



BRIEFING STATEMENT
BLM-MONTANA/DAKOTAS
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March 2012

SUBJECT: AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS / CROWN OF THE CONTINENT

I. INTRODUCTION:

In April 2010, President Obama announced the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative to "collect the best ideas on conservation... pursue good ideas that local communities embrace... be more responsible stewards of tax dollars to promote conservation." In February 2011, the President released the *America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations* report. The focus of the initiative is to promote and expand conservation of our public lands while providing important and diverse outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans. The BLM-Montana/Dakotas is contributing to AGO implementation within the AGO Priority Landscape, the Crown of the Continent (COC).

II. BACKGROUND:

The Crown of the Continent trans-boundary landscape is one of North America's most ecologically diverse and jurisdictionally fragmented ecosystems. Successful landscape scale management and conservation in the COC requires collaborative and coordinated efforts among government jurisdictions and local communities in the U.S. and Canada. The Southern COC is a mosaic of private and public lands spanning the Rocky Mountain Front and Blackfoot and Swan River watersheds. Approximately 40 percent of the area is protected public land, with the remainder in private working ranches and timberlands.

Significant efforts to protect and preserve lands within the Southern COC have been made by conservation groups and public agencies. These efforts include land acquisitions which protect ecologically valuable or sensitive areas; help to counteract habitat fragmentation; consolidate public land holdings; improve wildlife habitat connectivity; provide better outdoor recreation opportunities; and provide for sustainable economies.

To date and with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Lands, federal agencies (BLM, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and state agencies (Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks) have protected more than 310,000 acres. The BLM's contribution through land purchases utilizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and exchanges within the Blackfoot River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) has totaled 24,093 acres with a land value of more than \$36,600,000.

The FY2013 Interior budget request for land acquisition funding includes \$5,572,000 for additional BLM land acquisitions of 4,620 acres within the Blackfoot River SRMA. This request is part of the Department's Collaborative Land Acquisition Project process, a key component of the Crown AGO.

III. POSITION OF INTERESTED PARTIES

The BLM is one of several public agencies active in the COC. Other agencies include the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Conservation groups include The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Lands. Private parties and local communities are active partners through such groups as the Blackfoot Challenge, The Crown Managers Forum, and, Swan Ecosystem Center. All are committed to collaboration and community involvement. There has also been extensive congressional and media interest in COC issues.

CONTACT:

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