

# factsheet

March 2009

## Hay Creek conservation easement protects trout habitat in Flathead County

The Bonneville Power Administration is currently working with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to fund the state's acquisition of a 53-acre parcel of land along Montana's Hay Creek in the North Fork of the Flathead River drainage for fish habitat mitigation (see map). Once the proposed land is acquired, which is expected in spring 2009, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks would convey a conservation easement on the property to BPA to ensure that the fisheries values and habitat are protected in perpetuity. This parcel is the highest-ranking conservation project being proposed jointly by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Located in Flathead County in northwestern Montana, this property is part of an important tributary to the North Fork of the Flathead River, a drainage supporting strong populations of bull trout in the Flathead River system north of Flathead Lake.

Hay Creek also provides important habitat for westslope cutthroat trout, a native resident fish and Species of Special Concern in Montana. The Hay Creek property includes extensive wetlands that are also important for grizzly bears and adjoins both U.S. Forest Service and state public lands.

The proposed acquisition would create a contiguous block of protected land between Glacier National Park on the east bank of the North Fork of the Flathead River west to the Flathead National Forest. The conservation project is within a mile of Glacier National Park and a private conservation easement on the North Fork of the Flathead.

The project also helps protect an important aquatic link from the North Fork of the Flathead River to the upper Hay Creek watershed on U.S. Forest Service lands. This project would also ensure development

and other activities would not degrade this sensitive and important tributary reach. In the past, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks fisheries staff have improved a section of stream on this property. Ownership by the state's fish and wildlife agency would help ensure this section remains intact in the future. Many new cabins have recently been built just north of this parcel. The parcel includes a third of a mile of nearly pristine meandering channel.

The property proposed for acquisition and easement would provide BPA with credits for partial mitigation of resident fish habitat losses due to the construction of Hungry Horse Dam, a federal dam located on the South Fork of the Flathead River, and inundation of the land behind the dam.

### Land to get management plan

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks would provide long-term stewardship for the land and develop a management plan to ensure the protection and enhancement of habitat resources on the property.

Pending BPA's approval of the management plan, any activities that could damage habitat (such as harvesting wood products, grazing livestock or constructing buildings) would be prohibited on this land.

### For more information

If you have any questions about this proposal or would like additional information, please contact Cecilia Brown, BPA, at (503) 230-3462, at (800) 282-3713 or at [ckbrown@bpa.gov](mailto:ckbrown@bpa.gov). You may also contact John Wachsmuth at Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks at (406) 751-4554 or at [jwachsmuth@mt.gov](mailto:jwachsmuth@mt.gov).



# Hay Creek Conservation Easement

Flathead County, Montana

