



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Public Access Secured to 41,000 Acres in Southwest Montana**

**MISSOULA, Mont.**—The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation teamed up with a private landowner, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service (USFS), Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and local sportsmen groups to secure permanent public access to approximately 41,344 acres of public lands in time for Montana’s 2014 general big game hunting season.

“This strikes at the very core of our mission,” said David Allen, RMEF president and CEO. “RMEF is committed to seeking and finding avenues like this particular project to open public access for increased recreational opportunities like hunting.”

RMEF funding assisted in the purchase of a 30-foot wide permanent road easement to cross 0.66 miles, in three separate road segments, of a private ranch through two drainages in the Medicine Lodge area approximately 35 miles southwest of Dillon in Beaverhead County. The project improves access to both the Tendoy and Beaverhead Mountains.

More specifically, the easement provides 0.16 miles of motorized access to Ayers Canyon (Hunting District 328) between the Medicine Lodge Road and BLM ownership as well as motorized access to Kate Creek (Hunting District 302) through two private segments of 0.29 and 0.21 miles on the northwest corner of Ellis Peak. (These areas are also included in Hunting District 300 for antelope.) The road previously alternated between BLM and private ownership, and the public portions are designated as Road 70095 on both the BLM and USFS ownership.

“These types of collaborative efforts continue to ensure that sportsmen and women have access to public lands throughout Montana,” said Ron Aasheim, FWP spokesperson. “Partnerships are key to FWP’s management of resources which we hold in trust for all Montanans.”

“Improving public access to encourage the public's responsible use and enjoyment of their lands and resources continues to be a high priority for BLM, both locally and nationally,” said Cornie Hudson, BLM Dillon Field Office manager. “The partnerships that made this project possible could be a model for future access projects of this nature. Thank you partners!”



RMEF also partnered with the BLM Dillon Field Office in 2013 to complete construction on a road project that re-opened and improved public access to more than 9,355 additional acres at Cow Creek in the Medicine Lodge drainage.

“When you combine our work from last year with these two new projects, RMEF has now improved access to more than 50,000 acres of public lands in this drainage over the last two years alone,” said Blake Henning, RMEF vice president of Lands and Conservation.

Other project partners include the Beaverhead Outdoors Association and the Skyline Sportsmen’s Association.

Since 1984, RMEF has opened or secured access to more than 215,000 acres in Montana and 758,000 acres nationally across elk country for hunting, hiking, fishing, camping and other outdoor activities.

**About the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation:**

Founded over 30 years ago, fueled by hunters and a membership of more than 200,000 strong, RMEF has conserved more than 6.5 million acres for elk and other wildlife. RMEF also works to open and improve public access, fund and advocate for science-based resource management, and ensure the future of America’s hunting heritage. Discover why “Hunting Is Conservation™” at [www.rmef.org](http://www.rmef.org) or 800-CALL ELK.