

Montana Forests News

Summer 2018

Compiled and written by Freya Sargent, Communications and Coordination Intern

MEET CHARLIE DAHLSTROM Stewardship Intern

For the second summer in a row, The Nature Conservancy is working with students from the University of Montana to better understand where and how people are recreating on Montana Forest lands. Charlie Dahlstrom is one of these students. He grew up in Gig Harbor, Washington, spending summers with his extended family in Missoula. His father introduced him to hunting and fishing at an early age, which inspired a passion for the outdoors and an interest in becoming a game warden. He is currently studying recreation management at the University of Montana. As a stewardship intern, Charlie is maintaining campsites and other infrastructure used by recreationists, as well as speaking with user groups. His goal is to interview the people he meets to capture where they are coming from and what kinds of activities they are participating in. This baseline understanding will inform recreation management in the future. Charlie's favorite part about his job is the visitor interactions. He loves being surprised by everyone he meets and getting to know the people who share his love of the land. If you see Charlie, don't hesitate to say "hi!"



USING SCIENCE TO FOSTER ADAPTATION

In the summer of 2017, TNC formed a Science Advisory Council composed of researchers from the University of Montana, Blackfoot Challenge, and TNC staff. Montana Forests provide a unique opportunity to bring together communities, contractors, agencies and scientists to test new, innovative ways of managing land for the benefit of both people and nature. The Council ran a weekly seminar series this spring to form a common understanding of the work each researcher does as well as to build an interdisciplinary framework to work within. A theme that emerged from the seminars is the question of how to foster adaptation for people, wildlife and the land. The Council aims to apply for grants to better understand the coupling of human and ecological systems across the Montana Forests. Opportunities discussed include forest restoration to benefit lynx habitat, prescribed fire as a restoration tool, and ways to boost local economic benefits.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

At the beginning of 2018, TNC began to phase out the name "Clearwater-Blackfoot Project." Instead, we are using "Montana Forests" to refer to land in the lower Blackfoot watershed that has been our focus for the last three years, and all the lands we own throughout western Montana, including lands acquired through the Blackfoot Community Project and the Montana Legacy Project. This reflects our wish, and need, to be thinking about permanent conservation outcomes for these lands all together, not in isolation.

ROAD UPDATE

TNC and partner agencies are cleaning up and repairing roads after the Liberty Fire, requiring certain areas to remain gated. Public access should return to normal by mid-July.

A Fun & Family-Friendly Event!

July 15, 2018

Revive & Thrive

**Work Party & Celebration of
Montana Forests**

Lost Horse Meadows

**10 am - Volunteer Work Party
1pm - Free Lunch**

Info & Map: nature.org/montana



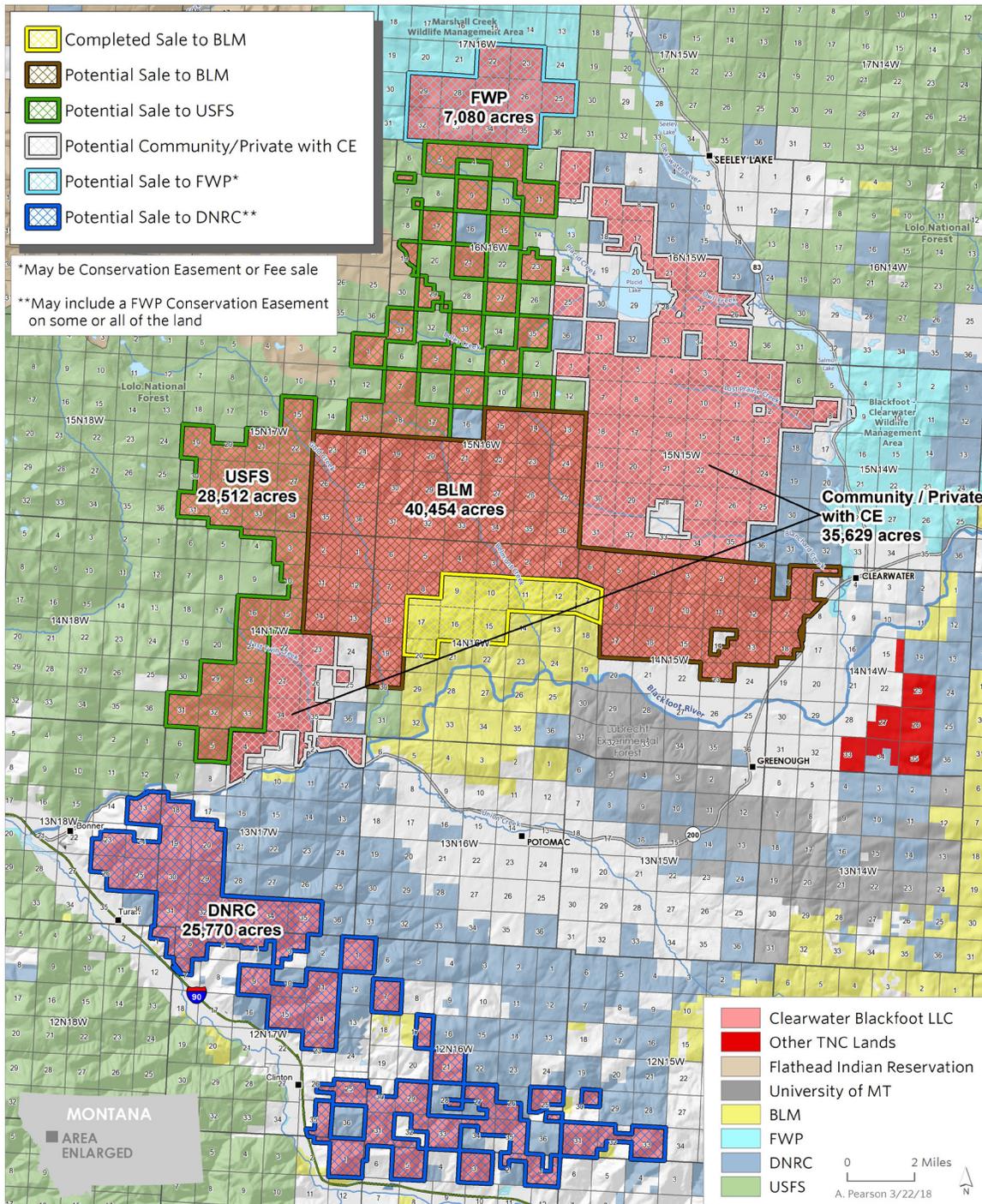
CLEARWATER-BLACKFOOT WORKGROUP MOVES FORWARD

Focus on recreation and community governance

Over 30 partners participating in the Clearwater-Blackfoot Project Workgroup met on May 16 in Greenough to catch up on many of the topics discussed in this newsletter and to review a draft land transfer map (below) and discuss next steps. Over the last three years, since TNC purchased the Clearwater-Blackfoot Project area, this group has gathered community feedback about priorities and visions for this landscape. Two opportunities in particular have become recurring themes in these discussions: recreational development and a community-governed ownership outcome, perhaps similar to the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area north of Ovando. Moving forward, a Community Forest Workgroup will explore the opportunities for a community forest. Similarly, it has become clear that recreation is a driving interest across the landscape, and so a Recreation Workgroup composed of diverse recreation interests will explore ways to realize future opportunities.



2018 DRAFT Disposition Scenario



*May be Conservation Easement or Fee sale
 **May include a FWP Conservation Easement on some or all of the land

Clearwater Blackfoot LLC
 Other TNC Lands
 Flathead Indian Reservation
 University of MT
 BLM
 FWP
 DNRC
 USFS

0 2 Miles
 A. Pearson 3/22/18

Data Source: Montana State Library (Cadastral)
 Disclaimer: Parcel data is displayed for informational purposes only and has not been surveyed. Accuracy is not guaranteed.
 Acreages are based on GIS data

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

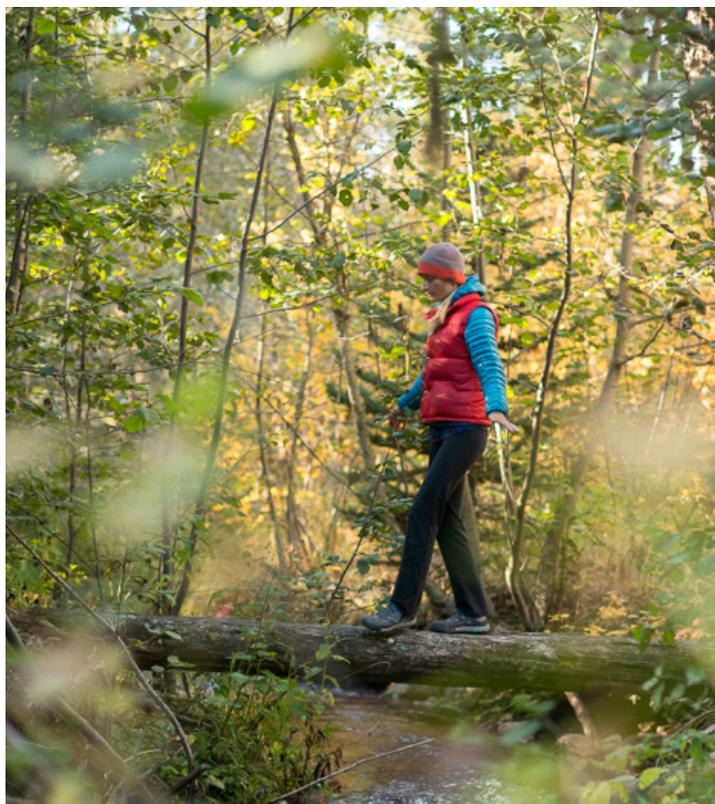


For thousands of years, fire was the major force shaping Montana Forests. Intensive logging and fire suppression have allowed forests to regrow densely, increasing the risk of mega fires. TNC recognizes the importance of thinning these areas and returning low-intensity fire to the landscape.

RESTORATION IN OUR MT FOREST LANDS

\$1 million to fund fire restoration work at Gold Creek

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes just received a Reserved Treaty Right Lands program grant through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This money will be put towards prescribed burns and restoration of camas and bitterroot on both TNC and BLM lands. This summer, TNC will be thinning and treating weeds in and around the Gold Creek drainage in preparation for the prescribed burn next spring.



RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN MONTANA FOREST LANDS

Three years of community engagement regarding the future of TNC-owned lands identified maintaining and expanding recreational opportunities as one of the biggest areas of interests. In response to this high level of enthusiasm, the Montana Forests Recreation Workgroup formed to provide assistance to TNC and its partners with recreation planning.

Over the last year, Andy Baur of Western Conservation Project conducted an analysis to identify what public agencies, as future owners of some of these lands, felt were areas and types of recreation to be avoided and which were opportunities for future development. The analysis is a guiding document for the Recreation Workgroup. Priorities include Hill 16 and the Wisherd Ridge-Twin Creeks areas. Hill 16 will be locally spearheaded by Seeley Lake ROCKS, with the goal of establishing a non-motorized trail system that will connect Seeley and Placid Lake. Trails will use a combination of existing logging roads and new singletrack trails. Uses will be primarily hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, hunting, and equestrian.

The Wisherd-Twin Team will look at planning for multiple uses in the area including backcountry skiing, nordic skiing, and snowmobiling in the winter; hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian in the summer; and hunting in the fall. The group agreed that emphasizing long-term user group involvement is critical to maintaining and stewarding trails. In addition, many of the opportunities for expanded recreation require efforts to control invasive weeds, make road improvements for aquatic health, or bring public attention to forest restoration opportunities. Any opportunities to connect recreation to improving the overall health of the land will be prioritized.

The Recreation Workgroup will meet periodically throughout the summer and fall. To participate, contact Andy Baur at andy@westconserve.org.



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Stay tuned for the next Montana Forests News this fall!