



Main Office

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30 August 2010

Mack Long, Regional Supervisor
FWP R-2
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Re: Marshall Creek WMA

Dear Mack:

Montana Trout Unlimited enthusiastically supports FWP's proposal to purchase more than 24,000 acres of private land in the West Fork Clear River drainage from the Nature Conservancy for use as a state wildlife management area. Montana TU represents 3,400 conservation-minded anglers, including hundreds, if not thousands, who use the Clearwater-Blackfoot watershed annually.

The proposed acquisition, also referred to as the "Marshall Block," is an extraordinarily valuable piece of fish and wildlife habitat. It includes 25-miles of critical native fish bearing streams, as well nearly 20 miles of important riparian corridor. The value of the property for conservation of native bull trout and cutthroat trout, especially migratory forms, cannot be understated. Adfluvial forms of both fish are becoming increasingly rare across their historical ranges. This purchase represents a rare and incalculably important opportunity to conserve this resource. We also are enthused by this proposal because of its value to some 37 species identified by the State as Species of Special Concern, including the increasingly more uncommon western pearlshell mussel, and dwindling amphibians such as northern leopard frogs and western toads.

The value this tract holds for important terrestrial species, including grizzly bears, Canada lynx, fisher, wolverines, as well as a healthy herd of elk and mule and white-tail deer, only amplifies what a great opportunity this purchase is for the state. It's location between the Mission and Swan Ranges also exemplifies its value as secure corridor habitat. Finally, the variety of recreational opportunities available there can now be secured in perpetuity, a situation that might not occur should the land be conveyed to a private interest.

We endorse FWP's interim proposal for management of the property, and urge FWP, should it secure the tract, to evaluate closely the impacts of the road system on watershed

function, water quality and fish movement. The existing 290-mile road system is fairly extensive, and FWP should take the opportunity to decommission roads to increase wildlife security and watershed values.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to comment on this superb acquisition opportunity, and look forward to it becoming part of Montana's system of wildlife management areas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Farling". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "B".

Bruce Farling
Executive Director

cc. Big Blackfoot Chapter TU
West Slope Chapter TU
FWP commission
FWP director's office