

**THE  
MONTANA LEGACY  
PROJECT**

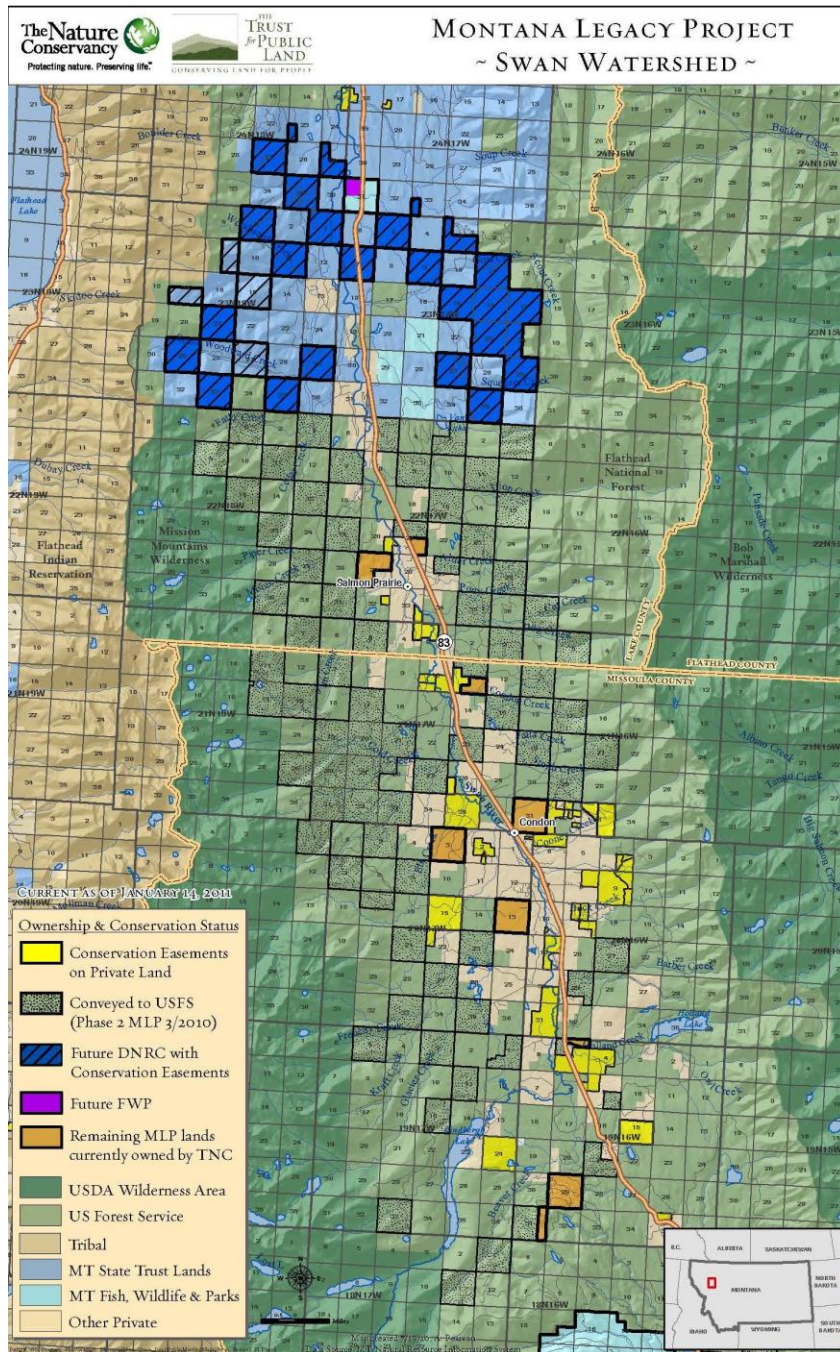
**Swan Valley Factsheet – January 2011**

The Montana Legacy Project is a cooperative project of The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land and many state, federal and private partners. The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land have acquired approximately 310,000 acres of land owned by Plum Creek. The land will eventually be conveyed to a mix of public and private owners. Under this partnership, actual land ownership and management responsibilities rest with The Nature Conservancy.

**Land Ownership Status**

In December of 2010, The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land completed the third and final acquisition phase of the project, including about 21,000 acres in the Swan Valley. A total of about 66,000 acres of former industrial timberland have been acquired in the Swan Valley, constituting all the remaining Plum Creek ownership between the Clearwater Divide and Swan Lake. The land was in a checkerboard ownership pattern with the United States Forest Service and the Swan River State Forest. After extensive due diligence activities (which included addressing vandalized gates, illegal ATV trails, illegal dumping, encroachment, etc.), about 44,820 acres of the land in the Swan Valley were donated to the Flathead National Forest in March 2010. In December of 2010, FWP purchased a conservation easement on about 9,350 acres of land intermingled with the Swan River State Forest. This was funded through a combination of the USFWS Habitat Conservation Program and BPA funding. The Nature Conservancy retains title to this land pending additional state funding. A second round of December closings transferred 1,920 acres in the north Swan Valley to DNRC and 450 acres in the same area to FWP. The adjacent map delineates these transactions in the Swan Valley.

As of January 2011, nearly 200,000 acres of all project lands have been transferred to public ownership—including local, state and federal entities. Maps of all project areas, current ownership and other information can be found at [nature.org/Montana](http://nature.org/Montana).



### **Dispositions of remaining lands in the Swan Valley**

It is a goal of the project to convey the remaining land within the Swan River State Forest (~14,620 acres) to the DNRC, pending available funding and a small parcel (~170 acres) to FWP. The remaining lands in the Swan Valley (about 3,630 acres) are scattered throughout the valley, mostly located at lower elevations and more accessible from Highway 83. Two parcels (containing a total of approx. 620 acres) are located in Lake County, and the remaining seven parcels (approx. 3,010 acres) are within Missoula County. The Forest Service has identified the remaining parcels of Phase 3 land for possible additions and has applied for funding through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program. Through several venues, the public has expressed the desire to provide for certain community interests through community or private purchase of some parcels of Montana Legacy Project land. The final disposition of these lands is not certain and interested parties need to pursue funding opportunities and communication with the current land owner. While there are no solid commitments for these parcels, The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land will continue to work with the Swan Valley Community Council and other interested local entities to evaluate site characteristics and identify feasible outcomes for long-term land uses.

### **Land Management Activity and Plans**

During the period of interim ownership of land acquired from Plum Creek, The Nature Conservancy continues to provide opportunities for public recreation, similar to what existed under Plum Creek ownership. This includes enrolling the property in the MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks Block Management Program for hunter access. TNC has contracted with a local non-profit for assistance in monitoring and patrol of Legacy lands. In addition, non-commercial firewood gathering is allowed, subject to obtaining a permit, which is available at SEC. During the period of interim ownership of land acquired from Plum Creek, The Nature Conservancy continues to pay property taxes to Missoula, Lake, Mineral and Powell counties.

The Fiber Supply Agreement (FSA) is an agreement between Plum Creek and the MT Legacy Project partners that provides for the harvest of approximately 92 million board feet of merchantable timber from MT Legacy Project lands over a 10-year period, which would be sold to Plum Creek. Most of the Swan Valley land acquired as part of the Montana Legacy Project is currently subject to the FSA. The Nature Conservancy's 2010-2011 harvest activity includes projects in the Swan Valley.

The Nature Conservancy (with its contractor, Northwest Management, Inc.) is planning ongoing timber harvest activities to meet its obligations. Northwest Management will call for bids from potential contractors prior to the announcement of any sales. The Swan Ecosystem Center has a list of Swan Valley contractors that will be notified—please make sure your information is up to date with SEC, or contact Chris Bryant at The Nature Conservancy (406-543-6681) to be added to a list. Plum Creek will no longer conduct any forest management activities on Montana Legacy Project lands.

### **Other issues**

The principal goals of this project are to:

- \* Conserve vital wildlife habitat and water resources
- \* Maintain the forestland production and restoration opportunities that sustain both the land and local economies
- \* Conserve traditional access for a broad variety of outdoor recreation activities

The majority of land dispositions are designed to achieve these goals. There may be some smaller parcels that have lower conservation values for which an alternative outcome may be possible. The project objectives are always foremost in any negotiation.

Additional information, maps and updates are available at [nature.org/Montana](http://nature.org/Montana)

If you have any questions or comments, please contact:

The Nature Conservancy  
Chris Bryant  
543-6681 or [cbryant@tnc.org](mailto:cbryant@tnc.org)

The Trust for Public Land  
Robert Rasmussen  
495-2269 or [robert.rasmussen@tpl.org](mailto:robert.rasmussen@tpl.org)