

The logo for the Blackfoot Challenge, featuring the words "BLACKFOOT" and "CHALLENGE" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is set against a blue, stylized banner that has a jagged, flame-like edge on the right side. The banner is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the page.

BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE

The text "2015 Annual Report" is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font with a thin black outline. It is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page, overlaid on a snowy mountain slope. The background of the entire page is a photograph of a winter mountain landscape at sunset or sunrise, with snow-covered evergreen trees in the foreground and a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow over the scene.

2015 Annual Report

Message from the Chairman

For over 20 years now the Blackfoot Challenge has worked through partnership and consensus to respond to change. We rely on the strength of our communities to weather changes in water availability, wildlife conflict, wildfire and landownership, and realize that each one presents us with an opportunity to be better partners.

We think of our work as a progression - from conservation, through restoration, to stewardship. We work together across ownerships and livelihoods to find solutions to the common problems we face. And the solutions are working. We will continue to pick up carcasses from ranches because it has proven to be a successful strategy for reducing conflicts with grizzly bears and wolves. We will also continue to coordinate a voluntary approach to “shared giving” during drought because of the benefits for fish, irrigators and anglers. The same goes for weeds, forestry and trumpeter swans, as well as new opportunities related to economics, recreation and soil health.

This kind of stewardship needs sustaining. We need to support the programs that support us. With your participation, your ideas, and your support, the Challenge will continue finding solutions that protect our livelihoods, our families, and our future.

Thank you all for another great year.



Jim Stone

Rolling Stone Ranch, Ovando
Blackfoot Challenge Board Chair



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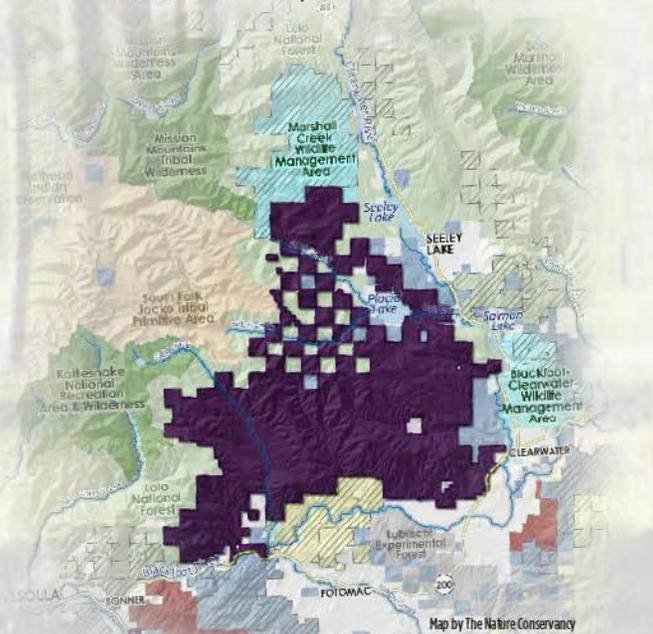
* Board Partner

CONSERVATION

CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

Coordinating land conservation and stewardship to keep working landscapes intact

- Private landowners, public agencies and land trusts continued coordinating watershed conservation priorities at annual meeting in February
- Clearwater-Blackfoot Project initiated when The Nature Conservancy purchased 117,152 acres of former Plum Creek Timber Company lands
- Clearwater-Blackfoot Project Work Group formed with public and private partners to facilitate building a shared vision for conservation and community values
- Co-hosted the “Revive & Thrive” restoration work party and celebration for over 100 people at Primm’s Meadow in September



“These are places where wildlife and freshwater resources are sustained and improving, people can continue to recreate and work on the land, and future generations will be able to experience a Montana recognizable to past generations. Finding long-term conservation ownership helps realize this vision.”

—Chris Bryant, TNC Land Protection Specialist and Blackfoot Challenge Board Member

RESTORATION

FORESTRY

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

- Provided forest health and fuel reduction education to 50 landowners
- Coordinated 520 acres of hazardous fuel reduction around homes to improve community and firefighter safety
- Supported forest fuel reduction efforts in the Clearwater Valley through a partnership with Clearwater Resource Council
- Supported local forestry contracting jobs and provided wood products to the local sawmill and chip plant



Photo by Bronte Witzpenn

SWANS

Restoring trumpeter swans to their native habitat on Blackfoot wetlands since 2004.

- Returning trumpeter swans established 8 territories and 5 nests on valley wetlands in 2015
- At least 32 trumpeter swan cygnets hatched in the Blackfoot since 2011
- Over 220 students and adults participated in annual swan release
- More swans returning to Blackfoot and establishing territories each year, nearing the goal of 7 successful nests for two consecutive years



Photo by Jason Coughlin



Photo by Alan Davis

STEWARDSHIP

WILDLIFE

Reducing human-wildlife conflicts through proactive and preventative strategies.

- More than 250 carcasses removed from 35 Blackfoot ranches to reduce carnivore attraction
- Three full and part time range riders monitoring wolf, bear and livestock activity across 40,000 acres
- Monitored wolverine, lynx and fisher activity in the upper watershed for 3 months in winter
- *Living with Carnivores: Boneyards, Bears and Wolves* documentary co-produced
- Over \$10,000 raised for Carcass Pick-Up Program through online crowdfunding campaign



Photo by Zaren Pitts

WATER

Voluntary water conservation grounded in shared sacrifice and shared commitment.

- Irrigation scheduling science applied across 1,500 acres in support of water use efficiency
- More than 100 irrigators received monthly water supply and weekly irrigation reports
- 7 irrigation systems tested and provided with energy efficiency recommendations
- Nearly 100 irrigators involved in water conservation through 2015 drought response
- 67.5 miles of dirt roads improved in the upper watershed to reduce erosion

Photo by Kailie Bickford

STEWARDSHIP

BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA

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

- Thinned 300 acres of forest prioritized for restoration
- Treated 80 acres of weeds across boundaries using herbicide and biological controls
- Worked with adjacent ranchers to monitor rest-rotation cattle grazing on 5,600 acres
- Ovando elementary students collected baseline stream and forestry data
- Maintained year-round public access for multiple recreation opportunities

"It is amazing and inspirational to see how they are able to find common goals and interests between landowners in such a large area."

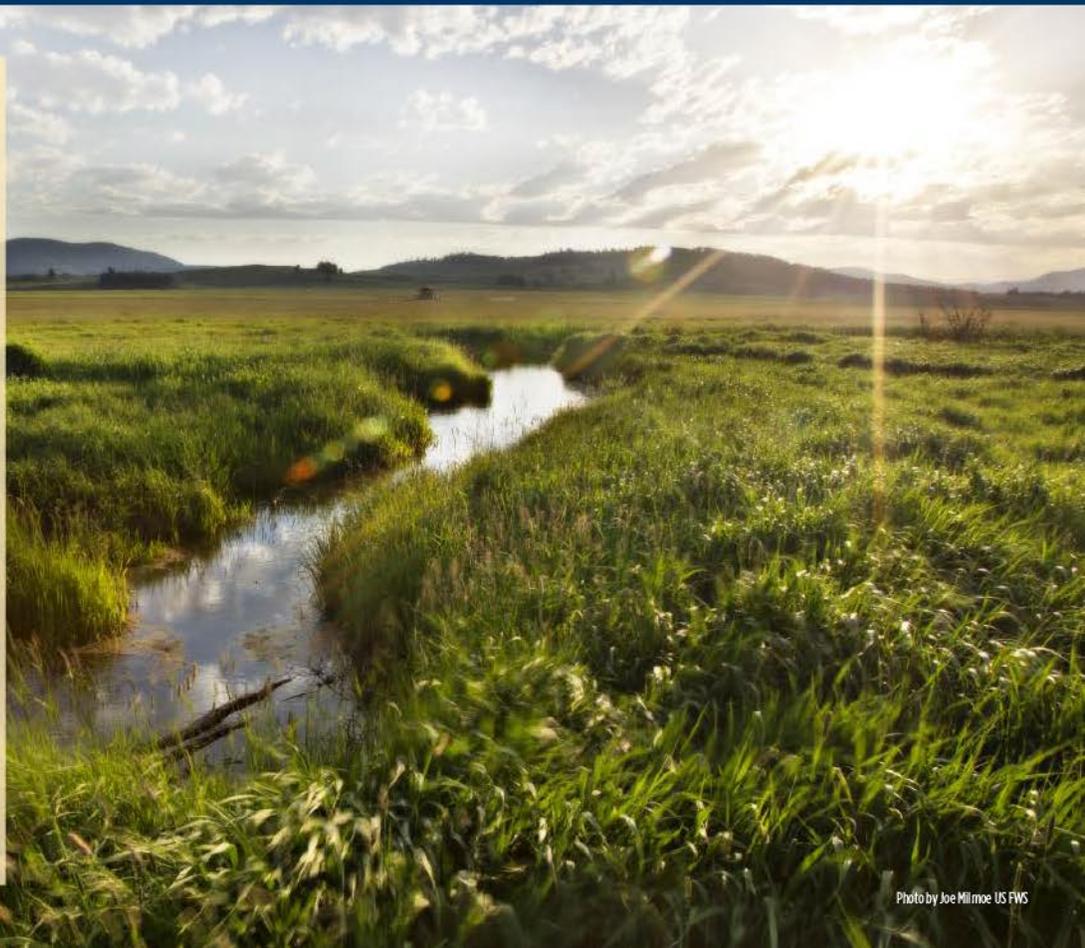
-Ryan, Helena High School senior on tour in the BCCA



WEEDS

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

- Worked with Lincoln area landowners to establish a new Vegetation Management Area, the 14th in the watershed
- Treated 250 miles and 781 acres across state and federal public lands
- Inventoried noxious weeds along 534 miles of roads in the Lincoln Ranger District
- Hired Trails and Weeds Liaison in cooperation with Seeley Lake Ranger District
- Educated youth on native plants, wildflowers and invasive aquatic species



EDUCATION

EDUCATION

Fostering resource stewardship in youth through place-based education.

- Over 160 students attended Youth Field Day at Lubrecht to learn about forestry
- Reached over 100 students monthly through rotating Naturalist Speaker Series
- Involved 80 K-12 students in collecting data on local streams and forests
- Coordinated installation of a grizzly bear educational exhibit at Lincoln Ranger District office
- Coordinated six public tours of Mike Horse Dam restoration underway at the headwaters of the Blackfoot River



OUTREACH

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

- Reached over 3,700 individuals through workshops, tours and presentations
- Co-hosted Southwest Crown Regional Trails Summit in May focused on recreation and community development
- Coordinated inaugural Resource Stewardship Fair in downtown Ovando in September
- Completed Communications Assessment and Membership Survey



DONORS

We extend enormous gratitude to our many 2015 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 2015 made our work possible.

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FINANCIALS

The Board of Directors approves a 12-month operating expense budget funded by fully secured private donations, public awards and agreements, and allocations from investments. Oversight and recommendations are provided by the Finance, Endowment and Personnel Committees.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (DEC 31, 2015)

NET ASSETS

UNRESTRICTED	\$ 106,376
TEMPORARY RESTRICTED	\$ 466,530
PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	
Blackfoot Stewardship Endowment Fund	\$ 632,665
BCCA Endowment Fund	\$ 403,243

BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA (LAND)	\$ 1,891,284
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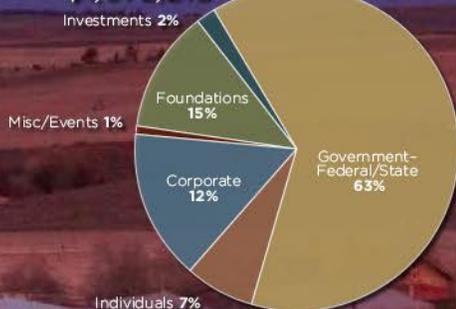
TOTAL ASSETS \$ 3,585,562

TOTAL LIABILITIES (\$ 54,616)

TOTAL NET ASSETS \$ 3,530,946

A heartfelt thanks to our many 2015 Annual Fund donors! For a complete list of supporters, please view our online annual report at www.blackfootchallenge.org.

SOURCE OF FUNDS \$1,672,216



USE OF FUNDS \$1,498,014

