

**BLACKFOOT
CHALLENGE**

2014

Annual Report

Message from the **Chairman**

While we were lucky to have better snow pack than many other areas, spring was still unusually dry. Most of us are already bracing for the impact of continued dry weather to irrigation, fishing and fire.

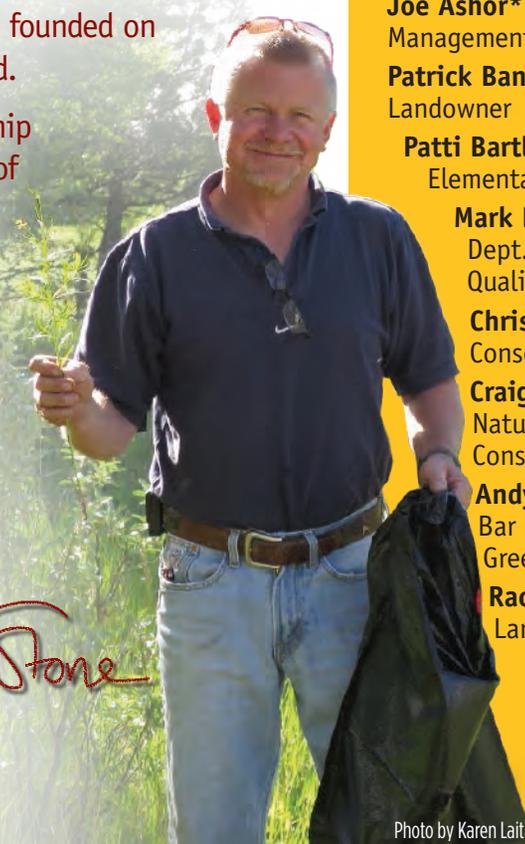
Our community-based approach to drought relies on “shared sacrifice,” or perhaps better termed “shared giving.” Drought and fire affect us all, and these challenges present us with an opportunity to be even better partners – in the Blackfoot, in Montana, and across the nation.

We heard loud and clear during the community conversations in 2013 that economics is on the mind of many in the watershed; so last year we looked further into the barriers and opportunities related to economics in the Blackfoot. Thank you for taking the time to participate in those discussions and sharing your hopes for the future. We might not know yet where these conversations will take us, but we do know that continuing to rely on a community-based approach founded on trust, inclusivity and partnerships is our path ahead.

When I look back at the private and public leadership that emerged in the 1970s, and the ensuing years of collaboration and coordination that have come to define this incredible place, I see an approach that is standing the test of time; an approach that’s built on a shared commitment to civil dialogue, proper pacing, and working together. As we continue to build trust and credibility, we build momentum. This approach works, and we are more determined than ever to keep at it. Thank you for joining us and for committing to be a part of the solution.

Jim Stone

Rolling Stone Ranch, Ovando
Blackfoot Challenge Board Chair



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FORESTRY

Restoring forest health, creating defensible space, and increasing community safety.

The 2014 fire season was relatively quiet in fire-prone western Montana, but chances are the smoky skies will be back in 2015. Landowners can work to “live with fire” by reducing hazardous fuels on their property. These actions make properties more defensible in case of fire, help restore the health and structure of fire-prone forests, and improve the safety of firefighters and the community as a whole. The Blackfoot Challenge Forestry Committee is dedicated to helping landowners in the Blackfoot watershed achieve these goals. We strive to work with landowners in order to implement projects that will mesh program objectives with those of the landowner. Most projects are eligible for cost-share grant assistance. Our Forestry Program staff, Signe



Photo by Jack Cohen

Leirfallom and Matt Arno, also work with landowners in the Clearwater Valley in a similar capacity through a partnership with the Clearwater Resource Council. If you have been thinking about doing some work in your forest, call us for free technical assistance and to apply for cost-share funding.

2014 BY THE NUMBERS

- Provided technical forestry assistance to approximately 40 landowners in the Blackfoot and Clearwater Valleys.
- Funded hazardous fuels reduction on roughly 210 acres in the Blackfoot through cost-share grant assistance.
- Supported hazardous fuels reduction on roughly 160 acres in the Clearwater.
- Fuels reduction activities helped support local jobs and provided wood products to the local sawmill and chip plant.



Photo by www.montanahelicopter.com



WATER *Voluntary water conservation grounded in shared sacrifice and shared commitment.*

Water connects all stakeholders in the Blackfoot and beyond – making collaboration a priority in caring for this shared and limited resource. In 2014, the Blackfoot Challenge built on the strength of existing partnerships within the watershed and nurtured new relationships across a larger landscape. Within the watershed, the Challenge continued collaborating with the Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, U.S. Forest Service and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to complete stream restoration projects on Ashby Creek, Cottonwood Creek and the South Fork of Poorman Creek.

While a good snowpack staved off the need for drought response measures in 2014, the Challenge staff continued to coordinate with irrigators to improve their water conservation activities and drought preparedness. With leadership from the Blackfoot Drought Committee, the Challenge staff created an angling brochure sharing voluntary fishing techniques that can reduce stress to fish during drought. Additional water-related public education and outreach remained a priority as the Challenge hosted public meetings on the final series of TMDLs for water quality issues and on the proposed



Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes water rights compact. The Challenge broke new ground with the irrigation scheduling program in 2014, piloting work with flood irrigators to improve resource stewardship, water application and pasture management. Sharing lessons learned beyond the watershed, the water program coordinated with neighbors in the Upper Clark Fork Basin on common water stewardship goals and assisted in completing the new Montana state water plan.

2014 BY THE NUMBERS

- Provided monthly water supply reports and drought status updates to Blackfoot irrigators and outfitters.
- Updated nearly 100 irrigators and partners weekly with irrigation scheduling reports to help maximize crop production while conserving water resources.
- Advised directly on 1,500 acres for irrigation scheduling, bringing the five-year program total to more than 6,000 acres.
- Completed the Blackfoot Watershed Restoration Plan, building on the Blackfoot Subbasin Plan and Blackfoot TMDLs to guide future watershed stewardship.
- Implemented best management practices on 62.5 miles of roads to reduce sedimentation.

WILDLIFE

Reducing human-wildlife conflicts through proactive and preventative strategies.

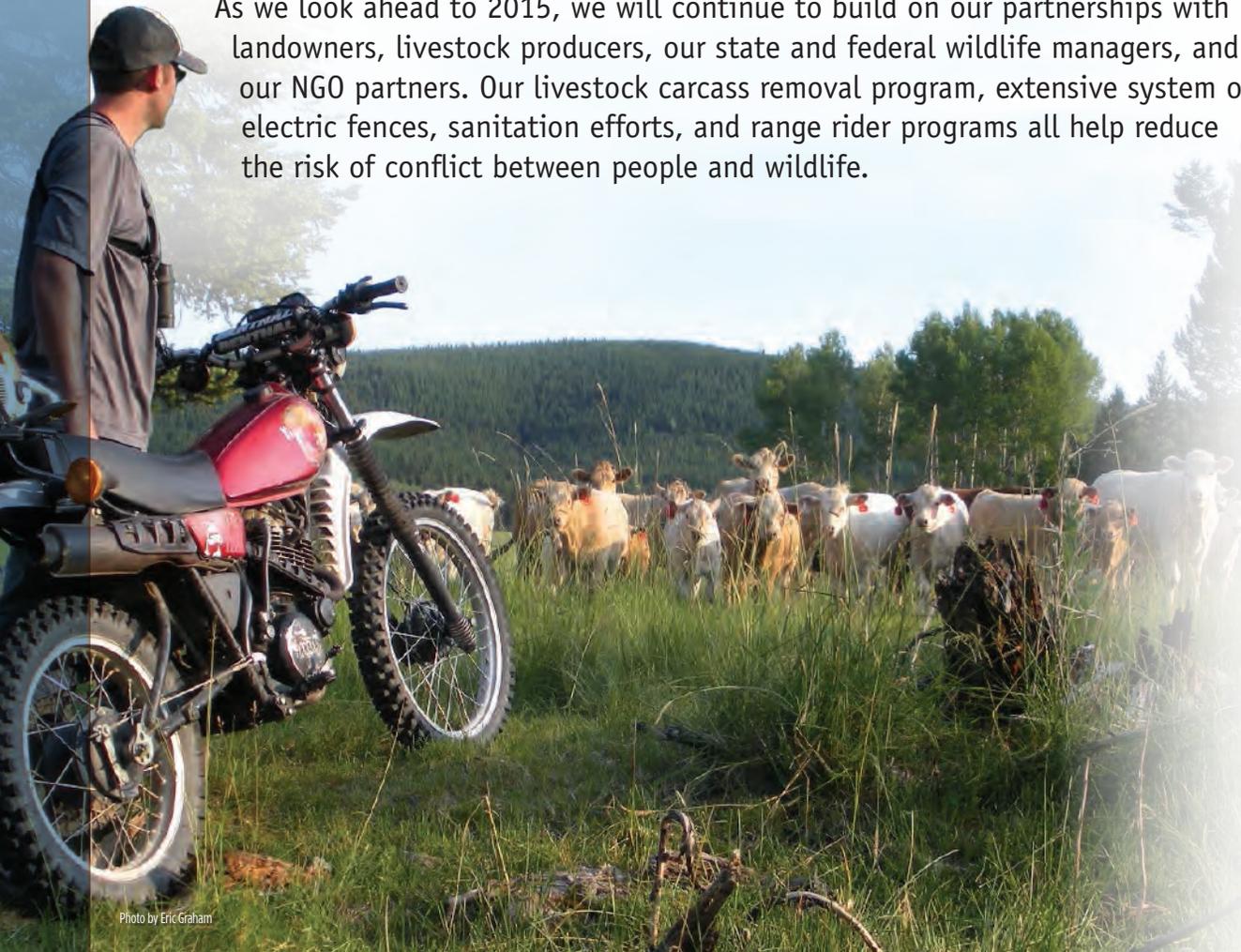
Throughout 2014 the Wildlife Committee continued to work to reduce grizzly bear-human conflicts and to proactively address wolf-livestock conflicts. From 2012 to 2013 we observed a slight increase in grizzly bear crop foraging, yet in 2014 overall incidents among grizzlies and people remained low. One lamb was killed east of Lincoln and fourteen chickens north of Seeley Lake were killed by a grizzly. One beehive was hit by a grizzly due to a malfunctioning electric fence energizer. In the Woodworth area, there was one confirmed livestock lost to a grizzly and one calf lost to wolves with three wolves subsequently removed for management purposes.

As we look ahead to 2015, we will continue to build on our partnerships with landowners, livestock producers, our state and federal wildlife managers, and our NGO partners. Our livestock carcass removal program, extensive system of electric fences, sanitation efforts, and range rider programs all help reduce the risk of conflict between people and wildlife.



2014 BY THE NUMBERS

- Over 5,600 livestock carcasses removed in the Blackfoot watershed and Granite County since 2003.
- 18 electric fences on calving areas protecting livestock installed since 2001.
- 4 wolf packs and 12 livestock herds intensively monitored by Range Riders across 40,000 acres.
- Range riders and cooperating producers logged over 2,500 hours of livestock monitoring.
- Five new livestock carcass management programs modeled after the Blackfoot Valley underway in Montana (2), Washington (2), and Alberta (1).



WEEDS

Integrated, locally-led approaches to noxious weed management across fence lines.

During the 2014 field season, the Challenge's Weed Committee once again worked with a number of private and public partners to implement weed management activities across a diversity of ownerships. Herbicide applications were implemented along the Blackfoot River, within the Blackfoot Clearwater Game Range, the Nevada Creek Game Range, Bureau of Land Management lands in the Marcum and Chamberlain areas, and the Patterson Prairie and Arrastra Creek areas, including private, state and federal acreages.

2014 BY THE NUMBERS

Blackfoot River Noxious Weed Project:

- 357 covered acres, for a total of 30.5 treated acres.
- 23 cooperative partners including 16 private landowners.
- Two weed pulls held at the Russell Gates Fishing Access Site.



Chamberlain, Marcum, Arrastra and Patterson Prairie areas:

- 400 acres of private ground treated, both aerial and ground applied.
- 160 acres of public lands aerial sprayed.
- 231 acres of public lands treated with ground



BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA

*5,600 acres managed cooperatively
by community council for multiple uses.*

The Blackfoot Community Conservation Area “Core” sits just northeast of Ovando on 5,600 acres of land previously owned by Plum Creek Timber Company. These lands have been used for a variety of purposes for generations, including forest harvesting, livestock grazing, and recreation. They also encompass an important transition zone between forested uplands and productive valley bottoms, providing critical wildlife habitat. Through collaboration and consensus, the 15-member BCCA Council balances these economic, recreational and resource uses. As a “multiple-use demonstration area”, the BCCA continually pilots innovate access, restoration and stewardship practices.

2014 BY THE NUMBERS

- Initiated forest restoration on 350 high priority acres.
- Over 100 acres of cross-boundary weed management using herbicide and biological controls.
- Third year of Conservation Stewardship Program completed.
- Maintained public access for a diversity of year-round recreation opportunities.
- Hosted multiple educational tours for school groups and other interested parties.



EDUCATION

Fostering resource stewardship in youth through place-based education.

The Blackfoot Challenge continues to coordinate the Education and Teachers Steering Committees to deliver quality, place-based resource and stewardship education to the watershed's residents. At our 10th Annual Trumpeter Swan Release in September, we worked with watershed partners to deliver curriculum on aquatic invasive species and trumpeter swan biology. Also in September, we partnered with the Lincoln Sculpture Park to bring students from the watershed and beyond to learn from internationally-renowned artists and create site-specific sculptures of their own. We enjoy, and rely on, working with a variety of private and public partners to deliver these education programs in the Blackfoot.



Photo by Ami Fitzgerald

2014 BY THE NUMBERS

- 210 students and adults attended the 10th Annual Trumpeter Swan Release Day in Ovando on September 12th.
- Over 300 students attended Youth Field Day at Blackfoot Pathways: Sculpture in the Wild in Lincoln in September.
- Partnered with Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the USFS Lincoln Ranger District to photo-document reclamation of the Upper Blackfoot Mining Complex at the headwaters of the Blackfoot River, and conduct public tours of the Mike Horse Dam and Repository.
- Co-hosted five family-oriented natural and cultural history presentations with Clearwater Resource Council.
- Coordinated two Teachers Steering Committee meetings with educators representing eight schools around the watershed.



Photo by Sara Schmidt

OUTREACH *Sharing the community-based and partnership-centered approach with others.*

In 2014, we were thankful to share our story with diverse audiences from around Montana and around the globe. Having realized success through community-based conservation here at home, we are committed to working with others to help advance this approach in other areas. Through local leadership, diverse partnerships, and collaboration, we can all be better stewards of the landscapes we share.

Under the umbrella of the Outreach Committee, the Economics Workgroup partnered with Headwaters Economics to coordinate a series of focus groups in 2014 to better understand the barriers and opportunities facing economic development in the Blackfoot watershed. Participants identified an array of opportunities, including branding and marketing, recreation, entrepreneurial assistance, health care, and agriculture, to name a few. They also recommended that the Challenge stick to its core strengths—gathering information, convening discussions, and securing resources—as it navigates the role it will play in economic development.

2014 BY THE NUMBERS

- 3,700 individuals reached through workshops, tours and presentations.
- Economic Assessment conducted and “Economic Opportunities in the Blackfoot Watershed” report produced.
- 450 supporters celebrating 20 Years of Partnerships on October 4th at Paws Up Resort.
- \$63,000 raised in one night to support the next 20 years of community-based outcomes.



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIPS!

It is amazing what a valley of passionate and dedicated people can do.

Thanks to our partners, members and friends, we can reflect on 20 years of outcomes for the resources and people of the Blackfoot watershed.

Thank you for joining us last October to celebrate!
Here's to the next 20 years!

“This community has respect for each other, respect for the land and respect for the moment because you all take the moment and figure out what you can get done now, instead of complaining about what you can never get done ... The problem with cynicism is it tells you to not to show up. Who wins are the people who show up, and you all have been showing up for 20 years.”



—Jamie Williams
President of The Wilderness Society (Former Montana State Director of The Nature Conservancy)



Event Photos by Andi Bourne



Photo by Tara Comfort, Missoula Conservation District

FINANCIALS

The Board of Directors approves an annual operating budget funded from secured private donations, public awards and agreements, and allocations from investments. Oversight is provided by the Finance and Endowment Committees.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (Dec 31, 2014)

NET ASSETS

UNRESTRICTED	\$ 103,945
TEMPORARY RESTRICTED	\$ 416,178
PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	
Blackfoot Stewardship Endowment Fund	\$ 662,676
BCCA Endowment Fund	\$ 423,246

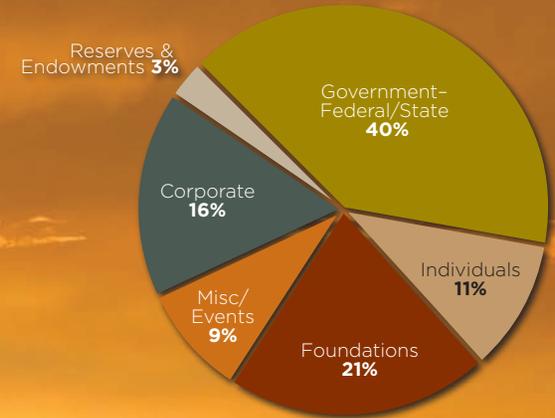
BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA (LAND)	\$ 1,891,284
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TOTAL ASSETS **\$ 3,595,000**

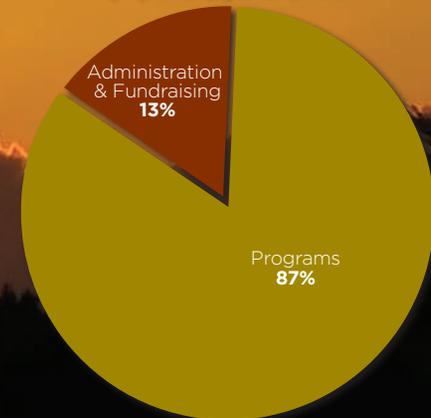
TOTAL LIABILITIES **(\$ 21,466)**

TOTAL NET ASSETS **\$ 3,573,534**

SOURCE OF FUNDS \$1,208,582.68



USE OF FUNDS \$1,065,963.10



“It’s hard to let go of the ‘from,’ if you don’t know where the ‘to’ is. All of our jobs is to paint a different picture of the ‘to’ than what people are used to looking for in the rearview mirror. That’s what you’re all doing here. What you have done is a model for the world; not just for this region, the western United States or the whole United States.”

—Sally Jewell

Secretary of the Interior on tour in the
Blackfoot Watershed, March 15, 2014



DONORS

We extend enormous gratitude to our many 2014 donors! The majority of our projects are funded with public, private and foundation grants, while gifts from private individuals are critical to match and coordinate these project funds. Your support in 2014 made our work possible.

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