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Strong Partnership Makes Conservation History

MISSOULA, MT — December 2, 2010 —Today, [The Nature Conservancy](#) and its partner, the [Trust for Public Land](#), completed the final phase of the largest, private conservation land purchase in history. The [Montana Legacy Project](#) is the culmination of an unprecedented partnership between private and public partners – from local Montana loggers to a billionaire philanthropist – to secure the future of one of the last places on the planet where not a single plant or animal has gone extinct in the last two centuries.

The Montana Legacy Project purchase of more than 310,000 acres from Plum Creek, is a critical link to conserving the [Crown of the Continent](#) – a 10-million acre natural region that encompasses Glacier National Park and provides refuge for some of the last grizzly bears, Canada lynx and wolverines left in the lower 48 states.

The former commercial timber land in this purchase was intermingled in a checkerboard pattern with thousands of acres of public land. The Legacy Project seized the opportunity to erase this fractured pattern of ownership, allowing the land to be managed more effectively for both public recreation, sustainable forestry and as wildlife habitat.

Someone else recognized that same opportunity: A quiet philanthropist, engineer, and entrepreneur, Hansjörg Wyss, who became the project's lead donor and passionate supporter.

"The best legacies are the hardest to achieve. This project represents one of those rare chances to leave future generations one of the wildest places on Earth to use and enjoy for generations."

The Wyss Foundation's initial gift of \$25 million inspired many to believe this bold enterprise could be realized. His latest gift of an additional \$10 million helped bring the deal to completion. These gifts added to public contributions championed by U.S. Senator Max Baucus and Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer.

"Partnership was the key to bringing this complex project to completion. It's a testament to what can be achieved when people come together to find common ground," said Will Rogers, CEO of the Trust for Public Land.

The Montana Legacy Project recognizes that, if we're going to preserve the magnificent diversity of life on our planet, we can't define conservation by political boundaries, or even a single river valley. We have to work at a scale that preserves all the interconnecting pieces that make Nature work. We also have to recognize that people are part of the picture.

The Legacy Project not only preserves habitat for wildlife, it ensures that people are still able to use this land for recreation, a source of clean water and as a place to make a living through activities such as ranching and sustainable forestry. Through the Montana Legacy Project:

- 310,000 acres of conserved forest lands now connect millions of acres of public lands;

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Condon Lake © John Lambing

- 640 miles of free flowing streams for cold water fisheries have been conserved;
- Assures that wildlife such as grizzly bears, Canada Lynx and wolverines can reach vital areas of habitat that spread over hundreds of miles;
- Sustainable forestry continues to provide jobs for timber-dependent communities;
- Public access for outdoor recreation will be permanently protected.

[Mark Tercek](#), President and CEO of The Nature Conservancy, said “The Montana Legacy Project represents a new brand of conservation that is focused on protecting large, healthy landscapes for the benefit of both people and wildlife.”

Visit this link for more information about the [Montana Legacy Project](#).

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Conservancy and its more than 1 million members have protected nearly 120 million acres worldwide. [Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org.](#)



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