

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

VIEWPOINTS



Stillwater River on the new Olney conservation easement



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

"There is a serene and settled majesty to woodland scenery that enters into the soul and delights and elevates it, and fills it with noble inclinations."

- Washington Irving



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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.



A Message FROM THE PRESIDENT



In the span of only a few weeks, the COVID-19 pandemic upended daily routines and impacted communities across the country in unprecedented ways. No corner of our society has been left untouched by the effects of the pandemic, including the nonprofit sector. The pandemic has changed not only how we live, but also how we give.

Like most non-profit organizations, we have been very concerned about our ability to maintain during a time of crisis. As we put our annual budget together, we had an expectation of not being able to meet our fundraising goals. With two big, high profile conservation projects (Bad Rock Canyon and Somers Beach) underway, fundraising during the pandemic was our top challenge despite having to cancel our annual live fundraising event in August. Like many other organizations we were required to shift and adapt operations and services, with the most prevalent being pivoting to virtual means.

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As pandemic shutdowns, layoffs, and cancelled events have fueled great need, Americans have been generous. Despite our fundraising concerns, due to the generosity of our member community we have met and, in some cases, exceeded our revenue goals. US households prioritized giving to meet the pressing needs of those in their area. COVID-19 has driven a surge in "localism," bringing increased attention to pressing needs within our communities and the responsibility to take care of one another and the environment.

With the support of our donors, Flathead Land Trust was able to keep our current staffing model in place, with some staff working in person and some working virtually. Our monthly board and committee meetings were held virtually. Our annual fundraiser and holiday member appreciation party were also held virtually.

The outlook for the Flathead Land Trust is extremely positive. Fundraising goals for the Somers Beach Project have been met, and we are closing in on our goal for the Bad Rock Canyon Project. We are continuing our in-person community events such as the bird and bike tours. And, we are bringing back our annual fundraiser "The Land Affair" which is set for August 19, 2021.

Thank you all so much for your generosity and caring for the special environment that surrounds us. Get outside and make the most of the Flathead Valley. Have a great summer and I hope to see you at "The Land Affair".

Bill Corwin, Board President



MAJOR MILESTONES REACHED FOR BAD ROCK CANYON AND SOMERS BEACH PROJECTS

Our partnership with the Sliter family and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to conserve the 106-acre Somers Beach property and create a new Montana State Park on the north shore of Flathead Lake is nearing completion. In January, the Sliter family committed to match all donations given to Flathead Land Trust up to \$25,000 for the long term operations and maintenance of the property as a new state park. Within just a month, generous donors stepped up and helped us meet the \$25,000 challenge. In April, the legislature authorized funding for the acquisition of the 106-acre Sliter property along the north shore of Flathead Lake for inclusion in the state park system by passing House Bill #5. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks hopes to complete the purchase of the Sliter property by the end of the year. There will be a public process for how the future park will be developed with a public comment period.

We're also excited to announce that our partnership with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to purchase 772 acres of Columbia Falls Aluminum Co. land along the Flathead River near Columbia Falls is also getting close. The Bad Rock Canyon Conservation Project is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to conserve strategically located land that provides important habitat connectivity for wildlife, and secures public access to a wild place as a new Wildlife Management Area.

This spring, due to the generosity of several donors, we were able to establish a \$150,000 matching challenge in partnership with the Flathead Lakers which raised a considerable amount of funding for the project. Not only have we now met that fundraising match, we have closed the entire funding gap for the \$7.1 Million project! This summer, FWP will be asking for public comment on the proposed Bad Rock Canyon Wildlife Management Area environmental analysis and management plan. Visit flatheadlandtrust.org this summer for details and to submit comments to FWP. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will then seek approval from the Fish and Wildlife Commission and State Land Board this fall. Thank you

to everyone who supported this incredible project so far. If all goes well this amazing conservation project will be completed in December.

TWO CRITICAL PIECES OF FLATHEAD VALLEY BIRD HABITAT PROTECTED

Flathead Land Trust completed two conservation easements this winter which protect important migratory bird habitat in the lower Flathead Valley. Both easements protect habitat used by tundra swans, snow geese, northern pintail, mallard, Canada geese, American wigeon, and many other species of waterfowl.

One easement protects 53.4 acres owned by Marty and Linda Boehm located along Mill Creek near its confluence with the Flathead River south of Creston. The conserved property safeguards 41 acres of wetlands and 0.6 miles of Mill Creek, a warm spring creek which is especially important to migratory birds in spring when other areas are ice-covered. Nearly 190 species of birds, 28 of which are priority species for conservation and a plethora of wildlife including grizzly bear, black bear, mountain lion, coyote, red fox and otter use the property. The property's wetlands and riparian habitat also help protect the water quality in the Flathead River and Flathead Lake.

The other conservation easement protects 36.4 acres owned by Bob Danford which include 15 acres of Reed's Slough and rich farmland adjacent to the slough; the other half of Reed's Slough is already protected by a conservation easement. The property borders 1,300 acres of protected land including Wiley Slough, a 200 acre wetland. It is also important to migratory waterfowl and even had a tagged snow goose that migrated 2,562 miles from Wrangel Island, Russia use the habitat on the property last spring. Both conservation easements were made possible with grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service North American Wetland Conservation Act program that provides funding to protect wetlands and migratory bird habitat. The projects were also made possible with funding from the Cinnabar Foundation, Flathead River to Lake Initiative, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Wildlife Mitigation Program, Flathead Audubon and Flathead Wildlife.



The Stillwater River flows through the 1072-acre Olney conservation easement.

A Thousand Acres OF FORESTLAND CONSERVED NEAR OLNEY

Just beyond Olney is a forested property over one thousand acres in size that mostly only locals knew about. It is a pocket of private property surrounded by public land with a beautiful stretch of over a mile of the Stillwater River cutting through the middle of it. At the end of last year, in partnership with Trust for Public Land and F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company, Flathead Land Trust helped conserve this incredible property and ensure permanent public access.

In 2017, the landowners, Cindy and Alan Horn, generously donated the property to The Trust for Public Land with the intent of facilitating greater land conservation. In a deal that achieves conservation of the property and generates funds for more conservation, The Trust for Public Land sold the property to F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company encumbered with a conservation easement held by the Flathead Land Trust. The outcome accomplishes the layered benefits that the former owners had hoped to see and is a true win-win scenario for all parties and the residents of Montana. The conservation easement permanently protects this beautiful forested

property by limiting future development and ensuring that it will remain a privately held working forest contributing to our local economy. The conservation easement protects wildlife habitat, wildlife movement corridors, clean water and also allows for public recreational access to the property.

“This incredible property is now conserved in perpetuity and protects important wildlife habitat and water quality along the Stillwater River, as well as open space and forest resources for sustainable management”, said Paul Travis, Executive Director of the Flathead Land Trust. “The conservation easement also secures access for the use and enjoyment of the public adjacent to other public lands. As the Flathead’s community-based land trust, we are proud to be a partner on this significant forestland conservation project with The Trust for Public Land and F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co.”

Dick Dolan, Northern Rockies Regional Director for The Trust for Public Land, echoed the enthusiasm for this conservation achievement. “This project is just one chapter in our long history of conserving working forests in Montana. We are proud to be able to preserve

some of the region’s most special places for outdoor recreation, while also ensuring the health and continuity of sustainable forestry. This project would not have been possible without the support of our exceptional partners.”

F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company is grateful for the opportunity to continue the stewardship of this property under private ownership. “It is a unique property that fits well into our timberland holdings and will benefit from long term forest management under our principals of sustainability.” Said Chuck Roady, Vice President and General Manager of Stoltze. “Putting this property under conservation easement and long-term sustainable forest management is a great example of how healthy forests support healthy communities, both the two- and four-legged kind” said Paul McKenzie, Lands & Resource manager for Stoltze. This is the third project Stoltze has worked with The Trust For Public Land on and the first for working with Flathead Land Trust.

Flathead Land Trust will host a tour of the property in the evening of Thursday, July 8th. Space will be limited, so please RSVP by sending an email to rhunter@flatheadlandtrust.org.



THANK YOU TO OUR 2020 DONORS & SUPPORTERS

GRANTORS AND FOUNDATIONS

\$50,000 +

Whitefish Community Foundation - Great Fish Community Challenge
Flathead Lakers
North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant

\$10,000 - \$50,000

AGL Foundation
The Cinnabar Foundation
State of MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Schlinger Family Foundation
The Sustainability Fund of the Flathead Community Foundation
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

\$1,000 - \$10,000

The Bibler Foundation
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Flathead Beacon Foundation
James and Wanda Hollensteiner Foundation
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Whitefish Community Foundation - Day of Giving & Unity
Flathead River to Lake Initiative Fund

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\$10,000 - \$50,000

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Whitefish Credit Union

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Rebecca Hughes and Joe Mann
Iron Horse
Dean Robbins
F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co.
Trust for Public Land

* Preservation Partner Monthly Donor

2020 ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL SUMMARY

THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL MEMBERS, SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS! IN 2020 WE CELEBRATED A BANNER YEAR FOR CONSERVATION BECAUSE OF YOUR SUPPORT.

→ In April, we completed the Robbins conservation easement which now conserves vital bird habitat on Wiley Slough and stitches together 1,235 acres of adjacent land already conserved for bird and wildlife habitat and productive farmland.

→ In May, we completed the Flathead River Conservation Project. This easement permanently protects 155-acres of agricultural open space in the heart of our valley and water quality of the Flathead River and Flathead Lake. It adds protection to a critical puzzle piece that is adjacent to 725 acres already conserved.

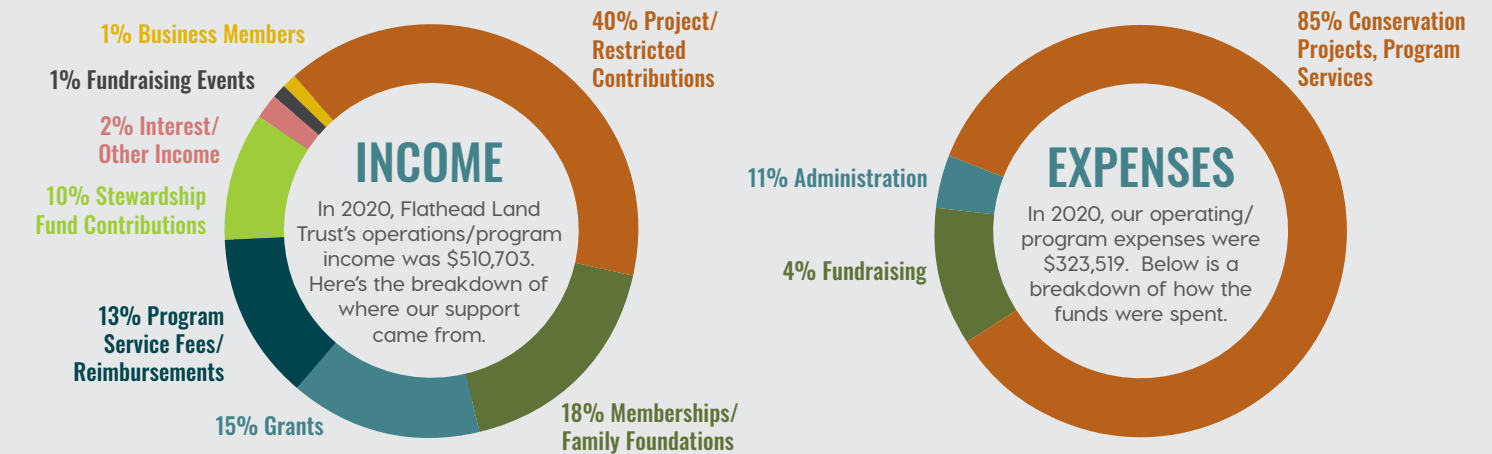
→ We also completed a 37-acre conservation easement along Goodrich Bayou near the Flathead River in September, and a 50-acre conservation easement of forested and wildlife rich land near Kila in November.

→ In December, Flathead Land Trust completed a conservation easement along the Stillwater River near Olney in partnership with the Trust for Public Land and F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Co. The Olney conservation easement permanently protects a 1,072 acre inholding surrounded by Flathead National Forest and Montana State forests, and will remain a privately held working forest protected from future development.

→ On December 30th, we conserved another vital piece of bird habitat and open space in the Flathead Valley - 53.4 acres of land owned by Marty and Linda Boehm located along Mill Creek near its confluence with the Flathead River.

→ We also made considerable progress towards the Bad Rock Canyon Conservation Project and proposed Somers Beach State Park which we hope to be completed soon.

FLATHEAD LAND TRUST HOLDS 67 CONSERVATION EASEMENTS AND HAS PARTNERED ON 18 COOPERATIVE PROJECTS FOR A TOTAL OF 16,158 ACRES CONSERVED.



Note: Summaries depict unaudited financials. Most recent audited financials are available on our website or by request.



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

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THE LAND AFFAIR

AUG 19 • 2021

After a year hiatus, we finally get to get together and celebrate with you at The Land Affair, Flathead Land Trust's annual fundraising event on Thursday, August 19, 2021 starting at 6 PM. The event will help raise critical funding for our conservation work throughout the Flathead. The event will be hosted at the beautiful Snowline Acres and Ashley Creek Historic Venue with live music, locally-sourced fare from Cartwright Catering, local beer and wine, and our live drive paddle raise.

Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased at www.flatheadlandtrust.org or by calling 406-752-8293.