

*Flathead County*  
**Board of Commissioners**

(406) 758-5503



Brad W. Abell  
Randy L. Brodehl  
Pamela J. Holmquist

August 9, 2021

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
P. O. Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

RE: FLP Fiscal Year 2022 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

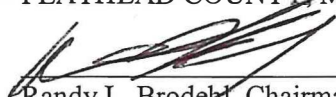
Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Flathead County Commissioners support the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead County to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.


Green Diamond's private timber ownership in Flathead County provides economic, community-oriented, and public recreation benefits. Green Diamond is the third landowner of this project area in the last 18 months, creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty to the Montana timber industry and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwestern Montana. As a result of the willingness of Green Diamond to work with TPL and FWP, we have this opportunity to protect a large portion of their land base in northwestern Montana. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills. Our constituents will be able to access 48,000 acres of public open space for recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry picking, biking, and hiking. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits, these forestlands protect the scenic landscape for its natural scenic values and fish and wildlife habitat along the Thompson Chain of Lakes corridor between Libby and Kalispell, Montana.

The quality of life and the economy in Flathead County has been enhanced through previous FLP-funded projects. Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. If you need additional information, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
FLATHEAD COUNTY, MONTANA

  
Randy L. Brodehl, Chairman

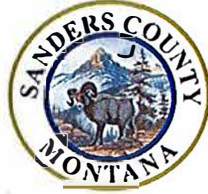
  
Pamela J. Holmquist, Member

  
Brad W. Abell, Member

# Sanders County Board of County Commissioners

1111 Main Street • PO Box 519 • Thompson Falls, Montana 59873

**Dan B. Rowan**, Presiding Officer  
**John J. Holland**, Commissioner  
**Anthony B. Cox**, Commissioner



Telephone (406) 827-6966  
Fax (406) 827-4388  
[commissioners@co.sanders.mt.us](mailto:commissioners@co.sanders.mt.us)

Greg Gianforte; Governor  
Christi Jacobson; Secretary of State  
Austin Knudsen; Attorney General  
Elsie Arntzen; *Superintendent of Public Instruction*  
Troy Downing; *Commissioner of Securities and Insurance*

To the Montana Land Board,

The Sanders County Commissioners are writing in support of the Green Diamond Resource Company and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Upper Thompson Connectivity Project Phases 1 and 2. The easement has been in the works since Weyerhaeuser sold its Montana properties in 2020. The land provides a unique opportunity to keep the area open to the public and to continue managing the ground, much as it has been for over 100 years.

By preventing subdivision and development, this easement will maintain the character and economy of our region. It enjoys broad support from sportsman groups, community leaders, and local governments, reflecting its importance to both our local community. This easement will provide a long-term timber supply to our local mills in perpetuity.

The Upper Thompson Connectivity Project Phases 1 and 2 will keep over 47,907 acres open for public recreation, such as hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, etc. This land has been generously left open to the public for the past three years while the easement has been worked out. Former Plum Creek and Weyerhaeuser holding have been open for more than a century in Montana while other industrial timberlands in the west have charged the public access fees to access their private land. This easement keeps access open in perpetuity. The easement is also supported by the Lincoln and Flathead County Commissioners, while also being supported by a wide variety of citizens and user groups.

What the easement will do:

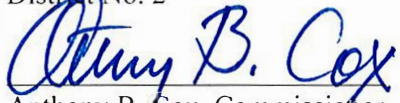
- Continue to provide public access for up to 47,907 acres
- Continue to provide forest harvest opportunities
- Continue to provide fire protection for local communities and other agency timberland
- Continue to allow management of predators
- Continue to allow cattle grazing on 80,000 acres of land
- Will pay the FULL value of taxes to Montana Counties

The project's funding—through private donations, the Forest Legacy Program, and Habitat Montana — ensures that it is efficiently executed without adding financial burden to taxpayers. We believe this easement is a critical investment in Northwest Montana's future, and we urge your support to help protect these working lands and public access for generations to come.

Sincerely,



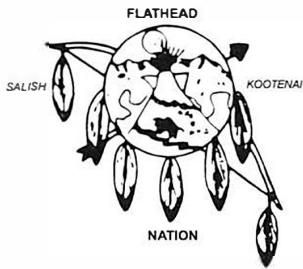
John J. Holland, Commissioner  
District No. 2



Anthony B. Cox, Commissioner  
District No. 3



Dan B. Rowan, Commissioner  
District No. 1, Presiding Officer



THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES  
OF THE FLATHEAD NATION  
P.O. BOX 278  
Pablo, Montana 59855  
(406) 275-2700  
FAX (406) 275-2806  
www.cskt.org



A People of Vision

A Confederation of the Salish,  
Pend d' Oreille  
and Kootenai Tribes

TRIBAL COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Tom McDonald - Chairman  
Len Twoteeth - Vice Chair  
Martin Charlo - Secretary  
Ellie Bundy - Treasurer  
Carole Lankford  
Anita Matt  
James "Bing" Matt  
Jim Malatare  
Mike Dolson  
Jennifer Finley

Rick Northrup  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
P.O. Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes wish to express our support for Phase 2 of the 24,865-acre Upper Thompson Conservation Easement that Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and The Trust for Public Land are proposing. These lands are all a part of the aboriginal territory of our people, and archeological history indicates that these lands were used by our ancestors for at least 8,000 years. Surveys have documented a variety of related archeological sites and traditional trails. Many Tribal members continue to regularly return to these areas to hunt, fish, camp, and gather food and medicinal items.

The project lands are used by grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and bull trout; all ESA threatened species which require large, resilient landscapes for their survival. The proposed project area is also home to many state species of concern as well as winter range for moose, elk, and mule deer. It is a key migration corridor for many highly mobile species, such as grizzly bears and elk.

If this project is successful, it would stitch together over 350,000 acres of conservation easements completed over the last 20 years that has protected important working forestland between Montana's Rocky Mountains and the Selkirk and Coeur d'Alene mountains of the Idaho panhandle. Conserving habitat for fish and wildlife species at this scale is a one-time opportunity that should not be missed.

We strongly support the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement and Montana's request for funding from the Forest Legacy Project to help make this project a reality.

Sincerely,

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes  
Tom McDonald, Chairman  
Tribal Council

# City of Thompson Falls



Mayor

Mark Sheets

Ward I

Larry Lack  
Raoul Ribeiro

Ward II

Katherine Maudrone  
Earlene Powell

Ward III

Ruth Cheney  
Shawni Vaught

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The City of Thompson Falls supports the efforts of The Trust for Public Land in their efforts to obtain a conservation easement in the Thompson River area of Sanders County that is not part of a current conservation easement.

Access to lands for recreation is very important to the citizens of Thompson Falls and to the recreation economy of our City. These lands would also support raw materials for our local sawmill which is very important to the Thompson Falls economy by the jobs it provides.

Thank you for your consideration of the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. This proposed easement would provide a win-win situation for all involved and again earns the support of the City. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Sincerely,

Mark Sheets, Mayor

On behalf of the City Council for the City of Thompson Falls



## ***Thompson Falls Chamber of Commerce***

PO Box 493, Thompson Falls, MT 59873

Phone: 406.827.4790

Website: <https://www.thompsonfallschamber.com/>

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Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2022 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

My name is Andrea, I am writing to you on behalf of the Thompson Falls Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce is a local organization that is dedicated to keeping the businesses engaged in the community, bringing new opportunities to the area, and preserving the existing opportunities already available to our community members. I would like to express our support of the USFS's Forest Legacy Program and its use for the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project in the Flathead and Sanders counties.

The Chamber of Commerce believes that the outdoor recreational opportunities in our area are a major draw not only to our local community members and business owners, but also to tourists coming to our area who will in turn help boost our economy by visiting local businesses, and staying in local campgrounds and hotels. The 48,000 acres of proposed area for this preservation project is a crucial area for recreation, fishing, and hunting, all major draws to our area, and great opportunities for our locals to enjoy the reason that they chose to live and make their living in this area. We feel very strongly that eliminating access and developing this area of the Upper Thompson River would be incredibly detrimental to our area by reducing access, damaging our pristine natural resources, and ultimately we would see less destination travel to our area, reducing the economic benefits.

Thank you for your consideration of this Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We truly believe this once in a lifetime opportunity to help conserve 48,000 acres of beloved forests, and to preserve the way of life for our community members and business owners. If you have any further questions in regards to the Chamber's stance on this project, please feel free to reach out to us, we can be reached at [thompsonfallschamber@gmail.com](mailto:thompsonfallschamber@gmail.com) or by calling me directly at (406) 868-8775.

Sincerely,

Andrea Christensen

Board Member of the Thompson Falls Chamber of Commerce



Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

Sanders County Community Development Corporation (SCCDC) supports the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead and Sanders Counties to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.

Green Diamond's private timber ownership in Flathead and Sanders Counties provide economic, community-oriented, and ecological benefits. Green Diamond is the third landowner of this project area in the last 18 months, creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty to the Montana timber industry and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwestern Montana. As a result of the willingness of Green Diamond to work with TPL and FWP, we have one shot to protect a large portion of their land base in northwestern Montana. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills. After completing the EPA facilitated Recreation Economies for Rural Communities workshops we learned just how important outdoor recreation is to our economy. Residents and visitors alike will be able to access 48,000 acres of public open space for non-commercial, non-motorized recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry picking, biking, and firewood collecting. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits, these forestlands protect the scenic landscape for its natural scenic values and fish and wildlife habitat between the Cube-Iron and Sundance Ridge Roadless Area to the McGregor-Thompson Roadless Area, between the Thompson Chain of Lakes and Plains, Montana.

FLP-funded projects have enhanced the quality of life and the economy in northwestern Montana. Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. If you need any assistance, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,

*Ray Brown*

Ray Brown  
Executive Director



**SUPPORTING BUSINESSES  
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES**

2504 Tradewinds Way, Suite C1  
Thompson Falls, MT 59873  
406.827.6935  
sccdc@ronan.net  
www.SandersCounty.org



# United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Grizzly Bear Recovery Program  
University of Montana  
University Hall, Room 309  
Missoula, Mt 59812



Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

September 27, 2021

Dear Mr. Northrup,

As the Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator for the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), I am responsible for coordinating grizzly bear recovery in the lower-48 states under the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS supports the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead and Sanders Counties to conserve privately -managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.

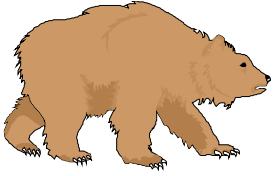
This project occurs in an area important for connectivity between three grizzly bear recovery zones: Cabinet-Yaak, Northern Continental Divide, and Bitterroot. Connectivity among these populations has not yet occurred, but is needed for recolonization in the Bitterroot and long-term genetic viability in the Cabinet-Yaak. Placing these 48,000 acres under a conservation easement will protect this important habitat and further grizzly bear recovery. In addition, by preventing encroachment of development, this project will reduce the potential for human-bear conflicts often associated with private land development, and ensure successful dispersal/connectivity.

FLP-funded projects have enhanced the quality of life and the economy in northwestern Montana. Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. If you need any assistance, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hilary Cooley', written in a cursive style.

Hilary Cooley, PhD  
Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



# Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Subcommittee

## Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee

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### S/C-Y CHAIR

**Ben Conard**  
US Fish & Wildlife Service,  
Montana Field Office

### S/C-Y VICE-CHAIR

**Steve Pozzanghera**  
Washington Department of Fish &  
Wildlife

### S/C-Y MEMBERS

**Holger Bohm**  
BC Ministry of Forests, Lands &  
Natural Resource Operations

**Dan Dinning**  
Boundary County, Idaho  
Commissioner

**Chip Corsi**  
Idaho Department of Fish & Game

**Michele Anderson (co-acting)**  
**Dan Brown (co-acting)**  
Idaho Department of Lands

**Ray Entz**  
Kalispel Tribe of Indians

**Gary Aitken, Jr.**  
Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

**Neil Anderson**  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

**Kurt Pindel**  
US Bureau of Land Management

**Rodney Smoldon**  
US Forest Service, Colville National  
Forest

**Carl Petrick**  
US Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle  
National Forest

**Chad Benson**  
US Forest Service, Kootenai  
National Forest

**Carolyn Upton**  
US Forest Service, Lolo National  
Forest

**Christy Johnson-Hughes**  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
Northern Idaho Field Office

**Jeff Krupka**  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
Washington Field Office

### I&E TASKFORCE

**Christy Johnson-Hughes (Chair)**

**Michael Feiger**  
USFS, Kootenai National Forest

**Kim Annis**  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

### SCIENCE ADVISOR

**Wayne Kasworm**  
US Fish & Wildlife Service

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

February 28, 2022

Re: Upper Thompson Connectivity Project, Phase II

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Subcommittee (SCYE Subcommittee) of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee has reviewed the Trust for Public Lands' application to purchase a conservation easement on the Green Diamond Resource Company's forestlands in Sanders and Flathead counties, Montana. Conservation easements have proven to be a highly effective approach to maintaining and improving connectivity across landscapes that provide substantial conservation benefits to highly mobile species such as grizzly bears while maintaining working landscapes. The second phase of this project will safeguard approximately 25,000 acres between the Thompson Chain of Lakes and Plains, Montana and complete both phases of this effort. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will hold the conservation easement which in total will conserve approximately 48,000 acres of wildlife habitat.

Phase II of the Upper Thompson Connectivity Project will provide a multitude of benefits for wildlife and public recreation. Over 24,000 acres will be protected from subdivision and development and continue to provide the valuable wetland and wildlife habitat it contains. The area now provides high quality habitat for grizzly bear, Canada lynx, gray wolf, big horn sheep, elk, mule deer, bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and numerous other birds and fish species.

Phase II's 24,865 acres will benefit grizzly bears as a linkage area for movement between the Northern Continental Divide (NCDE), Cabinet-Yaak (CYE), and Bitterroot (BE) recovery zones. Connectivity among these populations will be an important part of recovering the Cabinet-Yaak and eventually the Bitterroot grizzly bear populations. Grizzly bears are already observed within this area and may be starting to reestablish home ranges as bears from the NCDE and CYE continue to expand. Preventing encroachment of development will reduce the potential for human-bear conflicts often associated with private land development, ensuring successful dispersal.

The potential development threat makes the Upper Thompson Connectivity Project a great candidate for a conservation easement that would allow the traditional uses to continue, while maintaining wildlife habitat. The SCYE Subcommittee is encouraged

that Green Diamond is considering conserving this land, ensuring it remains a working forest and maintains the open space species like grizzly bear need to survive.

Funding The Trust for Public Land's Forest Legacy Program grant application will support working forest land while providing long term and valuable conservation benefits for grizzly bears and host of other highly valued wildlife species in the northern Rockies. Thank you for your consideration of this excellent conservation opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Conard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ben" and last name "Conard" clearly distinguishable.

Ben Conard, SCYE chair



# F.H. STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER COMPANY

*Lumber Manufacturers*

Box 1429 Columbia Falls, MT 59912  
Phone (406) 892-7005 Fax (406) 892-1612

[www.stoltzelumber.com](http://www.stoltzelumber.com)

September 20, 2021

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Mr. Northrup,

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company for the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead, and Sanders Counties to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Project. We understand The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.

Green Diamond's private timber ownership in Flathead, and Sanders Counties provide economic, community-oriented, and ecological benefits. The culture and economy of NW Montana is greatly influenced by the traditional open access to these previously industrial forestlands. There is a unique, and likely short-lived opportunity to work with the new landowners of these lands to conserve the historical working forest and public access these lands have provided. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills while ensuring healthy forests continue to provide clean water, clean air and healthy wildlife habitat. Our friends, neighbors and employees will be able to access 48,000 acres of public open space for non-commercial, non-motorized recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry picking, or just exploring. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits, these forestlands protect the scenic landscape for its natural scenic values and fish and wildlife habitat along the Thompson River corridor between Libby and Kalispell, Montana.

Stoltze has experienced firsthand how quality of life and the economy in northwestern Montana has been enhanced through previous FLP-funded projects. Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Project. If you need any assistance, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Paul R. McKenzie  
Vice President, General Manager



Good for you. Good for our forests.  
[www.sfiipogram.org](http://www.sfiipogram.org)  
SFI-00160



Member Since 1966



Charter Member



Stimson Lumber Company  
60 Port Blvd, Suite 101  
Libby, Montana 59923

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

Stimson Lumber Company is a fully integrated forest products manufacturer with timberlands and manufacturing facilities located in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana. In Lincoln County, Montana Stimson owns and manages 120,000 acres of timberland that provide good paying jobs to loggers, truck drivers and many associated businesses in Libby and the surrounding communities. Much of these lands have been placed under conservation easement with full support of the public.

Stimson supports the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead and Sanders Counties to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.

Green Diamond's private timber ownership in Flathead and Sanders Counties provide economic, community-oriented, and ecological benefits. Green Diamond is the third landowner of this project area in the last 18 months, creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty to the Montana timber industry and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwestern Montana. As a result of the willingness of Green Diamond to work with TPL and FWP, we have one shot to protect a large portion of their land base in northwestern Montana. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills. Our constituents will be able to access 48,000 acres of public open space for non-commercial, non-motorized recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry picking, biking, and firewood collecting. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits, these forestlands protect the scenic landscape for its natural scenic values and fish and wildlife habitat, between the Thompson Chain of Lakes and Plains, Montana and is a nice compliment to the great work already done to conserve timberland in northwest Montana.

FLP-funded projects have enhanced the quality of life and the economy in northwestern Montana. Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. If you need any assistance, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Bruce Rowland

Area Woodlands Manager  
Stimson Lumber Company  
406-370-5657



## MOLPUS WOODLANDS GROUP®

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Molpus Woodlands Group, LLC supports the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead and Sanders Counties to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.

Green Diamond's private timber ownership in Flathead and Sanders Counties provide economic, community-oriented, and ecological benefits. Green Diamond is the third landowner of this project area in the last 18 months, creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty to the Montana timber industry and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwestern Montana. As a result of the willingness of Green Diamond to work with TPL and FWP, we have one shot to protect a large portion of their land base in northwestern Montana. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills. Our constituents will be able to access 48,000 acres of public open space for non-commercial, non-motorized recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry picking, biking, and firewood collecting. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits, these forestlands protect the scenic landscape for its natural scenic values and fish and wildlife habitat across the Lolo National Forest and gaps in the Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement, between the Thompson Chain of Lakes and Plains, Montana.

FLP-funded projects have enhanced the quality of life and the economy in northwestern Montana. Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. If you need any assistance, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,

*Chad McElvany*

Chad McElvany  
Operations Director- NW Region  
Molpus Woodlands Group, LLC



## LOWER CLARK FORK WATERSHED GROUP

PO Box 1329, Trout Creek, MT, 59874

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208.304.3852

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lcfwg.org

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2022 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

I am writing to express my and the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group (LCFWG)'s support for the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project.

I have been the LCFWG's coordinator for the last six years. Over that time, I have worked with numerous partners on a diverse array of projects in pursuit of our mission to maintain, enhance, and restore the ecological integrity of tributaries to the lower Clark Fork River. Our group is focused on facilitating tangible, "boots on the ground" watershed restoration projects that will leave our ecosystems more resilient into the future. Projects that I have contributed to have ranged in scale from small planting efforts along streams to major channel and floodplain reconstruction work. I recognize the importance of active stewardship in many disturbed systems - active intervention that ideally increases the resiliency of our landscapes, which is the focus of my work with the LCFWG.

However, I also feel that perhaps the most meaningful contribution that I have made to conservation in my career thus far is introducing landowners to our local land trust, ultimately leading to the protection of private land in conservation easements or simply helping landowners recognize the value of the habitat that they steward. Land under conservation easements will now be protected in perpetuity, and remain open and wild throughout and beyond my lifetime. While I remain passionate about the numerous ways to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife species across varying landscapes and parcel sizes (even in my own modest backyard); for many species, there is no better alternative than maintaining large, undeveloped landscapes.

The Thompson River drainage is a cherished landscape to many, full of the type of rugged Montana beauty that is attracting many to our state, and one of the most ecologically important systems in which I work. Within the lower Clark Fork watershed, it supports one of the most important and productive Bull Trout populations (a federally listed and Montana species of special concern).

The LCFWG has been working with partners in the drainage to identify opportunities for the conservation of Bull Trout and other native species since 2016. We completed the Thompson River Watershed Restoration Plan, which includes the following among its numerous identified projects that would promote conservation of the watershed: “[support FWP to] acquire or purchase any private land or conservation easements for sale on the Thompson River for the purpose of conservation”. In addition to developing these basin-wide strategic plans, the LCFWG has worked cooperatively with numerous entities to complete four “on-the-ground” projects: (1) fencing cattle out of riparian areas, (2) realigning a road away from a stream, (3) enhancing in-stream habitat with the addition of large wood, and (4) storing over 7 miles of road in a hydrologically neutral condition. We continue to look for opportunities to actively enhance or restore habitat in the drainage, and recognize that the best companion for our work is assurance that the drainage’s resources continue to be protected from development and that the watershed remains intact.

I and my organization fully support the pursuit of the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement, and if finalized, feel that it will be one of the most impactful accomplishments for conservation of natural resources since the last major conservation easement supported by the Forest Legacy Project in the drainage was finalized. The proposed Upper Thompson Conservation Easement represents a critical opportunity to build off past efforts and contribute to lasting conservation.

Thank you for your efforts to preserve this important landscape,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brita Olson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Brita Olson, Coordinator  
Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group



Protecting Montana's wildlife,  
land, waters and hunting & fishing  
heritage for future generations.

October 14, 2021

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) is our state's oldest and largest state-based wildlife conservation organization. We were formed in 1936 when hunters joined landowners to restore depleted wildlife in Montana, and for 85 years we have worked on key issues affecting wildlife, habitat and access to public lands.

MWF supports the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead and Sanders Counties to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand that The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.

Green Diamond's private timber ownership in Flathead and Sanders Counties provide economic, community-oriented, and ecological benefits. Green Diamond is the third landowner of this project area in the last 18 months, creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty to the Montana timber industry and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwestern Montana. As a result of the willingness of Green Diamond to work with TPL and FWP, we have one shot to protect a large portion of their land base in northwestern Montana. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills. Our constituents will be able to access 48,000 acres of public open space for non-commercial, non-motorized recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry picking, biking, and firewood collecting. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits, these forestlands protect the scenic landscape for its natural scenic values and fish and wildlife habitat between the Cube-Iron and Sundance Ridge Roadless Area to the McGregor-Thompson Roadless Area, between the Thompson Chain of Lakes and Plains, Montana.

FLP-funded projects have enhanced the quality of life and the economy in northwestern Montana.

Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. If you need any assistance, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Clewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Eric Clewis  
Connectivity & Wildlife Campaigns Manager  
Montana Wildlife Federation



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Christine Brissette  
312 N. Higgins Ave., Suite 200  
Missoula, MT 59802  
406-544-9649  
e-mail: cbrissette@tu.org

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Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

September 23, 2021

**RE: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project**

Mr Northrup,

As Trout Unlimited's project manager working in northwestern Montana, I'd like to express my enthusiastic support for the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. Trout Unlimited works throughout the country, bringing together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams for the long-term health of native trout and salmon. The upper Thompson Conservation Easement project would create lasting protection for lands and tributaries of the Thompson River basin, one of the highest priority native fisheries in the region. It would also guarantee public access throughout the "checkerboard" of land ownership shared between private timber and Lolo National Forest.

Trout Unlimited and partners have invested heavily in planning and restoration efforts in the Thompson River watershed. While our work generally focuses on improving in-stream habitat, we are acutely aware that land management in the surrounding basin has substantial impact on the health of the waterway and the fish that inhabit it, namely native Bull trout (a federally threatened species) and Westslope Cutthroat Trout (a Montana species of concern). In addition to ensuring that 48,000 acres of working forest lands are sustainably maintained, this project will provide permanent protection for 76.5 miles of streams, 233 acres of riparian habitat and 542 acres of wetlands.

Trout Unlimited is fully supportive of the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement, and we thank you for your consideration of this project. The lands considered for this easement have changed hands several times in the past two years, and each sale fueled concerns by conservationists, recreationalists and the timber industry about the long-term fate of the Upper

Thompson. This easement is a crucial solution, balancing the needs of all parties, and we hope that the Forest Legacy Project will join the long list of partners in support of this impactful work.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine Brissette". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Christine Brissette  
Project Manager



**BACKCOUNTRY**  
**HUNTERS & ANGLERS**  
**MONTANA**

August 17, 2022

Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6th Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup:

On behalf of our roughly 3,000 dues-paying members in the Big Sky State, the Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers is thrilled to see Green Diamond Resources partner with The Trust for Public Lands and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to permanently protect these proposed 48,000 acres of active timber lands by entering them into a perpetual conservation easement. As a grassroots conservation organization, our members care deeply about quality wildlife habitat, public access and fair-chase hunting and fishing opportunities, and this project would help accomplish all three.

The Thompson River corridor is historically an important recreation resource for residents of Flathead and Sanders counties. While this region isn't ranked among the best in the state for elk hunting, these areas provide some of the best opportunities for area residents to chase wapiti. Previously owned by Plum Creek Timber Company, and then Weyerhaeuser, these lands were managed as a contiguous parcel with public recreational access permitted through the goodwill of the landowners. The recent sale and subdivision of these lands to Southern Pine Plantations and then to Green Diamond Resources has left some questions as to what the future of public access will hold. Entering this acreage into a perpetual conservation easement shows that Green Diamond is committed to Montana's gold standard of forestry legacy by allowing public access while being good stewards of the lands through active management and conservation.



[WWW.BACKCOUNTRYHUNTERS.ORG/MONTANA](http://WWW.BACKCOUNTRYHUNTERS.ORG/MONTANA)  
[MONTANA@BACKCOUNTRYHUNTERS.ORG](mailto:MONTANA@BACKCOUNTRYHUNTERS.ORG)

Montana has experienced unprecedented growth over these last several years, Flathead County especially. With increased growth and development often comes the loss of wildlife habitat. By excluding these lands from future development, Montana FWP and Green Diamond are protecting critical habitat for deer, moose, elk and bighorn sheep, among a host of other native wildlife that depend on large swaths of contiguous forests.

Montana BHA is deeply appreciative for the Forest Legacy Program's consideration of this project. This easement would fully cement these lands as part of Montana's hunting and fishing legacy and provide endless opportunities for the enjoyment of our great outdoors for generations to come.

Montana BHA offers our full support of – and for any future needs with – this project.

Sincerely,

Aaron Agosto  
Flathead Valley Regional Leader  
The Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers





DUCKS  
UNLIMITED,  
INC.

DUCKS UNLIMITED, INC.  
*Montana Field Office*

P.O. Box 183  
Elliston, MT 59728  
406/492-2002 Telephone  
[rsanders@ducks.org](mailto:rsanders@ducks.org) E-mail

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Rick,

I am writing this letter in support of the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project brought forward by the Trust for Public Lands. Pursuing the perpetual protection of this valuable area through the Forest Legacy Program is an excellent approach to conserving these important lands. As you are aware, the roughly 48,000 acres identified in this proposal are primarily forested lands, but also include valuable wetland and riparian habitats. The conservation of these lands will provide direct benefits for wetland and riparian wildlife, including waterfowl, and will also provide far-reaching societal benefits including improved water quality in the Thompson and Clark Fork Rivers, flood control, and ground water recharge.

The area is also valuable from a recreational standpoint. Under prior ownership by Weyerhaeuser, many outdoor enthusiasts utilized these private timber lands and benefitted from the access to U.S. Forest Service and other public lands that they provided. I have personally spent many hours in this part of Montana and was excited to hear about the potential partnership with Green Diamond. Public-private partnerships like the one proposed for the Upper Thompson area will serve as a model for how conservation can be accomplished in the state of Montana.

It would be a tragic loss to let the opportunity to perpetually protect these lands and provide public access slip past the citizens of Montana. As stewards of our public outdoor heritage, I encourage Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to place their full support and effort behind the accomplishment of the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Sanders  
Manager of Conservation Programs – Montana  
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.



## THE KOOTENAI FOREST STAKEHOLDERS COALITION

Mr. Rick Northrup,  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1240 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

RE: FLP Fiscal Year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition wishes to express our strong support for the Forest Legacy Program and its use to conserve the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We support this approach to conservation of privately-managed forestland and to ensuring access for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities.

The Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition (KFSC) is a forest collaborative group headquartered in Libby, MT. Since 2006, the KFSC has brought together individuals, businesses, and organizations that take an interest in the management of our public lands. We strive to help craft and support solutions for public lands management by representing diverse values and providing a venue for productive, inclusive conversations between public land managers and the community. We seek opportunities that will foster collaboration and benefit the communities and ecosystems within the Kootenai National Forest. Inter-forest collaboration between the Kootenai National Forest and conservation easements within the Lolo National Forest are crucial to our mission.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

*Tim Dougherty*  
Co-Chair KFSC

*Doug Ferrell*  
Co-Chair KFSC



## Sanders County Collaborative

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2022 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Sanders County Collaborative (SCC) is a diverse group of citizens who live in Sanders County and who work on forestry and recreation projects on the Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest. We are a group of timber supporters, conservationists, hunters, recreationalists, etc. who have worked on a number of projects over the past 5 years. We are writing to support the Upper Thompson River Conservation Easement. We support the conservation of 48,000 acres of privately-managed timber lands and to enhance the public access and recreation opportunities in Sanders and Flathead Counties using the USFS's Forest Legacy Program between The Trust for Public Lands, Montana FWP, and Green Diamond.

The SCC has supported numerous projects of timber, recreation, and access in the lands in and adjacent to the Green Diamond opportunity. We have a vested interest in the lands surrounding the Chippy Creek drainage due to the firewood, hunting, and berry picking opportunities it provides. We have worked with the Lolo National Forest on a 5 year rotating fire road plan for the public and lands that provide access to this area run through this private ground. This land also covers an area of Loneman Divide (north of Plains) that provides public access to the City of Plains). The SCC has supported numerous recreation opportunities such as trail and lookout restoration in the Big Hole drainage as well as the east side of Sundance Ridge which entails Jungle, Deerhorn, and Barktable Creeks. These creeks have trail access which ties into the historic Priscilla Peak Lookout.

Members of our group have supported numerous projects through the Sanders County Resource Advisory Council (RAC). The RAC consists of a diverse group of citizens who rank projects (which are submitted by non-profits and Federal partners) who are given money from the USFS to enhance fishery, recreation, and road projects on Federal Lands. Most recently, a 5 mile reroute of Fishtrap Creek was finalized with use of this money and support from Weyerhaeuser and Southern Pine Plantations (the land owners prior to Green Diamond). This project went through private land and also enhanced fisheries and a priority timber haul road. We have also supported culvert replacement and road closures for grizzly bear recovery on these lands.

Another priority for our group is fire protection in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The lands on the south part of the easement near Buffalo Bill, Weeksville, and Upper Lynch is home to a growing number of subdivisions. Having this part in the easement will provide extra protection in the WUI as the population in NW Montana grows.

Mr. Northrup, thank you again for taking the time to read our letter of support for the Upper Thompson River Easement. This is a special opportunity for Sanders County. We have seen how the original FLP easement in the drainage has helped to preserve our rural way of life. Please, don't hesitate to reach out if you have any other questions.

Sincerely,

Willy Peck  
Sanders County Collaborative (Co-Chair)  
Idaho Forest Group; Collaboration Out Reach Manager  
[SandersCollab@gmail.com](mailto:SandersCollab@gmail.com)

Zach Whipple-Kilmer  
Sanders County Collaborative (Co-Chair)  
814.490.9848



Sanders County Rural Landscape Initiative

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2022 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,


The Sanders County Rural Landscape Initiative (SCRLI) is a group of Sanders County residents who are interested in the lands in the county that sold with the Weyerhaeuser to Southern Pine Plantations sale in 2020 and 2021. We have been following these transactions to provide information on these sales and the impacts it will have on our rural County's future. We currently have a webpage and a Facebook group where people can follow the progress on these lands.

We have vested interest in these lands and the impacts it will have on our current and future populations. With NW Montana changing so much with all of the new residents and then these sales, there has been a lot of skepticism, fear, and confusion as far as Public Access, Rural Integrity, and who the future land owners are. The lands north and south of Plains has been open to the public for over 100 years and one day, there were gates and signs up in places there never have been. Unlike Thompson Falls, Plains has very few access points to town when it comes to being able to access Federal Land. Some of these areas have been locked out due to outfitting and hunter leases.

We believe it is important to protect these lands now because the longer we wait the less opportunity we will have to do so. There are already subdivisions going in on some of these areas and limiting these developments will save the local tax base money on future services and wildfire protection to these areas. We are huge proponents of private property rights, but when we have a common, united front for rural preservation with a willing land owner, we believe the this is the time to act.

Thank you for your consideration of this opportunity to use the Montana Forest Legacy program to conserve the 48,000 acres in Sanders and Flathead Counties. We believe the Upper Thompson River Conservation Easement is the perfect fit for this project. The fact we can conserve privately-managed forests and still provide quality access is vital in these times. Please let us know if you have any other questions.

Thank you,  
Zach Whipple-Kilmer



Chair  
Sanders County Rural Landscape Initiative  
[sanderslands@gmail.com](mailto:sanderslands@gmail.com)  
814.490.9848  
[www.sanderscountylands.wordpress.com](http://www.sanderscountylands.wordpress.com)



**WILD HORSE PLAINS  
BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN  
P.O. BOX 222, PLAINS, MT. 59859**

**To: Mr. Rick Northrup**

It is the pleasure of the Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen (WHPBCH) Chapter to have the opportunity to provide a letter of support for the use of the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) for the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project proposed by The Trust For Public Lands organization and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Since the formation of our chapter in 2006 and with the permission of the previous landowners we have annually volunteered to clear and improve miles of trails across the lands proposed in the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement (CE) Project. Due to the checkerboard ownership trails had been minimally maintained and often totally neglected prior to the formation of our chapter. We have worked to restore the continuity of trails that crisscross between public and private lands specifically within the Upper Thompson CE. Over these years we've seen firsthand the regular use of the lands proposed in the CE by folks from Plains, Thompson Falls, Missoula, Kalispell, Ronan and Polson most frequently, but we've also met folks from Idaho and Washington as well as elsewhere. Hikers, berry pickers, hunters, wood gathers and folks simply out for a pleasurable ride are the most frequent visitors but we've also met other stock users, mountain bike, motorcycle and snowmobile riders as well as the newer sport of snow-motorcycle users. Due to the close proximity of these lands to several nearby towns it is not unusual to meet people any day of the week.

Growing populations, expanding development, and the lure of the outdoors for people living near public lands have increased demand for recreational opportunities in national forests. Recreation enthusiasts contend that public lands enhance quality of life, and, according to the Outdoor Industry Association, the use of public lands contribute over \$80 billion annually to the U.S. economy and locally tourists spend \$20 million in Sanders County each year (Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research, 2020). We're confident adding these lands to the National Forest system will have positive economic benefits to the local communities.

Not only do these lands have a tremendous recreational draw, the CE will ensure these lands remain as working timberlands contributing to the long-term societal needs for wood products rather than in residential development which in turn complicates and increases firefighting costs. Additionally, these lands provide crucial habitat for elk, deer, moose, deer, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, lynx, westslope cutthroat trout, bull trout and grizzly bears. Without doubt, residential development would greatly increase human-grizzly bear conflicts, putting humans at risk, and the bears typically ending up on the losing end.

The Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen Chapter is a group of likeminded folks with the purpose to perpetuate enjoyable common sense use of horses within public lands; assist government agencies in maintenance and management of resources; educate, encourage and solicit active public participation in wise and sustaining use of horses and use by people commensurate with our heritage and back country resource.

Again, we strongly support the use of the USFS’s Forest Legacy Program (FLP) for the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. If we can be of any assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank-you,

/s/ Kelsie Belvins  
President – Wild Horse Plains BCH



WHPBCH worked with previous landowners to leave “high stumps” during timber harvest to demark the trail which was later re-treaded and posted with orange trail markers by WHPBCH.



Mr. Rick Northrup,  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1240 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2022 Upper Thompson River Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

My name is Zach Whipple-Kilmer and I am writing a letter of support on behalf of the Cube-Iron Cataract Coalition (CICC) for the Upper Thompson River Conservation Easement. We are a group of conservationists, hunters, and recreationalists who are working to build community awareness and support for the existing wild backcountry of the Cube-Iron/Cataract area. The Cube-Iron/Cataract Inventoried Roadless Areas provides a unique, backcountry experience just minutes north of Thompson Falls, Montana.

Our organization supports the collaborative efforts between The Trust For Public Land, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and Green Diamond to use the United States Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program to put a conservation easement on 48,000 acres for the Upper

Thompson River Conservation Project. The project is located in Northwestern Montana in Flathead and Sanders Counties and will be used to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities. This easement will also halt future land sales and development while also allowing historical activities such as timber harvest, grazing and continued property taxes being paid to Sanders County.

The easement area is important to not only our group but to other local citizens of both Plains and Thompson Falls due to its location. People here from all walks of life use these lands to recreate and to live off of the land. This area was recently part of a largescale land transfer that sent 600,000 acres of private timberland that has been opened for generations to the public to a questionable future. This land was part of the Weyerhaeuser to Southern Pine Plantations sale. A smaller section south of the City of Plains, Montana has lost over 10,000 acres just mere minutes from town. A large section of property was purchased by MKH Montana and they have barred access on more than 7,000 acres of this land and other parcels have been sold for housing units. Another area north of town (approximately 5,000 acres) is being closed off for hunting leases.

The Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project will ensure up to 48,000 acres of protected, yet workable land that is protected for the residents of Sanders County. Specifically, the pieces north of Plains will provide quality, easily accessible opportunities in perpetuity to hopefully offset what has been lost over the past year or so.

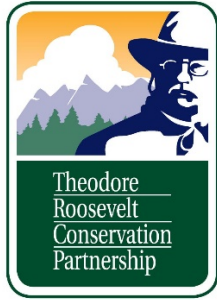
Our organization (CICC) was brought together to have a community voice in the area for when the Lolo National Forest Plan (LNFP) is revised. The LNFP is the legal document which guides the decision making for the Lolo National Forest. The plan was last updated in 1986 and is currently waiting in the wings to be revised in the near future. Our group works in an area that is connected to the west side of the proposed easement. This specific area is known as the Sundance Ridge Inventoried Roadless Area. This area is in a checkerboard pattern at some very highly productive Bull Trout streams. The area of concern which are included in this area consist of Jungle, Deerhorn, and Beatrice Creeks. These creeks are the furthest west that Bull Trout spawn in Sanders County. This area also has old pack mule trails that run up to the Sundance Ridge trail and eventually to the historic Priscilla Peak Lookout. This area is also ideal elk habitat and provides locals with the opportunity to hunt these majestic animals. This area also provides habitat and migratory open space to Grizzly Bear, Mule Deer and Big Horn Sheep to name a few.

The area to the southeast (known as the Big Hole drainage) is home to not only endangered fish species, but is also home to a patchwork network of trails which connects into a historic pack mule trail system. This trail system in turn reaches the recently restored, Big Hole Lookout. This lookout was recently placed on the Lookout Rental Program list. With providing an easement for all of this land (and the far west and north reaches), this will help to keep our rural ways of life in tact and it also will help to limit development on mountain peaks and areas where wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities have been severely impacted by the large amounts of people moving into Sanders County.

In closing, we would like to thank you for your time and your consideration to conserve the 48,000 acres of beautiful forest land on the Upper Thompson River for future generations to enjoy. If the opportunity for this easement to permanent goes through, almost the entire Thompson River drainage will be conserved forever. We have had the fortunate opportunity to live in a state where the Forest Legacy Program has made a huge difference in keeping and enhancing our quality way of life. From the original Thompson/Fisher conservation easement in 2003 to the 2008 Montana Legacy Project. This state is fortunate to have citizens who have looked to the future and had the chance to make a difference. We understand this is a once in a life time opportunity and we appreciate your time to read this over. If you need any additional support or information from us, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Thank you,  
Zach Whipple-Kilmer  
Cube Iron/Cataract Coalition  
[www.cubeironcataract.org](http://www.cubeironcataract.org)  
[cubeironcataract@gmail.com](mailto:cubeironcataract@gmail.com)  
814.490.9848





September 24, 2021

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership supports the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead and Sanders Counties to conserve privately managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.

Green Diamond's private timber ownership in Flathead and Sanders Counties provide economic, community-oriented, and ecological benefits. Green Diamond is the third landowner of this project area in the last 18 months, creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty to the Montana timber industry and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwestern Montana. As a result of the willingness of Green Diamond to work with TPL and FWP, we have one shot to protect a large portion of their land base in northwestern Montana. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills. Our constituents will be able to access 48,000 acres of public open space for non-commercial, non-motorized recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry picking, biking, and firewood collecting. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits, these forestlands protect the scenic landscape for its natural scenic values and fish and wildlife habitat across the Lolo National Forest and gaps in the Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement), between the Thompson Chain of Lakes and Plains, Montana.

FLP-funded projects have enhanced the quality of life and the economy in northwestern Montana. Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres

within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. If you need any assistance, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott Laird". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Scott Laird  
Montana Field Representative  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership



INTERMOUNTAIN WEST  
JOINT VENTURE

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP Fiscal Year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) is focused on conserving priority bird habitats through partnership-driven science-based projects and programs. Through the IWJV's Water 4 efforts we are furthering the partnerships with land trusts, recognizing the vital role that easements play in sustaining bird habitat and landscape connectivity. The IWJV supports the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead and Sanders Counties to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.

Green Diamond's private timber ownership in Flathead and Sanders Counties provide economic, community-oriented, and ecological benefits. Green Diamond is the third landowner of this project area in the last 18 months, creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty to the Montana timber industry and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwestern Montana. As a result of the willingness of Green Diamond to work with TPL and FWP, we have a rare and precious opportunity to protect a large portion of their land base in northwestern Montana. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills. The public will be able to access 48,000 acres of public open space for non-commercial, non-motorized recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry picking, biking, and firewood collecting. In addition to the economic and recreational



INTERMOUNTAIN WEST  
JOINT VENTURE

benefits, these forestlands protect the scenic landscape for its natural scenic values and fish and wildlife habitat between the Thompson Chain of Lakes and Plains, Montana. Land stewardship of this huge land base is critical to watershed health from the headwaters to the streams and creeks below that support the abundant fishery including Bull Trout and the westslope cutthroat trout.

FLP-funded projects have enhanced the quality of life and the economy in northwestern Montana. Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We are very pleased to help support this amazing opportunity for land conservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dave Smith".

Dave Smith  
IWJV Coordinator



The Vital Ground Foundation  
20 Fort Missoula Road  
Missoula, Montana 59804  
406.549.8650  
[www.VitalGround.org](http://www.VitalGround.org)

September 2, 2021

Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Manager  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Re: FLP fiscal year 2022 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

I am writing to express The Vital Ground Foundation's support for the Upper Thompson Forest Legacy Project. As proposed, the project will protect habitat critical to wildlife, including grizzly bears. In 2018 Vital Ground completed its Habitat and Conflict Inventory and Prioritization Assessment. In that assessment area biologists identified these lands for their value to grizzly bears and the high potential for development.

Funding this project will ensure protection of lands within a linkage area between the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem and the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem where Grizzly Bear populations are considered threatened and endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Security of habitat in this connectivity area is critical to the long-term sustainability of those populations.

As a past sponsor of Forest Legacy Program projects in Idaho and Montana the Vital Ground Foundation recognizes the myriad benefits these funds help to accomplish not only on the ground, but for the communities that rely on these lands for jobs, water quality and recreational opportunities. Any future development of these lands puts those key values at risk.

The Vital Ground Foundation strongly supports the Upper Thompson Forest Legacy Project and the request for Forest Legacy funding.

Sincerely,

Ryan Lutey  
Executive Director



September 2, 2021

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2022 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

On behalf of Wild Montana, I am writing to express my organization's support for the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. This project will protect 48,000 of forestland currently owned by Green Diamond by facilitating transfer to Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

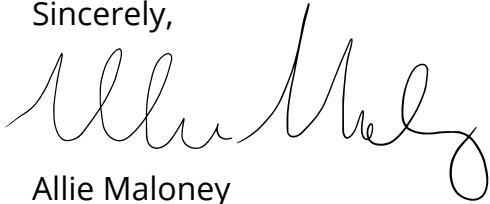
Since 1958, Wild Montana has worked with Montana's communities to protect wilderness and wild place heritage, quiet beauty, and outdoor traditions, now and for future generations. Our mission is to unite and mobilize communities to keep Montana wild. Wild Montana's membership base includes over 4,000 Montana households, including 500 supporting individuals in Sanders and Lincoln counties. The Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project will positively benefit our members and supporters, as well as the 2 million visitors northwest Montana receives annually.

The Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project will protect wildlife habitat from fragmentation and development, preserve a working timber base, and increase sportsmen's access next to the Cabinet and Salish Mountains. This project will positively support our region's timber economy, quality of life for community members, and provide protection for wildlife and plant species.

We support the United States Forest Service's work with The Trust for Public Land to utilize the Forest Legacy Program for this opportunity. The threat of land development, subdivision, and loss of access has never been more relevant to the

people who live and recreate in northwest Montana. Forest Legacy funded projects have enhanced the quality of life and the economy here, and this project will continue that tradition in a way that can be supported by conservationists, recreationists, and timber industry representatives. Thank you for your efforts to protect this area in our wild backyard. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me anytime.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allie Maloney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Allie Maloney  
Northwest Montana Field Director



Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

Kaniksu Land Trust (KLT) is strongly in favor of Forest Legacy Program support for the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand that The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for grant funds to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana, a region in which our organization has worked since its inception in 2002. KLT's missional work includes the protection of working farms and forestlands that generate clean water, wildlife habitat, and economic sustainability, and public access opportunities that support the health and vitality of the rural communities we serve.

The Upper Thompson project checks all these boxes. If protected through a Forest Legacy easement, this forestland will continue to provide dozens of jobs, generate untold thousands in tourism dollars for local economies, protect important habitat for an array of wildlife species from grizzlies to endangered trout, and guarantee public access to thousands of acres of wild Montana. Considering the rapid rate of growth and development occurring at present in beautiful northwest Montana, this is an unrivaled opportunity to protect a significant swath across this important landscape for the benefit of future generations of wildlife and humans alike.

Please be an advocate for quality of life, clean water, corridors for wildlife, and economic sustainability for rural communities through support for the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project.

Sincerely,

Katie Egland Cox  
Executive Director



September 20, 2021

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue; PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

Flathead Land Trust fully supports the Trust for Public Land and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks application for Forest Legacy Program funding to conserve 48,000 acres of forested land owned by Green Diamond in the Upper Thompson River drainage. This project will keep privately owned forest as working timberland and safeguard public access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities in perpetuity.

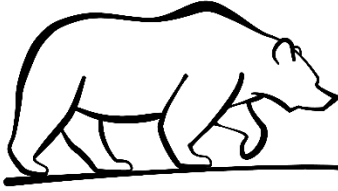
Since 1985, Flathead Land Trust has played a critical role in protecting northwest Montana's natural land and water heritage including our abundant wildlife, clean water, working forest and farmlands, and amazing outdoor recreation opportunities. The Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project complements our efforts and we commend the Trust for Public Land and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for their foresight and diligence in protecting special places in northwest Montana.

The timing of this project is critical as Green Diamond is the third landowner of this project area in the last 18 months, creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty for the timber industry and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwest Montana. This is a rare opportunity to keep a large tract of private forest intact as working timberland for the timber industry and protect public access for hunting, fishing, and recreating in this popular area in perpetuity. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits, the project protects valuable fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and landscape connectivity, and enhances the benefits of the Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project to take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity to permanently protect 48,000 acres of forested land in northwest Montana.

Sincerely,

Laura Katzman  
Land Protection Specialist



# Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2022 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y) would like to offer our support for Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project, led by the Trust for Public Land. Y2Y works to connect and protect habitat from Yellowstone to the Yukon in one of the last remaining intact mountain ecosystems in the world so people and nature can thrive. The USFS's Forest Legacy Program has provided tremendous benefits to people and wildlife in this region. We hope to see this continue through support for the 48,000 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. The project would conserve important acres of land from development and subdivision in one of Y2Y's priority conservation areas, the Cabinet-Purcell Mountain Corridor—a key transboundary area linking populations of wildlife in Canada with those in Idaho and Montana. Conservation of these privately managed forestlands in Flathead and Sanders counties will conserve the landscape's natural scenic values, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat and provide public access for hunting, fishing, and recreational activities.

Y2Y has long worked to support the recovery of grizzly bears in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem. This project will help support grizzly bears and other wildlife by preventing future development on lands providing important habitat and connectivity to neighboring regions.

We support the efforts of the landowners working in partnership with the State and non-profit partners to secure Forest Legacy Program funds to complete this project. Rapidly expanding development in the region threatens wildlife, rural livelihoods, and other characteristics of northwest Montana valued by so many. These projects would have a hand in conserving a truly unique and valuable place.

Sincerely,

Jessie Grossman  
US Program Manager  
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative



June 6, 2022

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6th Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

The Center for Large Landscape Conservation (CLLC) strongly supports the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead and Sanders Counties to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We applaud the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) for applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana. As a result of the willingness of Green Diamond to work with TPL and FWP, this is a very important opportunity to protect a large portion of their land base in northwestern Montana.

CLLC is an organization based in Bozeman, Montana that is dedicated to ensuring that fish and wildlife are able to move in the face of increasingly fragmented habitats, so that future generations of Montanans and others are able to enjoy these sustainable resources indefinitely. We are enthusiastically supportive of this project for its ability to protect important wildlife habitat and wildlife movement, particularly for grizzly bears in the region. Grizzly bears use the project area to forage, reproduce, and move between the Northern

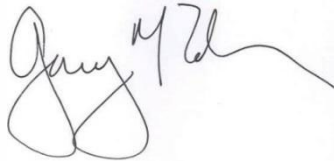
Continental Divide and Cabinet-Yaak recovery zones. Additionally, the conservation easement will permanently protect 76.5 miles of streams, 233 acres of riparian habitat, and 542 acres of wetlands on the property.

There has recently been a tremendous amount of uncertainty for those concerned about wildlife habitat conservation, the Montana timber industry, and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwestern Montana, as this project area has now had three landowners in the last 18 months. The certainty offered with this project is essential. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills. The public will be able to have access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities.

We support FLP-funded projects like this one, as they have enhanced the natural resources, quality of life, and the economy in Montana. Thank you for your efforts on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project.

Please do not hesitate to let us know if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Tabor", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Gary Tabor, Executive Director  
Center for Large Landscape Conservation



Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Mgr.  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6th Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: FLP fiscal year 2023 Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

**Sanders County  
Extension Office**

Dear Mr. Northrup,

Sanders County MSU Extension supports the USFS's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and its use in Flathead and Sanders Counties to conserve privately-managed forestland and to increase access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities, specifically on the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We understand The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are applying for FLP dollars to conserve approximately 48,000 acres of Green Diamond land in northwestern Montana.

Green Diamond's private timber ownership in Flathead and Sanders Counties provide economic, community-oriented, and ecological benefits. Green Diamond is the third landowner of this project area in the last 18 months, creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty to the Montana timber industry and the public's historical access to a large portion of land in northwestern Montana. As a result of the willingness of Green Diamond to work with TPL and FWP, we have one shot to protect a large portion of their land base in northwestern Montana. Placing these lands under a conservation easement will ensure these lands remain working timberlands that provide jobs in the woods and fiber for local mills. Our constituents will be able to access 48,000 acres of public open space for non-commercial, non-motorized recreation, including hunting, fishing, berry picking, biking, and firewood collecting. In addition to the economic and recreational benefits, these forestlands protect the scenic landscape for its natural scenic values and fish and wildlife habitat between the Cube-Iron and Sundance Ridge Roadless Area to the McGregor-Thompson Roadless Area.



*Montana State University,  
U.S. Department of  
Agriculture and Montana  
Counties Cooperating.  
MSU Extension is an equal  
opportunity/affirmative  
action provider of  
educational outreach.*

2504 Tradewinds Way, Suite 1B  
Thompson Falls, MT 59873  
[www.montana.edu/sanders](http://www.montana.edu/sanders)

Tel (406) 827-6934  
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E-mail [sanders@montana.edu](mailto:sanders@montana.edu)

**Mountains & Minds**



MSU Extension and Sanders County 4-H personally use this area for educational purposes to promote outdoor physical activity fitness, outdoor education in subject matter areas such as plant/weed ID and foraging, as well as hiking, camping, backpacking, wilderness survival, fishing and hunting with 4-H youth members.

FLP-funded projects have enhanced the quality of life and the economy in northwestern Montana. Thank you for your efforts on this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect the 48,000 acres within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. If you need any assistance, please contact us at your convenience.

**Sanders County  
Extension Office**

Sincerely,

*Juli Thurston*

Juli Thurston, Extension Agent  
MSU Sanders County Extension



*Montana State University,  
U.S. Department of  
Agriculture and Montana  
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**Mountains & Minds**

**Mountains & Minds**



August 15, 2022

Scott Bosse  
Northern Rockies Director  
American Rivers  
321 East Main, Suite 408  
Bozeman, MT 59715

Mr. Rick Northrup  
Wildlife Habitat Bureau Chief, FLP Program Manager  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project

Dear Mr. Northrup,

On behalf of American Rivers, I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for the 48,000-acre Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project in Flathead and Sanders counties in northwestern Montana. We are longtime advocates of the Forest Legacy Program, and we believe this project is an ideal fit for it. We have partnered with the Trust for Public Land on similar conservation easement projects in northwestern Montana over the past decade, including the Montana Great Outdoors Project.

Founded in 1973, American Rivers is the leading conservation organization working to protect our nation's rivers and streams. We have more than 300,000 members, supporters, and volunteers in all 50 states, including more than 6,000 in Montana. Many of our members, supporters and Montana-based staff recreate in the Thompson River drainage and value it for its crystal clear streams and native coldwater fisheries. We are particularly excited that this conservation easement project will help ensure long-term protection for several important waterways and the native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout that reside in them.

Residents of northwest Montana clearly cherish the timberlands within the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project for their valuable fish and wildlife habitat and the boundless recreational opportunities they provide, including fishing, hunting, and paddling. They also keenly understand the benefits of this project to our state's \$7.1 billion outdoor recreation economy and the 71,000 jobs it provides, especially in rural areas.

Thank you for considering our letter of support for the Upper Thompson Conservation Easement Project. We stand ready to assist you with this project should you need our help in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Scott Bosse  
Northern Rockies Director