the most prominent conservation projects of the North Fork was the conservation of Tom Ladenburg's massive Rocky-Bar-O Ranch. Mike Conner, together with Flathead Land Trust's Executive Director, Jo Ann Speelman, worked with Ladenburg to acquire 600 acres of the property for the Forest Service and to place another 500 acres under a Forest Service Wild and Scenic conservation easement. Marilyn Wood then worked with Ladenburg to place another several hundred acres under a conservation easement held by The Nature Conservancy.

These efforts conserved extensive wildlife habitat, including vital winter range habitat for a North Fork elk herd, and ensured large scenic open spaces for residents and visitors in the North Fork alike.

The Flathead Land Trust completed its own conservation easement in 1996 on property owned by none other than the North Fork's conservation leader, John Frederick. Then, in 2008, Flathead Land Trust worked with another iconic North Fork landowner and placed a conservation easement on the property where it all began, the 225-acre Foreman property.

Today, Flathead Land Trust continues to partner with landowners in the North Fork, protecting more of the rich habitat and wild character of this phenomenal valley with conservation easements. We are actively working on three projects this year which will permanently protect an additional 156 acres of important open space lands. We are committed to continuing the conservation legacy in the North Fork that has been established by so many dedicated individuals because, as longtime North Fork landowner Larry Wilson aptly articulated, "the North Fork is an interesting place. I've been in love with it my whole life."



Orville and Helen Foreman. Photo courtesy of Foreman family.



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The Impact You Make

In a place that is changing faster and faster each day, YOU have been the constant that doesn't change – standing up to sustain your community-based land trust because of your love of this place.

We hope you'll continue to give back, furthering our ability to make big and lasting conservation impacts for places we all love. Through December 31, you can take advantage of doubling your donation with our year-end matching gift campaign, or you can contribute directly towards the Flathead River Conservation Project.

Find out how by visiting flatheadlandtrust.org or give us a call at 406-752-8293.

You're Invited!

Join Us Thursday, December 13th for our holiday party and member appreciation celebration

Conservation of the West Valley Wetlands and the opening of the public bird viewing area, new conservation along the North Shore of Flathead Lake, and new conservation easements in the North Fork of the Flathead; there's a lot to celebrate and we want YOU to join us! Also, we'll fill you in on what's coming for 2019. Enjoy complimentary appetizers, holiday treats along with beer, wine and soft drinks. The party will be from 6-8 PM at our office, located at 690 North Meridian in Kalispell. Please RSVP to Paul at ptravis@flatheadlandtrust.org or 406-752-8293.



STAY IN THE KNOW! Keep up to date on new conservation projects, field trips and exciting events. Sign up for our monthly e-News updates at flatheadlandtrust.org and follow us on Facebook. It's easy to do.