

CINNABAR FOUNDATION

Haskill Basin Conservation Easement Completed

Almost five square miles of beautiful forestland will be conserved forever in the backyard of Whitefish due to a conservation easement transaction brokered by The Trust for Public Land. The 3,020 acres owned by F. H Stoltze Land & Lumber, located in the Haskill Creek watershed east of Whitefish, will permanently protect local timber jobs and important fish and wildlife habitat, while also providing the City of Whitefish with the majority of their water supply and public access to close-to-home outdoor recreation.

“We are sincerely grateful for the Cinnabar Foundation’s grant support that enabled The Trust for public Land to achieve this result.”

— Molly Pickall,
Philanthropy Director
The Trust for Public Land

The \$16.7 million conservation easement was conveyed by The Trust for Public Land to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the City of Whitefish. While the land will continue to be owned and managed by Stoltze, it will never be converted to other commercial or residential uses in the future.

“This is truly a remarkable achievement and a win-win for everyone,” said Dick Dolan of The Trust for Public Land. “It is a perfect fit for our ‘Land for People’ mission, and we are proud to secure generous support for the project from the Cinnabar Foundation, Wilberforce Foundation, and several local individuals.”

F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company has long wanted to formalize an agreement with the City of Whitefish to protect the municipal watershed, intakes, and water system located on their private forest lands. “After nearly five years of hard work and perseverance, I am thrilled to see this monumental project close,” said John Muhlfeld, Whitefish City Mayor. “I owe a debt of gratitude to the food folks in Whitefish who realized the historic significance and importance of this project by overwhelmingly voting to approve \$7.7 million in local funding. It is a legacy project that will give back to the Whitefish community for generations to come.”

In addition to the local funds provided by the City of Whitefish to purchase the easement, supplemental funding came from a variety of sources, including two federal programs — the U.S. Forest Service’s Forest Legacy Program and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Program. F. H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company also generously sold the conservation easement at a significant discount below the appraised value.

The Forest Legacy Program provides matching grants to states to protect important and threatened forests. It is funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which is financed by federal revenues from energy companies drilling for oil and gas in public waters offshore. The Fish and Wildlife Service Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Program helps to reduce potential for conflicts between species conservation and other land uses and is also funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Montana's Congressional delegation has consistently and unanimously provided essential support for federal funding for this project and other important conservation work in the Whitefish area. Senators Jon Tester and Steve Daines, both members of the subcommittee overseeing natural resource appropriations, successfully advocated in Congress and with the Administration to maximize LWCF funds for the easement.

Information for this project brief was excerpted from a press release by The Trust for Public Land, City of Whitefish, Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks, and F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber.

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