

Swan Lands Community Committee Update August, 2005

Dear Swan Lands Community Committee Members:

It has been a few months since we have held a meeting, so the following is a 'Swan Lands Issues' update! We will not be holding a Swan Lands Community Committee meeting until we hire our new Swan Lands Coordinator. Until that time, we will keep you updated on current issues via e-mail and mailings. Please call us with any questions/concerns/comments.

Thank you all for your patience during this interim period...!

Swan Lands Coordinator Position:

Ashley Mason will not be returning as Swan Lands Coordinator. SEC has decided to replace her position with a Swan Lands Director, someone who has experience negotiating land purchases and protecting lands with conservation easements in order to develop a community forest. Once that position is hired, we will seek out a part time staff person to continue community outreach.

SEC has begun advertising to fill the Swan Lands Director position. Several people have inquired since the first job posting July 22 in High Country News. The position has also been announced on the Land Trust Alliance web site and in other venues. We will keep the solicitation open until we have a handful of worthy applicants to consider.

June Community Forest Conference:

The June Community Forest Conference held in Missoula was outstanding. Folks from all over the country who are interested in developing their own community forest or who have already established a community forest came together to share ideas, offer advice, and learn important lessons. We met with folks who have owned and managed community (town) forests, in some cases, for decades! The conference also helped us to understand trends in forestland ownership across the country. We learned about new emerging financial tools for forestland acquisition as well as techniques for community involvement in long-term forest management. This was a great conference to inform our ongoing work in the Swan as we deal with the divestment of Plum Creek lands and pursue the formation of a Swan Valley Community forest.

Plans are underway to produce DVD's containing videotapes of all conference presentations.

Conservation Strategies in Progress:

Through all of our hard work and outreach to Congress this year, the Swan Lands Project is once again being supported through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Forest Legacy Program (FLP). The House-Senate conference committee concluded its deliberations and Congress forwarded an Interior Appropriations Bill (for Fiscal Year 2006) to the President, which has been signed. Although the budget was tight this year (and conservation funding, in particular, was reduced), the Swan Valley conservation initiatives were competitive, and received partial funding.

The Swan Valley program will receive \$3.0 million in **LWCF** to acquire priority Plum Creek lands for incorporation into the Flathead National Forest. This will be utilized to complete the acquisition of Sections 25 and 26, and Section 33 at Bunyan Lake beneath Lindy Peak. The application for FY07 is being prepared at this time. The **Forest Legacy Program (FLP)** protects working forestlands with conservation easements or acquisitions. FLP funds already appropriated in FY04 & FY05 will be used to purchase forestland easements from Plum Creek on about 7,200 acres within the Swan River State Forest in the northern part of the Valley. The FY06 allocations included \$2.8 million for the Swan Valley, a little over 40% of the requested \$6.6 million! This funding (along with matching funds) will be utilized for acquiring fee title of at least one section of Plum Creek land for the State of Montana.

All federal funds made available this year for the Swan Valley project were appropriated because of your letters, calls, and support. **THANK YOU!**

Plum Creek Land Sales:

Plum Creek lands that have sold in the last several months include:

Public Land Acquisitions

- Beaver Creek Section 17 (95 acres) - to TPL to be acquired by the Flathead National Forest.

Lands sold to private individuals

- Jim Creek - Southeast quarter of Section 29 and Northeast quarter of Section 32 (T22 R17) (200 acres)
- Kraft Creek - Northeast quarter of Section 25, (T20R17)
- Kraft Creek- South half of Section 25, (T20R17)

Please do not hesitate to call the Swan Ecosystem Center at 754 3137 if you have questions or comments about any of the above information!! Thank you all for staying involved! We will be in touch again soon with additional updates.