



State Highlights in Conservation: Montana

Profile of State Program(s)

Montana Agricultural Heritage Program: Created in 1999 by the Montana Legislature, the Agricultural Heritage Program acquired agricultural easements until its statutory sunset in 2003. Funding provided by legislative appropriations was used to purchase easements on properties consistent with conservation of rural landscapes: family farm, ranch and forestlands, and on properties that assisted in the conservation of native wild species and their habitat. A total of 16,540 acres were enrolled in the program at a cost of approximately \$1,630,000 in state funds, which were used to match over \$6 million in federal and private funds.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks: The Fish and Wildlife Division of Montana's Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department manages and acquires land for fish and wildlife habitat through a variety of programs. The programs administered by this division include:

- The Wildlife Habitat/Lease/Easement Program funded by hunting license fees
- Bighorn Sheep auction of one male mountain sheep license per year. Approximately \$2 million is raised from the auction.
- Wildlife Mitigation Program for Hungry Horse and Libby Dams, which replace habitat lost during the development of the dam and includes conservation easements and fee-title acquisition funding. Agreement with Bonneville Power Administration provides for funding to the state trust account for this program.
- Upland Game Bird Program allows landowners to enroll in a cost-share program to develop, enhance and conserve

upland game bird habitats. Up to 75 percent of landowner cost may be reimbursed.

- Habitat Montana, which may include the purchase of conservation easements to conserve habitat on private lands; and Wildlife Management Areas. Annually about \$4 million from several sources goes to fund projects. A portion is from hunting and fishing licenses.

Montana Upper Clark Fork Restoration Fund: The Upper Clark Fork River Basin (UCFRB) Restoration Fund was created in 2000 as a result of a partial settlement between mining and mineral processing operations and the State of Montana. Funds are used to restore habitat and natural resources disrupted by the release of hazardous substances into the Upper Clark Fork River Basin. The injured area is the portion of the watershed extending from the headwaters, surrounding the city of Butte, downstream to Milltown Reservoir and upstream to the city of Missoula. The Montana Department of Justice through the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) administers the Fund and an annual restoration grant program.

Substantial State Investment

Montana at present does not have a dedicated source of funding for land conservation. However, it directs internal agency funds to acquire lands as state parks and for wildlife habitat. The federal government is a major contributor to land conservation in Montana.

Montana is one of the few states where conservation easement reporting is mandatory according to legislation passed in 2007. Easements are reported to the county clerk and recorder who pass the information on to the Department of Revenue.

Public-Private Partnerships

Montana Legacy Project: This effort conserves over 310,000 acres of important forestland previously owned by Plum Creek Timber Company in western Montana. The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy reached an agreement to purchase the land from Plum Creek. The goals of this project are to:

- Keep sustainable harvesting operations in the forests, and timber in our mills
- Conserve traditional access for hunting, fishing, snowmobiling and hiking
- Preserve vital wildlife habitat and water resources

In 2008, Congress created a new public financing mechanism, Qualified Forest Conservation Bonds, to address the rapid conversion of traditional timberlands across the United States. This legislation enables states or non-profits to purchase important forestlands through the issuance of tax credit bonds or direct federal grants. As the first pilot project for this new program, the Montana Legacy Project is eligible to receive up to \$250 million in federal funding to help acquire lands that would be transferred into the ownership of the U.S. Forest Service. Approximately 90,000 acres of lands within the 320,000-acre Montana Legacy Project have been identified for this funding, largely checker-boarded lands inside existing Forest Service lands.

The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy purchased the land in three phases for a combined total price of \$510 million, making the final purchase in December 2010. Ultimately, there will be a mix of state, federal, and private ownership, including the U.S. Forest Service, Montana Department of Natural Resources, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and private timber investors.

The Project includes lands within the Swan Valley, the upper Clearwater Valley near Seeley Lake, the Lolo Valley, the Mill Creek area near Missoula, Fish Creek, Petty Creek, Rock Creek, between Libby and the Yaak Valley, and in the Garnet Mountains between Potomac and Interstate 90. The lands span five Western Montana counties: Missoula (223,400 acres), Mineral (42,800 acres), Lake (35,500 acres), Lincoln (13,800 acres) and Powell (3,900 acres).

Local Financing Enabled

Local governments in Montana are authorized to generate funds for land conservation through several funding mechanisms. Local governments in Montana have the enabling authority to use public funds to conserve lands through outright purchase and in conservation easements. To finance these transactions, local governments may issue bonds and levy property taxes. Since 1994, the majority of municipal and county conservation ballot measures that have passed have been bonds.

Local Programs Included

Local conservation programs include:

- Gallatin County, MT
- Lewis and Clark County, MT
- Missoula County, MT
- Missoula, MT
- Ravalli County, MT

Visit www.landvote.org for detailed information on these programs.

Federal Partnerships

Federal agencies and programs that have conserved land in Montana include:

- Bonneville Power Administration
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management – Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Section 6 Grant
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Forest Service – Forest Legacy Program (FLP)
- U.S. National Park Service
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)



The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

The Conservation Almanac

A comprehensive database of land conservation and public conservation funding in America, the Conservation Almanac provides a context for assessing impacts of conservation and the growing conservation finance movement. The Almanac offers information on public dollars spent and acres conserved, details on local, state, and federal conservation programs, and geospatial mapping of conserved land.

Almanac data collection efforts focus on land conserved using public dollars; contributions funded by private and non-governmental organizations are not tracked comprehensively. Federal data is complete from 1998-2017. State and local data is complete from 1998-2017. In the tables and charts below, acres are allocated to each program proportionate to the size of the contributions to each acquisition. For example, if an acquisition had two contributions, and each program contributed equal dollar amounts, each program receives 50% of the acres. If you have questions or want to provide updated information, please contact Jessica Welch at jessica.welch@tpl.org.

www.tpl.org

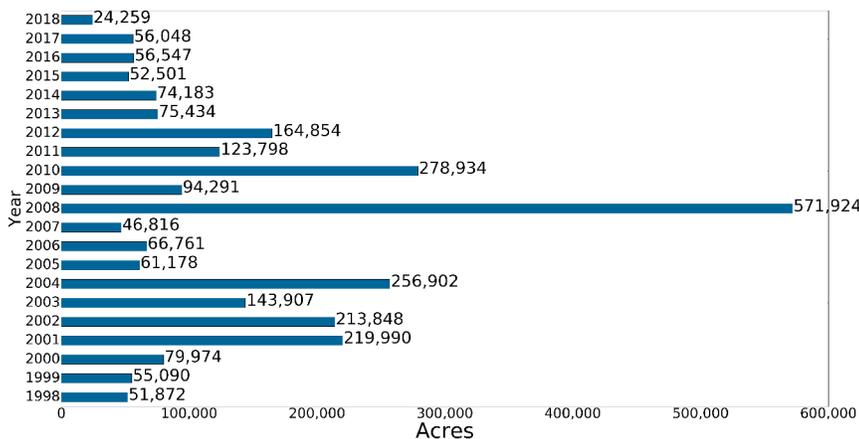
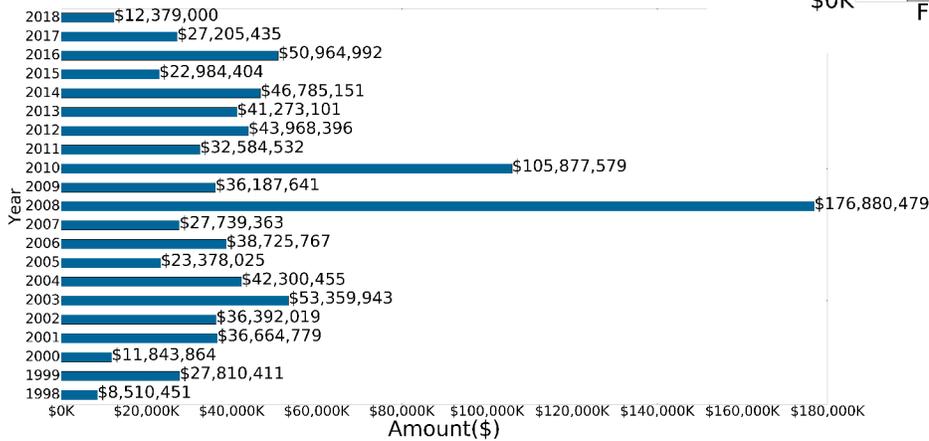
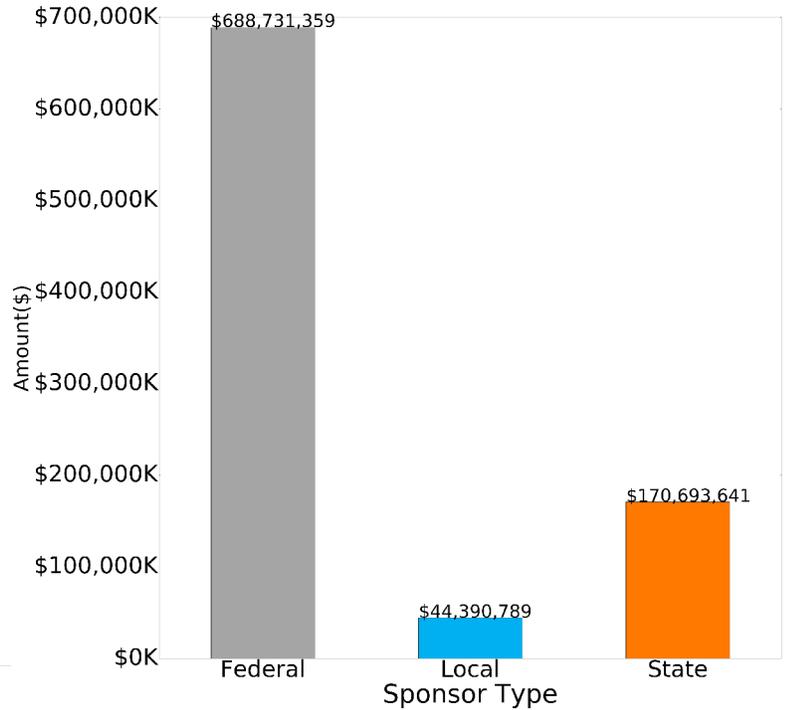
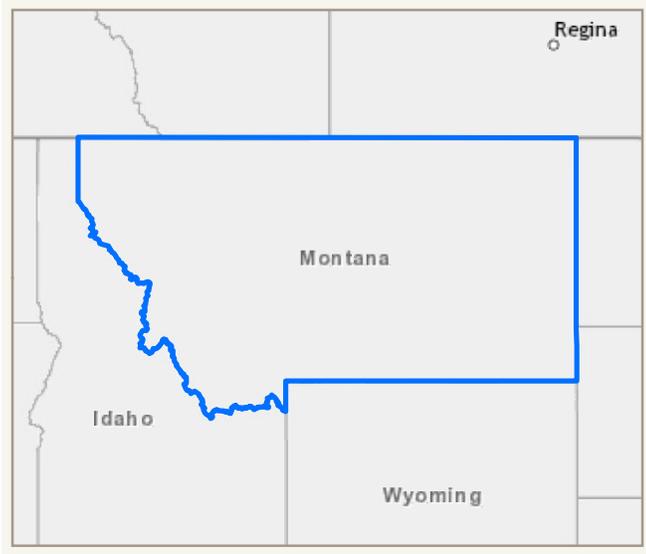
www.conservationalmanac.org

State Conservation Report Montana



CONSERVATION ALMANAC
Tracking Investments in Protected Lands

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The data in the Conservation Almanac track the impacts of public spending on land conservation. Created by The Trust for Public Land, the Conservation Almanac brings those data together along with state policy profiles, current conservation finance news, and an interactive map, to provide a powerful online tool.