JAMISON HABITAT ACQUISITION PROJECT

Montana Board of Land Commissioners
June 2008

Acquiring Agency:	**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**
Land Interest:	**Fee Ownership**
Cost/Value:	This project will be acquired in two phases: **Phase 1 is funded primarily from FWP's Sheep License Auction Fund and Habitat Montana Program funds.** The parcel is being acquired in cooperation with the American Lands Conservancy who on behalf of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks initiated the transaction with the landowner, and will close in June 2008. **Acquisition cost for Phase 1 is approximately $770,000 for 220 acres.** Phase 2 (approximately 76 acres) is anticipated to be funded through a State Natural Resources Damage Program grant. The acquisition cost for Phase 2 is approximately $262,500. **Total cost for the property is approximately $1,0325,000 ($3,500/acre). Appraised value for the property is $1,065,600 ($3,600/acre).**
Property Size/Location:	**Approximately 296 acres in Deer Lodge County**, located approximately 3 miles northwest of the town of Anaconda.
Resource Values:	The land supports intermountain grassland and riparian habitats identified as priorities for the Habitat Montana Program. It is three-season habitat for bighorn sheep, mule deer, and elk. This fee-title purchase would enhance the effect of the nearby Blue-eyed Nellie, Lost Creek, and Garrity Mountain Wildlife Management Areas.
Process:	**FWP Draft Environmental Assessment** was released on April 25, 2008, and comments were accepted through May 27, 2008. **Decision Notice** was issued by FWP on June 2, 2008, **recommending acquisition of the 296 acre Jamison property for addition to the Blue-Eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area.** **FWP Commission Approval** is anticipated on June 12, 2008.

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 12, 2008 **Agenda Item**: Jamison Habitat Acquisition Project

Division: Wildlife **Action Needed:** Approval of Final Rule/Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

FWP proposes to purchase approximately 296 acres owned by Sherri L. Jamison, in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. The land supports intermountain grassland and riparian habitats identified by the Habitat Montana Program. The project is within the Deer Lodge Valley Tier One Focus Area described in the Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy. It is three-season habitat for bighorn sheep, mule deer, and elk. This fee-title purchase would enhance the effect of the nearby Blue-eyed Nellie, Lost Creek, and Garrity Mountain Wildlife Management Areas.

The American Land Conservancy (ALC) and Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT) brokered a proposed transaction in two phases. The Phase I purchase would occur in June 2008, transferring the first 220 acres to FWP for $770,000 (plus $3,000 in closing costs). The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, Safari Club, and Anaconda Wildlife EXPO pledged $16,000 toward the Phase I purchase price and closing costs. The remaining $757,000 would come from FWP's Sheep License Auction Fund and Habitat Montana Program.

The Phase II purchase would occur in January 2009, and would transfer the remaining 76 acres to FWP for $262,500. ALC on behalf of FWP has applied for a grant from the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) and proposes that NRDP fund the Phase II purchase.

Public Involvement and Process Results

Region 2 released a draft environmental assessment, management plan, and socioeconomic assessment for public review from April 25-May 27. FWP held a public meeting at the Lee Metcalf Center in Anaconda on May 12. Fifteen of 18 attendees testified, all in support. FWP will issue the decision notice and provide it to the Commission promptly after the comment period closes, and its findings will be summarized at the Commission meeting on June 12.

Alternatives and Analysis

FWP analyzed the No Action alternative in the Draft EA, which would allow the near-immediate subdivision and development of exceptional wildlife habitat. The proposed preliminary plat for subdivision has already been prepared and a road partially constructed for subdivision access.

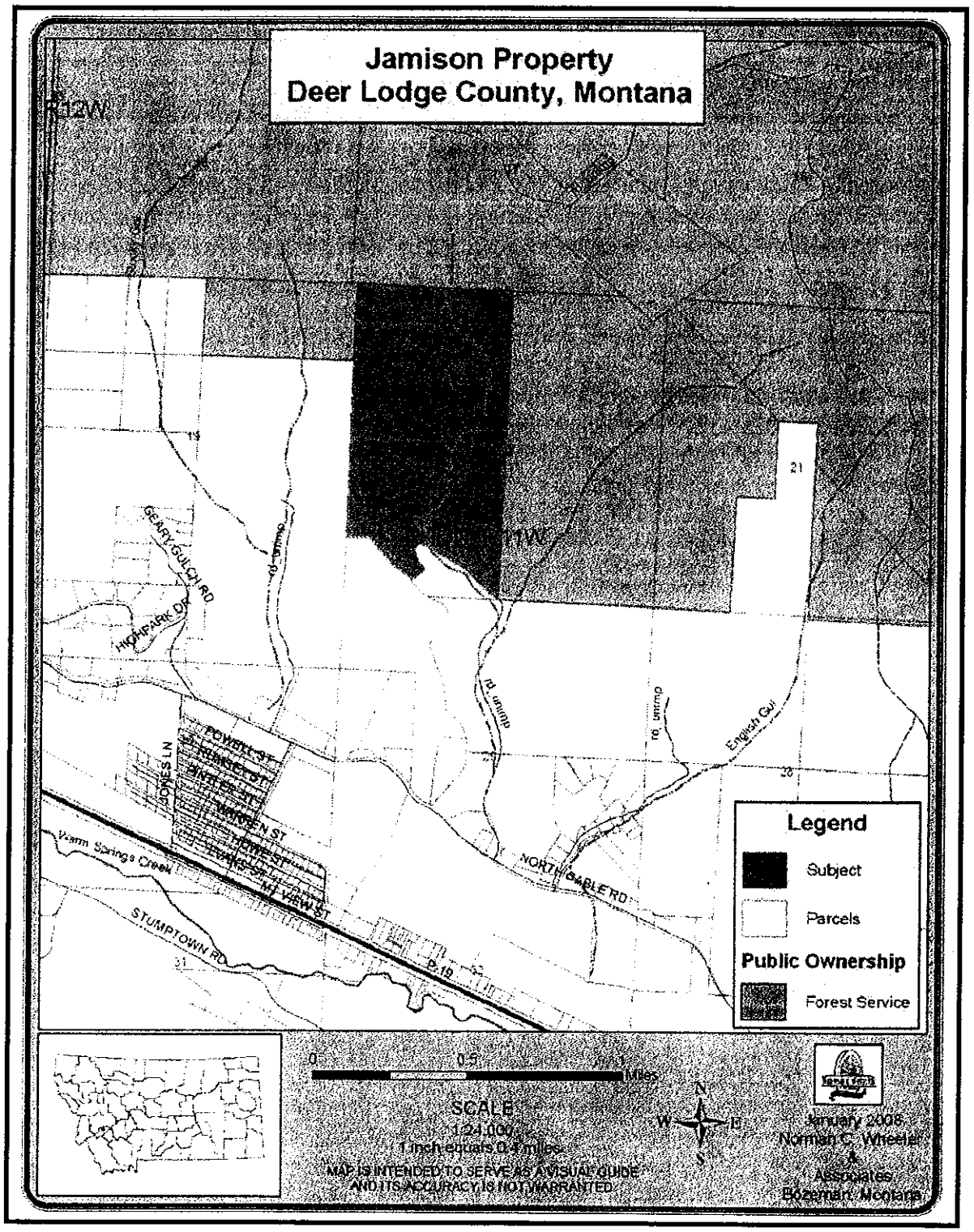
Agency Recommendation and Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission approve the proposed expenditure of approximately $757,000 toward the initial purchase of 220 acres, and the eventual addition of 76 acres to expand Blue-Eyed Nellie WMA. The public concurs with FWP's analysis that the property is exceptional wildlife habitat and provides key public access, both of which are at immediate risk from subdivision.

Proposed Motion

I move that the Commission approve FWP's two-phase purchase the Jamison property in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, and applaud the work and dedication of FWP's conservation partners involved in this project.

Figure 1. Location of the proposed land purchase, about 3 miles northwest of Anaconda.



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

DECISION NOTICE

Acquisition of Jamison Property
Addition to Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area

June 2, 2008

Proposal

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to purchase fee title and accept management responsibilities for an approximately 296-acre parcel (currently held by Sherrie Jamison), located 3 miles northwest of Anaconda in Deer Lodge County. The parcel is located in Section 20 west half, Township 5 North, Range 11 West. The land, which will be managed as an addition to the Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area (WMA) complex, lies within 2 miles of the existing 162-acre Blue-eyed Nellie WMA, as well as within 2 miles of Garrity and Lost Creek WMAs.

The proposed acquisition would proceed in two phases. Phase I, 220 acres adjoining Forest Service lands on Stucky Ridge, would close in June 2008. This phase will be funded primarily ($757,000) with FWP's Sheep License Auction Fund and Habitat Montana Program as well as with $16,000 in donations from the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS), the Five Valleys Chapter of the Safari Club, and the Anaconda Wildlife EXPO. The Phase II purchase would occur in January 2009 and would transfer the remaining approximately 76 acres to FWP at a price of $262,500. American Lands Conservancy (ALC) on behalf of FWP has applied for a grant from the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) and proposes that NRDP fund Phase II.

The purpose of this proposal is to preserve critical habitat for the Lost Creek bighorn herd. The property is made up of intermountain grasslands on a long grassy bench and an aspen filled gulch. Bighorn sheep, mule deer, and elk use the property extensively. Under this proposal Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks would acquire critical wildlife habitat, of special importance for bighorn, and important public access to Stucky Ridge.

Montana Environmental Policy Act Process

FWP prepared an Environmental Assessment pursuant to MEPA. FWP made this document available during a 33-day public comment period that began on April 25, 2008 and ended on May 27, 2008. FWP advertised the public comment period on the proposed project by legal notice entitled "Public Comment Sought" (Appendix A) in the following newspapers (dates published): The Independent Record (Helena; Apr 25, May 2); Missoulian (Apr 25, May 2); Montana Standard (Butte; Apr 25, May 2); and Anaconda Leader (Apr 25, May 2). This document was available in its entirety on FWP's Internet web site (www.fwp.mt.gov, under "Recent Public Notices") beginning April 24, 2008.

A public hearing regarding this acquisition was conducted by FWP in Anaconda on May 12, 2008 at 7 p.m. at the Lee Metcalf Center and was attended by 18 people.

FWP distributed copies of the draft EA (or postcard notification of its availability) to 38 agencies, private organizations, and persons (including adjacent property owners), before the comment period began. Email notification of the EA's availability was sent to 37 people in 7 State of Montana agencies. Copies were distributed at the public meeting in Anaconda, and FWP responded to additional requests as they were received.

Summary of Public Comment

Eighteen citizens and two FWP personnel attended the public hearing on May 12, 2008 in Anaconda. Fifteen individuals testified at the hearing, including representatives from the Anaconda Sportsmen's Club, the Montana Wildlife Federation, the Foundation for North American for Wild Sheep (FNAWS), and the Anaconda Wildlife EXPO. All spoke in favor of the project.

Casey Johnson of FNAWS read from a letter from the Montana Chapter that was strongly in favor of the purchase. Chris Marchion, representing the Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF), noted that MWF was an early supporter of the Sheep Auction and that this was an appropriate place to spend the dollars. Fred Boyer, an officer of the Anaconda Wildlife EXPO and noted area wildlife artist, said that the Jamison property was one of the best pieces of habitat in the Anaconda area and that additional access to Stucky Ridge was critical. Lorrie Thomas, president of the Anaconda Sportsmen's Club, noted that purchase of the Jamison property would stop a major subdivision in key wildlife habitat.

Two people submitted emailed comments during the comment period; they also voiced support. Bert Otis of Emigrant, Montana stated, "I would like to voice my support for the Jamison Property Acquisition."

Outside of the EA process the Natural Resource Damage Program received at least 10 letters of support for the Jamison project. Letters of support were received from the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Montana Wildlife Federation, Safari Club International (Five Valleys Chapter), the Public Lands/Water Access Association, Skyline Sportsmen's Association, Anaconda Sportsmen's Club, Five Valleys Land Trust, Anaconda Wildlife Expo, and the Anaconda-Deerlodge County Commissioners.

No comments against the proposal were heard or received during the comment period. Purchase of the Jamison property by FWP clearly has substantial public support in the Anaconda area and statewide.

In addition to the comments received during the MEPA process, Senate Bill 529 (2005 Montana Legislature) requires noxious weed inspections and weed management agreements for certain land transfers to non-federal public agencies. The Anaconda-Deer Lodge Weed Coordinator will

be contacted if the project acquisition proposal is approved, and a weed management plan would developed by FWP in concert with the county.

Decision

Utilizing the Environmental Assessment and public comment, a decision must be rendered by FWP, which addresses the concerns and issues identified for the proposed project. In light of public comments and internal agency review, I accept the draft Environmental Assessment as final. The proposed acquisition received support from all in attendance at the public hearing in Anaconda as well as two individuals who wrote emails of support, and no other comments have been received.

FWP recognizes the value of acquiring critical wildlife habitat when the opportunity arises. With the approval of this acquisition, the property's value as wildlife habitat will be preserved and enhanced and the threat of development will be nullified. No adverse effects are expected on the diversity or abundance of game species, non-game species or threatened and endangered species. Public access and recreational opportunities will be enhanced.

In consideration of these facts, I am pleased to recommend that the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission approve the acquisition of the 296-acre Jamison property for addition to the Blue-Eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area as proposed.

Mack Long
Region 2 Supervisor

6/2/08
Date

Appendix A.

PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) seeks public review of its proposal to acquire a 295-acre private parcel nearby the Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area (WMA), northwest of Anaconda in Deer Lodge County. The purpose would be to acquire critical winter range for bighorn sheep and elk. A draft environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared for this proposal. FWP will hold a public hearing in Anaconda on May 12 (Monday) at 7:00 p.m. at the Lee Metcalf Center. The EA may be obtained by mail from Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula 59804; by phoning 406-542-5540; by emailing shrose@mt.gov; or by viewing FWP's Internet website www.fwp.mt.gov ("Recent Public Notices," beginning April 25). Comments should be directed to Ray Vinkey by mail to the address above; by phoning 406-859-1704; or emailing rvinkey@mt.gov. Comments must be received by FWP no later than 5 p.m., May 27, 2008.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804-3101
406-542-5500
April 24, 2008

*Governor's Office, Attn: Mike Volesky, PO Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, PO Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704
*Dept. of Environmental Quality, PO Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
*Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, POB 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601
*Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:
Website, Commission Secretary, Division Secretaries, Regional Office Managers, Region 2 Information Officer
*State Historic Preservation Office, PO Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202
*MT State Library, PO BOX 201800, Helena, MT 59620-1800
MT Environmental Information Center, Attn: Jim Jensen, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624-1184
Pintler Ranger District, 88 Business Loop, Philipsburg, MT 59858
**DNRC, Anaconda Unit Office, 7916 Hwy 1 W, Anaconda, MT 59711
Skyline Sportsmen, PO Box 173, Butte, MT 59703
Anaconda Sportsmen, 2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711
Montana Natural Heritage Center, POB 201800, Helena, MT 59620-1800
Montana Audubon Society, POB 595, Helena 59624-0595
Montana Stockgrowers, 420 N. California, Helena, MT 59601
Montana Wildlife Federation, POB 1175, Helena, MT 59624-1175
Deer Lodge County Weed Supervisor, 800 S. Main, Anaconda, MT 59711
Deer Lodge County Commissioners, 800 S. Main, Anaconda, MT 59711
Anaconda-Deer Lodge Planning Department, 800 S. Main, Anaconda, MT 59711
Anaconda-Deer Lodge Planning Board, 800 S. Main, Anaconda, MT 59711
5 Valleys Land Trust, PO Box 8953, Missoula, MT 59807-8953
American Land Conservancy, Northern Rockies Office, Attn: Keith Lenard, PO Box 9017, Missoula, MT 59807-9017
Safari Club International, Five Valleys Chapter, P.O. Box 16142, Missoula, MT 59808-6142
Anaconda Wildlife EXPO, Attn: Kim Jones, 206 E Park, Anaconda, MT 59711
Montana Chapter, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, Attn: James Weatherly, POB 17731, Missoula, MT 59808-7731
Adjoining landowners
*Emailed notification of the availability of the EA
** Mailed a postcard notification of the availability of the EA

Dear Interested Citizen:

Enclosed you will find for your review the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for a Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposal to acquire a 295-acre parcel northwest of Anaconda in Deer Lodge County. Sherri Jamison currently owns the property, which lies about 2 miles east of the FWP's existing Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area (WMA). If acquired the property would become part of the Blue-eyed Nellie WMA. The purpose of this proposal would be to acquire critical year-round habitat for bighorn sheep and elk.

FWP will hold a public hearing in Anaconda on May 12 (Monday) at 7:00 p.m. at the Lee Metcalf Center to discuss this proposed acquisition and take public comment.

This draft EA is available for review in Helena at FWP's Headquarters, the State Library and the Environmental Quality Council. It also may be obtained from the Region 2 FWP Headquarters or viewed on FWP's Internet website at http://fwp.mt.gov ("Recent Public Notices").

Comments on this draft EA must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., May 27, 2008. Comments should be mailed to Ray Vinkey, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, PO Box 1066, Anaconda, MT 59711-1066 or emailed to rvinkey@mt.gov. If you have questions, please contact him at 406-859-1704.

As part of the decision making process under MEPA, I plan to issue the Decision Notice for this EA by May 30th. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission has the final decision-making authority for FWP land purchase proposals, and the Commission will be asked to render final decision on this proposal at its June 12 meeting in Helena. Approval will also be necessary from the Montana Board of Land Commissioners.

Sincerely,

Mack Long
Regional Supervisor

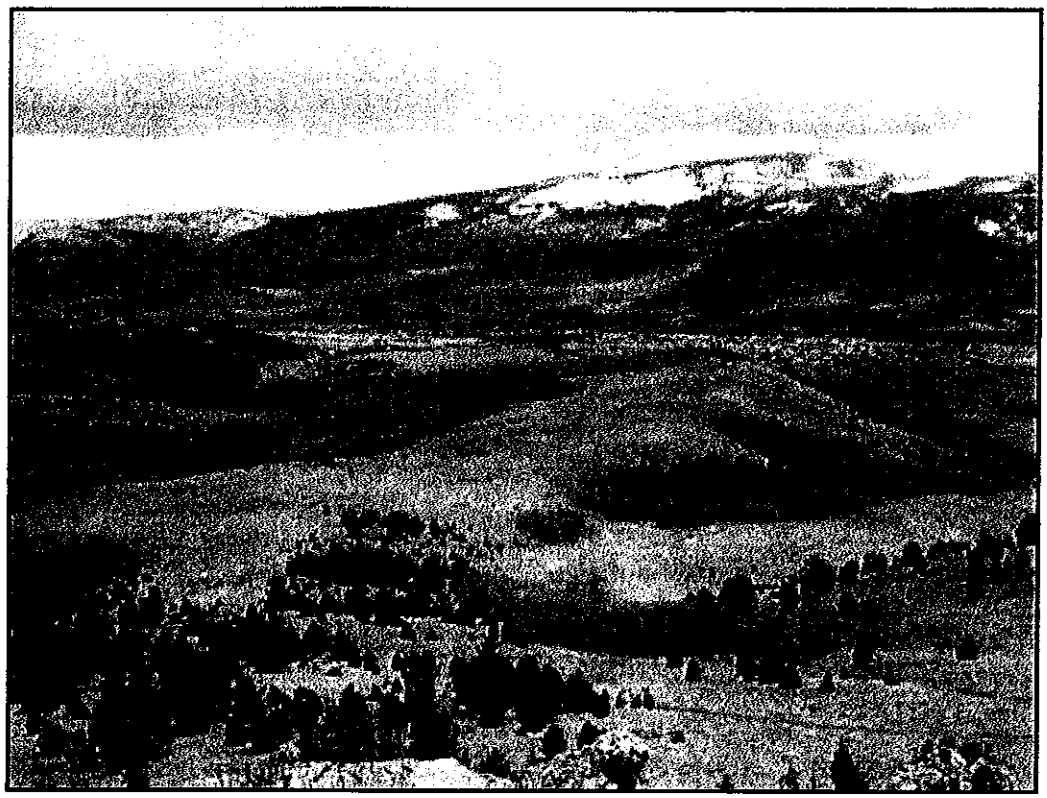
ML/sr

Enclosure: Jamison EA, Draft Management Plan, and Socioeconomic Assessment

Draft

Environmental Assessment

Jamison Property Acquisition



Jamison property looking southeast towards Anaconda's West Valley

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 2, Wildlife Division
POB 1066, Philipsburg, MT 59858
(phone 406-859-1704; email *rvinkey@mt.gov*).

INTRODUCTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) invites the public to comment on its proposal to purchase approximately 295 acres owned by Sherri L. Jamison, in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. The American Land Conservancy (ALC) and Five Valleys Land Trust (FVLT) brokered a proposed transaction that would occur in two phases. The Phase I purchase would occur in June 2008, and would transfer the first 220 acres to FWP at a price of $770,000. The Montana Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, the Safari Club, and the Anaconda Wildlife EXPO have in total pledged $16,000 toward the Phase I purchase price and closing costs. The remaining $757,000 (assuming and additional $3,000 of closing costs) would be provided by FWP from its Sheep License Auction Fund and Habitat Montana Program.

The Phase II purchase would occur in January 2009, and would transfer the remaining 75 acres to FWP at a price of $262,500. The American Lands Conservancy on behalf of FWP has applied for a grant of $265,335 from the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) and proposes that NRDP fund the Phase II purchase. Costs to complete the transaction will be provided by an in-kind match of $5488 from ALC and a grant request of $2835 from NRDP, 1% of the project cost, to be paid to ALC.

The proposed project area lies north of Anaconda's West Valley community, and would be added to FWP's Blue-Eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area, which lies 2 miles to the west. The Jamison property adjoins the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest along 1.75 miles of common property boundary, and is centered about 2 miles northeast of, and 2 miles southwest of the existing Garrity Mountain and Lost Creek Wildlife Management Areas, respectively.

The purpose of the proposed purchase would be to manage exceptional natural habitat for bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, and a diversity of wildlife species. The land would be opened to public hunting and wildlife viewing, but closed annually to public entry from December 1 until June 15 to avoid disturbance of ungulates on their winter range and lambing/calving habitat. This proposal would not result in a loss of property tax revenue to Anaconda-Deer Lodge County because FWP pays taxes on lands in its ownership.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

Authorities/Direction

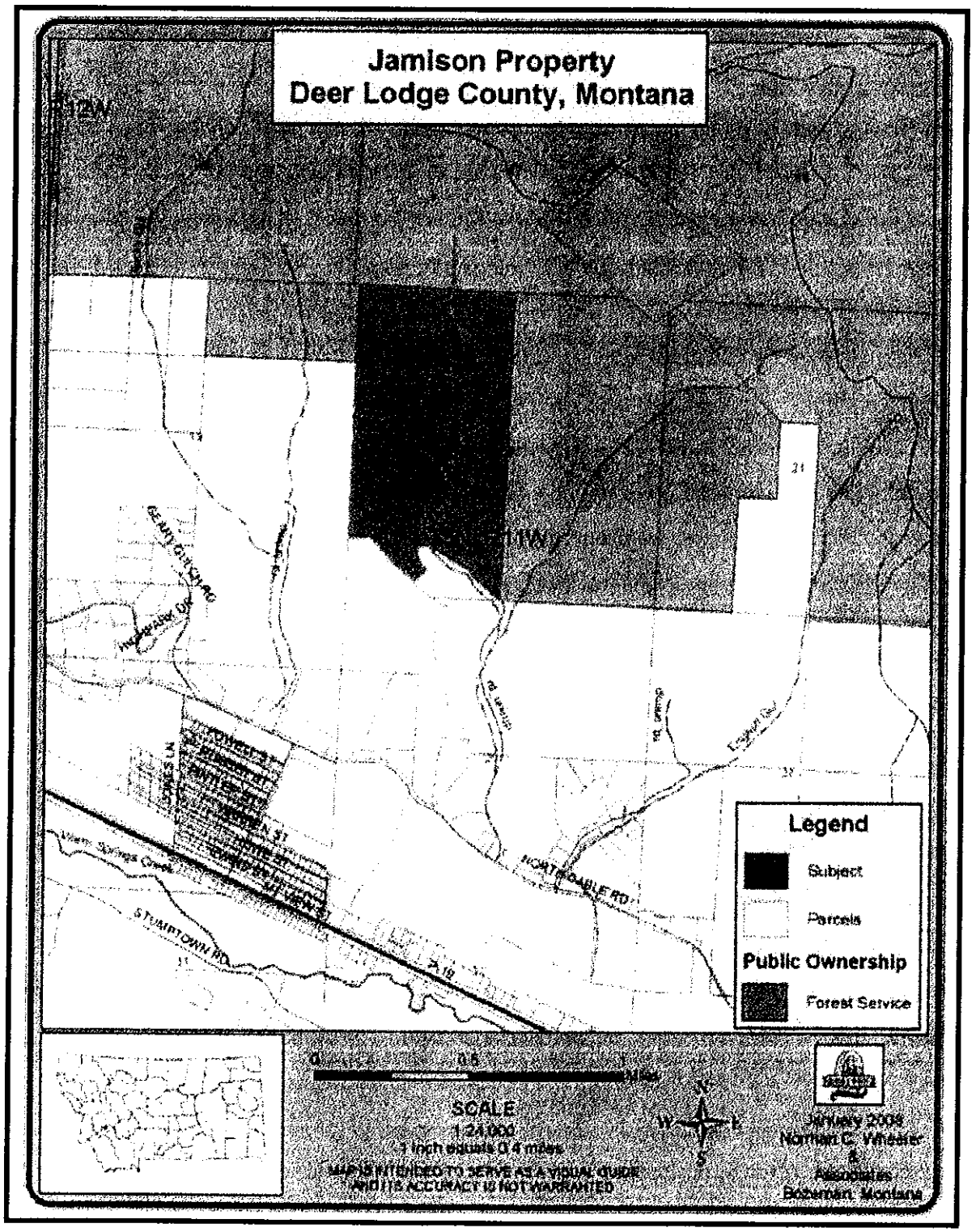
FWP is authorized by State law to own and manage lands as wildlife habitat. The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission (the Commission) is the decision-making authority for land acquisition, disposal or exchanges involving FWP-owned properties. Following Commission approval, if granted, the Montana Board of Land Commissioners (the Land Board) reviews land acquisitions, disposals, or exchanges involving FWP-owned properties over 100 acres or $100,000 in value. FWP's proposed expenditure of $757,000 to purchase the subject lands would come, in part, from its annual auction of one bighorn sheep license, as provided in MCA 87-2-722. The remainder of the $757,000 would be funded by the Habitat Montana Program, under policy adopted by the Commission in 1994. Funding for this proposed purchase is enabled by an act of the 1987 Montana Legislature (MCA 87-1-241-242), known as House Bill 526, which earmarked for habitat acquisition a set portion of the revenues generated from sales of Montana Sportsman's and nonresident Big Game Combination licenses.

Area Description/Wildlife Resources

The land is located about 3 miles northwest of Anaconda, Montana, in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County (Section 20 west-half, Township 5 North, Range 11 West). Public access is available to the parcel from North Cable Road, which runs parallel to and a half-mile north of State Highway 1 (Figure 1). A clear public access right-of-way through adjoining Jamison properties (Section 29, Township 5 North, Range 11 West) will be a condition of the sale(s).

Intermountain/foothills grassland (160 acres), aspen forest (80 acres), and dry, open grown stands of lodgepole pine (40 acres) characterize this land. The dominant feature is a long grassy bench, lying between Stucky Gulch to the west and an unnamed arm of Levengood Gulch, to the east, that sweeps southeast towards Anaconda (cover photo). Rough fescue and Idaho fescue dominate with wheat-grasses less common. Forbs like prairie smoke, lupine, sticky geranium, and *Potentilla spp.* are interspersed throughout. This substantial tract of native intermountain grassland provides excellent habitat for a variety of prairie specialists like vesper sparrows as well as native ungulates.

Figure 1. Location of the proposed land purchase, about 3 miles northwest of Anaconda.



Thick aspen forest occupies the gulch to the east and although water does not flow year-round, riparian habitats are present along the bottom of the gulch. An unnamed perennial spring

with a small waterfall flows in the northeast corner of section 20. Usually flow from this spring goes underground within a few hundred meters of its source.

Intermountain/foothill grasslands are a conservation priority for the Habitat Montana program and the Deer Lodge Valley is identified as a terrestrial focus area in *Montana's Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Conservation Strategy*[1]. Native bunchgrasses on the Jamison property provide critical bighorn sheep and elk winter range, and the property is under imminent threat of subdivision. Purchase of this property with Habitat Montana funds and with funds from the sheep auction account would meet the goals of the Habitat Montana program and the Strategy to protect imperiled properties. On a landscape scale, purchase of the Jamison property will protect critical winter range in the Anaconda area and landscape connectivity along the face of Stucky Ridge. The property lies intermediate between Lost Creek, Garrity Mountain, and Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Areas (Figure 2).

The abundance and juxtaposition of native grassland, aspen, and riparian habitats makes the subject property valuable to bighorn sheep, elk, deer, and other species. Bighorn sheep have ready access to escape terrain just offsite on the National Forest in the Red Rocks cliffs and on Stucky Ridge. Sheep are known to use the area year-round. In November 2006, a hunter harvested a 190-class trophy ram nearby. During an aerial survey on 29 March 2007, a total of 298 sheep were observed throughout all of Hunting District 213. Remarkably over half (155) of these sheep were within 1.5 miles of the Jamison parcel, with a third of the herd (102) within half a mile, and 15 rams observed on the property. The property lies in critical bighorn winter range.

Elk use the property in fall, winter, and spring. Neighbors report that over a hundred head of elk were present on the property for a large part of the winter in 2007 and 2008. Proof of this use can be seen in a in a photo taken by neighbor Dan Haffney in February 2007, where 101 elk are visible on the subject property (Figure 3). Currently the five-year mean number of observed elk in Hunting District 213 is 716 head (110% of the 600 head objective) with an average of 68 elk observed between Anaconda and Lost Creek.

Figure 2. Jamison property in relation to FWP owned lands.

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[1] 2005. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620-0701; 658 pp; http://fwp.mt.gov/specieshabitat/strategy/fullplan.html

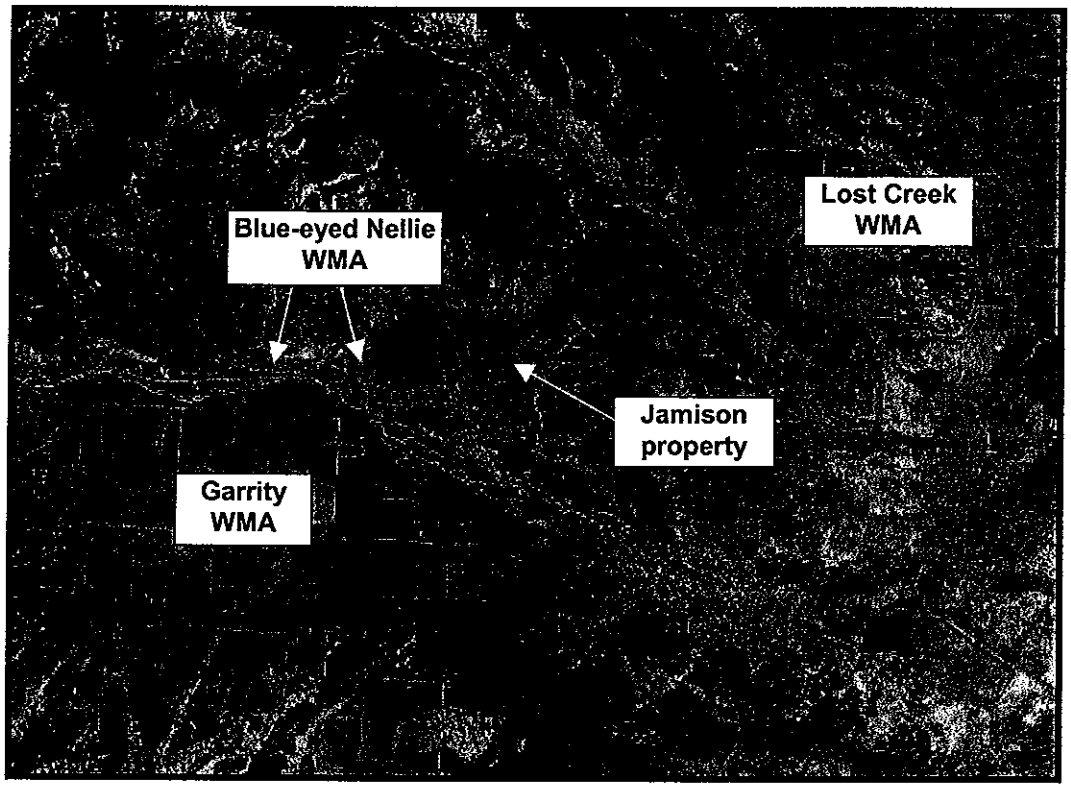
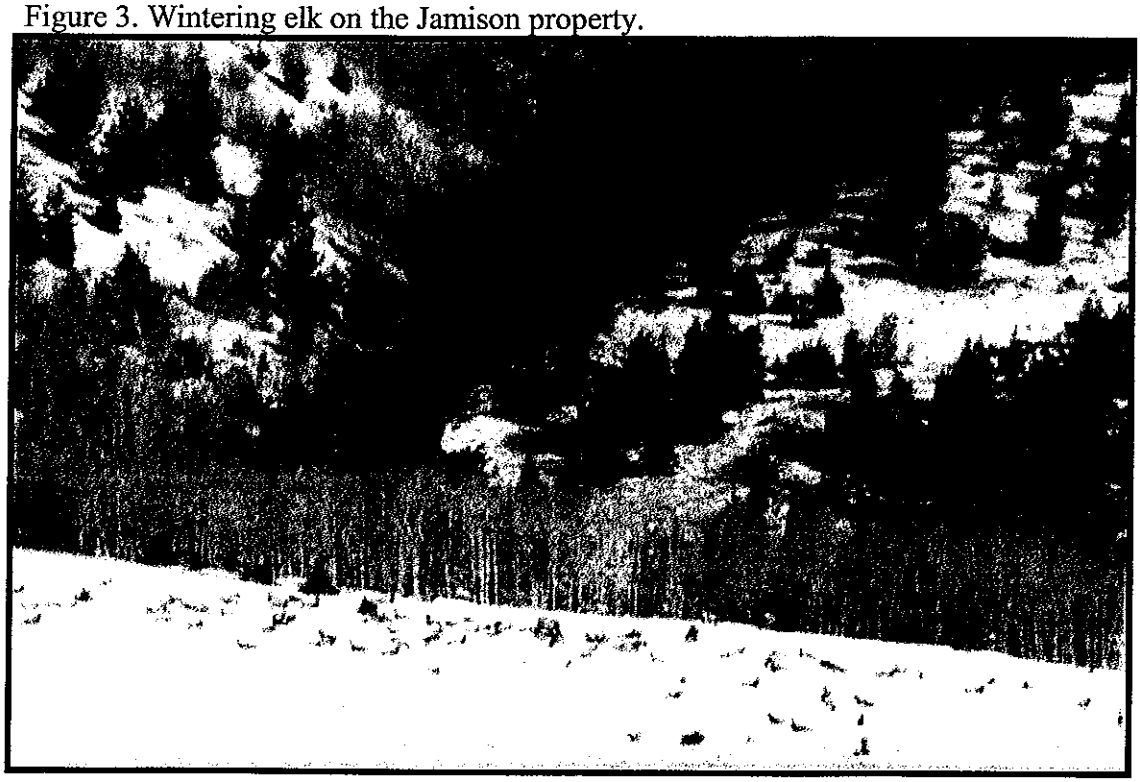


Figure 3. Wintering elk on the Jamison property.



Elk numbers along Stucky Ridge are stable to increasing. Most of the hundred-plus elk in

this herd unit can be found on the Jamison property, or within a mile, during the winter and spring. Bull elk are routinely harvested during the opening week of hunting season. Public ownership of this property will provide hunting access adjacent to Anaconda, will help FWP meet elk management objectives, and will provide recreational opportunities to the residents of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, Montana, and the United States.

Mule deer are increasingly abundant on the area, and 130 mule deer were observed within 1.5 miles of Jamison's on 29 March 2007. White-tailed deer are present in Levengood Gulch. Black bear, lion, coyote, bobcat, and red fox use the property intermittently. A total of 68 animal species are likely to use the Jamison property (44 birds, 22 mammals, 1 reptile, and 1 amphibian; species lists are presented in Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Mammals, amphibians, and reptiles likely to use the Jamison parcel.

Mammals	**Mammals**	**Amphibians, Reptiles**
Ungulates (5)	*Rodents (12)*	*Amphibians (1)*
Elk	Common Porcupine	Columbia Spotted Frog
Mule Deer	Snowshoe Hare	
White-tailed Deer	Yellow-pine Chipmunk	*Reptiles (1)*
	Golden-mantled Ground	Western Garter Snake
Moose	Squirrel	
Bighorn sheep	Red Squirrel	
	Bushy-tailed Woodrat	
Carnivores (5)	Southern Red-backed Vole	
Black Bear	Heather Vole	
Cougar	Meadow Vole	
Bobcat	Montane Vole	
Red Fox	Long-tailed Vole	
Coyote	Western Jumping Mouse	

Table 2. Bird species likely to use the Jamison parcel.

Birds (13)	Birds (16)	Birds (15)
Raptors (7)	American Robin	Western Meadowlark
Bald Eagle	Dusky Flycatcher	Horned Lark
Golden Eagle	Eastern Kingbird	Junco
Northern Harrier	Cassin's Vireo	Lazuli Bunting
Red-tailed Hawk	Wilson's Warbler	Hairy Woodpecker
American Kestrel	Western Tanager	Downy Woodpecker
Northern Pygmy Owl	Chipping Sparrow	Common Nighthawk
Great Gray Owl	Vesper Sparrow	Mourning Dove
Grouse (2)	Song Sparrow	Red Breasted Nuthatch
Ruffed Grouse	Pine Siskins	Black-Capped Chickadee
Blue Grouse	Rufus Throated Humming Bird	Mountain Chickadee
Corvids (4)	Yellow Finch	Cedar Wax Wing
Black-billed Magpie	House Finch	Mountain Blue bird
Raven	White-winged Cross Bill	Cassin's Finch
	Northern Yellow Shafted	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Steller's jay	Flicker	
Clark's Nutcracker	Evening Grosbeak	

Project Need

A series of grassy wind-blown benches and timbered gulches climb north to Stucky Ridge from Anaconda's West Valley (cover photo). Two miles of this front are privately owned and the Jamison property is the most important and most imperiled of these lands. Productive intermountain/foothills grasslands and healthy aspen forests on the Jamison property provide critical winter range for bighorn sheep and elk, as well as rutting and birthing habitat.

FWP became aware of plans to develop the Jamison property as a result of preliminary scoping of the "1880s Subdivision" in early 2007. Numerous community members as well as conservation groups have become interested in the project and would like to see the land brought into public ownership rather than subdivided. (Ten parties, including the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Commissioners, wrote letters of support for the NRD grant application). Staff from Five Valley's Land Trust, and later the American Land Conservancy, contacted Ms. Jamison and asked if she would be interested in selling the property, and a dialogue ensued. Ultimately, Ms. Jamison signed an option to sell most of her land in section 20 (Township 5 North, Range 11 West) to ALC with immediate transfer to FWP.

This project represents a timely coincidence of interests, priorities and funding among the private landowner, land trusts, conservation groups, community members, and FWP to conserve important wildlife habitat in perpetuity. Intermountain grasslands are a conservation priority for the Habitat Montana Program, and the Deer Lodge Valley is a terrestrial focus area in Montana's Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Purchase of this property with Habitat Montana funds and specifically with funds from the sheep auction account would meet the goals of the Habitat Montana program and the Strategy to protect these threatened habitats. Since the property lies intermediate between Lost Creek, Garrity Mountain, and Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Areas, its purchase will help to preserve landscape connectivity between these WMAs and adjoining public lands.

Failure to act on this opportunity would likely result in development of the subject property. Surveys of the property have been completed (Figure 4), septic test pits constructed in several sites, and test wells have been drilled. As a result of negotiations road construction into section 20 (the subject property) was halted after half a mile and before the road reached the bench. Under full build-out a loop road would access roughly forty lots in section 20.

Examination of Figures 5 and 6 shows how intensive development of the proposed 1880s Subdivision could be. The first development proposal (Figure 5) shows Phase I of the subdivision in green and lots in Phase II in yellow. The second proposal (Figure 6) produced later in 2007, shows only Phase I of a two-phased subdivision; under this plat, more of the critical habitat within the proposed purchase area would be proposed for development in Phase I.

Figure 4. Survey stakes with the Red Rocks in the background.

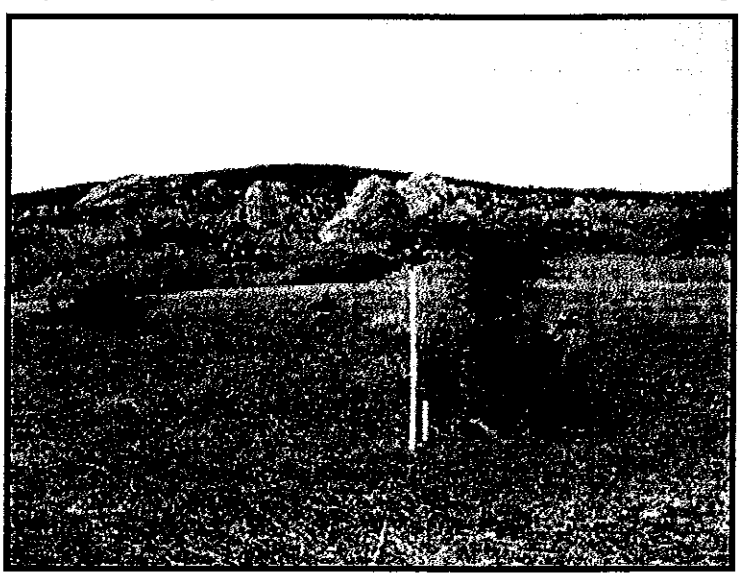
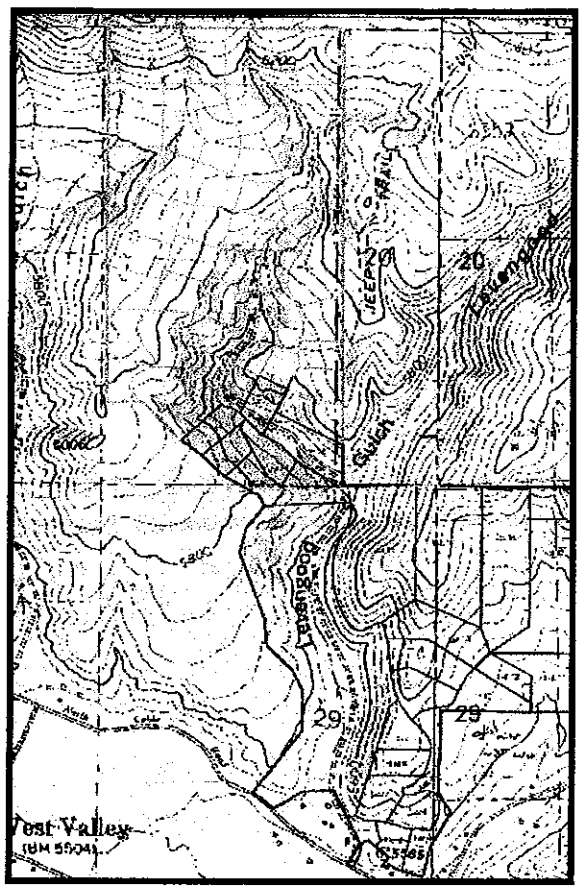
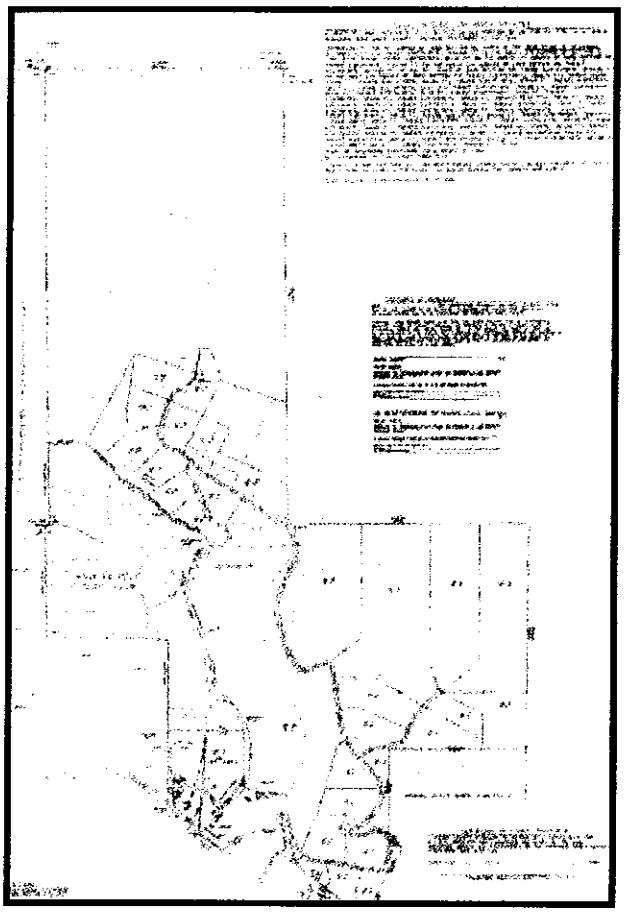


Figure 5 (left). Spring 2007 proposal, 1880's Subdivision (Phase I lots in green, Phase II in yellow).
Figure 6 (right). Summer 2007 proposal, 1880's Subdivision (showing only Phase I).





If Section 20 of the Jamison property were to be sold, subdivided and developed, a unique, native wildlife habitat would be lost forever, along with the public's opportunities to access and appreciate that habitat. The potential replacement of native vegetation with houses, fences, driveways, garages, barns, and other structures constitutes a direct habitat loss for native wildlife populations. Human activity associated with residential areas, including vehicle traffic, pets and outdoor recreation, would displace many species from otherwise suitable habitat within an expanded radius around the homes. Conversely, the potential introduction of garbage, bird feeders, fruit trees and other unnatural foods would likely attract deer, bears and mountain lions into nuisance situations that would not occur without rural residential development, and are difficult and expensive to mitigate or correct.

Additionally, potential residential development on the lands proposed for purchase would seriously decrease future hunting opportunities on those lands. Shooting restrictions would become a practical necessity within an extended radius surrounding the home sites to protect residents. As hunting is removed as a practical possibility on more and more acres in a rural setting, there would be increasing potential for wildlife, particularly bighorn sheep, elk, and deer, to habituate and seek refuge in areas closed to hunting. Experience has shown that this can prevent FWP from effectively managing populations to keep wildlife numbers in balance with natural forage and to control levels of private property damage caused by foraging ungulates.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

FWP proposes to purchase approximately 295 acres owned by Sherri L. Jamison in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. The acquisition lies north of Anaconda's West Valley and would be an addition to the nearby Blue-eyed Nellie WMA. The American Land Conservancy and Five Valleys Land Trust brokered a proposed transaction that would occur in two phases. The Phase I purchase would occur in June 2008, and would transfer the first 220 acres to FWP at a price of $770,000. The Montana Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, the Safari Club, and the Anaconda Wildlife EXPO have pledged $16,000 toward the Phase I purchase price and closing costs. The remaining $757,000 (assuming $3000 closing costs) would be provided by FWP from its Sheep License Auction Fund and Habitat Montana Program. The Phase II purchase would occur in January 2009, and would transfer the remaining 75 acres to FWP at a price of $262,500. The American Lands Conservancy on behalf of FWP has applied for a grant of $265,355 from NRDP and proposes that NRDP fund the Phase II purchase.

The purpose of the proposed purchase would be to manage exceptional natural habitat for bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, and a diversity of wildlife species. Under FWP management, the land would be opened to public hunting and wildlife viewing, with a winter/spring closure, from December 1 until June 15, to avoid disturbance of ungulates on their winter range and lambing/calving habitat. Outfitting or fee hunting would be prohibited. Public travel on the property would be restricted to access by foot or horseback. Motorized access would be secured to the southern edge of the property where a parking area, picnic area, and interpretive site would be established. A draft management plan outlining management goals and methods is attached.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

Alternative A—No Action

FWP considered the alternative of taking no action. This would leave a full range of future management options for the subject lands, including development options, in the hands of current and future owners of the property. FWP would retain the option to comment on proposed land subdivisions and developments on the subject lands under existing laws and policies in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County; however, the effects of FWP's input on any future proposed subdivision are uncertain. Public access would remain at the discretion of current and future landowners.

Alternatives Considered but Dropped from Further Consideration

Because the proposed purchase represents the full extent of agreement between FWP, the American Land Conservancy, and the private landowner, "no action" is the only reasonable alternative to the proposed action.

IMPACTS

Neither the proposed action nor alternative A would have any effect on the following resources:

Solid/hazardous wastes	Water rights
Wild and scenic rivers	Floodplains

Wildlife Populations and Use Currently Associated with the Property

Threatened and Endangered Species: Use of the subject lands by the recently de-listed gray wolf is possible. Continued recovery of wolves in this area will largely depend on prey populations (deer and elk) and conflicts with human activities. The proposed action would better protect habitat for prey populations of elk and mule deer than no action, and would lead to the lowest future increase in human settlement, development, and potential conflicts with wolves. Grizzly bears, a threatened species, are unlikely to use the property.

The proposed action would be expected to benefit threatened and endangered wildlife in the long run by maintaining native plant communities and preventing residential or other land developments. The proposed conservation purchase would not introduce any land use or activity

that would be detrimental to these species. No other federally listed threatened or endangered species are known or expected to occur on or within the affected area.

Sensitive Species: No sensitive animal or plant species are known to occur on the subject lands. The proposed action offers protection from habitat loss for sensitive and other native plant and animal species collectively, while the no-action alternative does not.

Big Game Species: The proposed action would prevent changes in land use that would negatively affect wildlife populations and their current use, and would introduce a management emphasis that would encourage wildlife use. The No-Action Alternative would leave native habitat and local wildlife populations vulnerable to the management decisions of future private landowners who might not consider wildlife, public recreation, or the public interest in wildlife. Changes in management direction, such as subdivision and sale of residential lots for development, would negatively impact native wildlife through direct removal of natural habitat on home-sites, along roadways, and elsewhere within the daily use area of people and pets.

Indirect effects include disturbance of wildlife across a wider area around homes due to an increase in human recreational activity. Wildlife species diversity would be expected to decline as species associated with human residential areas increase and species sensitive to disturbance are displaced. The introduction of dog food, garbage, bird feeders, pets, and other attractants in this presently uninhabited area, would attract black bears and mountain lions to residences, ultimately increasing mortality in these species as they become viewed as pests. The proposed action would prevent these and other forms of wildlife habitat loss on the subject lands.

The proposed action would ensure opportunity for public hunting and viewing of big game. The no-action alternative would allow a private landowner(s) to close the land to public hunting, which would result in a loss of access to land and wildlife in immediate proximity to Anaconda.

Potential Value of the Land for Protection, Preservation and Propagation of Wildlife

The proposed action would serve to maintain future management options for protecting, preserving, and propagating wildlife by conserving and managing the natural habitat required to support wildlife populations and communities, and by prohibiting competing land uses and developments that would diminish habitat quality. Alternative A (No Action) would allow the

possibility of future land subdivisions, developments, and other substantial changes in land use, that would severely limit and diminish options for protecting and managing wildlife populations for the public benefit.

Management Goals Proposed for the Land and Wildlife Populations

Management goals and strategies for the proposed purchase, including wildlife populations, timber management, livestock grazing, and noxious weeds are detailed in the draft management plan (attached). In effect, the management plan describes direction for dedicating the property to wildlife production. No agricultural operation currently exists on this property and as such there will be no impacts to agriculture.

Potential Impacts to Adjacent Private Land Resulting from the Proposed Action

The proposed action could influence landowners bordering the subject land via long-term impacts on property values. Property values on lands bordering the subject land may increase because it will remain open space providing wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. Otherwise, the general effects of this proposal, as felt by neighbors of the WMA on a day-to-day basis, would be status quo. The no-action alternative would allow the possibility of dramatic changes in land use on the subject property in the future, which could change the rural character of the area, open space, scenic vistas, and recreational opportunities.

Potential Social and Economic Impacts to Affected Local Governments and the State

The Draft Socio-Economic Assessment (Appendix A) details potential socio-economic impacts. To summarize, the proposed action would transfer ownership to FWP, and FWP pays taxes on lands in its ownership. These tax payments are equal to the annual property taxes assessed to privately owned property. Therefore, this proposal would not result in a loss of property tax revenue to Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. Over the long run, Alternative A (no action) would allow greater potential residential and commercial growth in this rural area. This possible future growth would be accompanied by higher demand for utilities, roads, schools, and other services that would have to be partially or wholly provided by state and local governments. As developments reach their growth limits under Alternative A, the recreational and economic benefits, generated by the existence of abundant and diverse wildlife and natural landscapes in

the local area, would be diminished. The proposed action would prevent future residential and commercial developments, in a location that would allow wildlife to continue to flourish, and will retain the economic benefits that wildlife provide.

Land Maintenance Program to Control Weeds and Maintain Roads and Fences

Under the proposed action, FWP would become responsible for weed control and the maintenance of roads and fences. Property management would be folded into the existing management plan for the Blue-Eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area. The Draft Management Plan (Appendix B) addresses these specific land management issues.

Air and Water Quality

The proposed action would likely result in a net reduction in potential future risks to air and water quality on the subject lands, compared to no action. Possibilities for residential, commercial, and industrial developments would be eliminated across the subject land. Such developments, which would remain a possibility under the no-action alternative, would have the potential to adversely affect air and water quality in numerous ways. For example, increased road construction and traffic on roads to service housing or commercial developments could increase runoff and decrease water quality.

Wetlands and Riparian Habitats

Under the proposed action, riparian habitat would be managed for wildlife production. Implementation of management strategies in the Draft Management Plan would be expected to maintain or enhance riparian vegetation. The no-action alternative offers no protection for riparian areas on the subject land and would allow manipulation of these habitats with potentially adverse impacts to fish and wildlife habitat.

Livestock Grazing

The proposed action would not result in the introduction of livestock grazing. Although grazing is not currently occurring, livestock grazing potential would remain unrestricted under the no-action alternative.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The proposed action would not cause a change in land use, so it would not affect cultural sites. Potential developments allowable under the no-action alternative would leave cultural resources at risk. A historic cabin on site would be left in place under the proposed action.

Cumulative Impacts

If the subject lands were managed in a manner incompatible with the conservation of fish and wildlife habitat, Alternative A (no action) could contribute to a cumulative loss of habitat, and associated public recreation, locally and regionally. No action may also result in additional demand for services provided by county and state governments to new residences. The proposed action would have a positive long-term cumulative impact on wildlife and outdoor recreation.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Formal public review of the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Jamison addition to the Blue-Eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area, including a Draft Socio-Economic Assessment and Draft Management Plan, will begin with the availability of these documents on April 25 and will close at 5 p.m., May 27, 2008. The availability of this EA for public review will be advertised in the Anaconda, Butte, Helena and Missoula newspapers, and a copy of the draft EA will be mailed to all parties who indicate an interest in this proposal. A public hearing will be held at the Lee Metcalf Center in Anaconda on May 12, 2008 at 7:00 P.M. After reviewing public input received on or before May 27, FWP will decide upon a preferred alternative. The Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission will be asked to render a final decision on this proposal at its regularly scheduled meeting on June 12, 2008. The State Board of Land Commissioners will be asked to approve the proposal at its first monthly meeting following an approval by the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission.

Comments should be addressed to Ray Vinkey, Wildlife Biologist; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; POB 1066, Philipsburg, MT 59858 (phone 406-859-1704; email *rvinkey@mt.gov*). Comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., May 27, 2008 to ensure their consideration in the decision-making process.

AGENCIES, GROUPS OR OTHERS CONSULTED IN PREPARATION OF THE EA

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Candace Durran, Land Agent, Helena

Paul Sihler, Field Services Administrator, Helena

Steve Knapp, Habitat Bureau Chief, Wildlife Division, Helena

Ken McDonald, Wildlife Division Administrator, Helena

Mike Thompson, Regional Wildlife Manager, Missoula

Mack Long, Regional Supervisor, Missoula

American Land Conservancy

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARING THE EA

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 2

Ray Vinkey, Wildlife Biologist, Philipsburg

NEED FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment, under MEPA, the proposed action is not a significant action affecting the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not a necessary level of review.

Appendix A.

Socio-economic Assessment

Jamison Property

Fee Title Acquisition

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Prepared by
Rob Brooks and Mike Thompson
April 15, 2008

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

I. INTRODUCTION

House Bill 526, passed by the 1987 Legislature (MCA 87-1-241 and MCA 87-1-242), authorizes Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire an interest in land for the purpose of protecting and improving wildlife habitat. These acquisitions can be through fee title, conservation easements, or leasing. In 1989, the Montana legislature passed House Bill 720 requiring that a socio-economic assessment be completed when wildlife habitat is acquired using Habitat Montana monies. These assessments evaluate the significant social and economic impacts of the purchase on local governments, employment, schools, and impacts on local businesses.

This socio-economic evaluation addresses the fee title purchase of property presently owned by Sherri L. Jamison, with an option to purchase held by the American Land Conservancy. The report addresses the physical and institutional setting as well as the social and economic impacts associated with the proposed fee title acquisition.

II. PHYSICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

A. Property Description

The Jamison property is located about three miles from Anaconda, Montana in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. The property that FWP would acquire encompasses approximately 295 acres in the Warm Springs drainage close to the Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area and the Lost Creek Wildlife Management Area. A detailed description of this property is included in the Environmental Assessment (EA).

B. Habitat and Wildlife Populations

Vegetation consists of native and introduced grasses, native forbs, aspen, and lodgepole pine. Grassland is the predominant habitat. Bighorn sheep and elk use the land intensively; mule deer also use this property intermittently. A variety of small mammals and birds found in grassland and aspen habitats also use this land.

C. Current Use:

The land is currently not used for livestock grazing or other activities.

D. Management Alternatives:

1) Purchase of the property fee title by FWP
2) No purchase

Alternative 1, the fee title purchase would provide long-term protection of the native habitats and protect key habitats that the Lost Creek bighorn sheep herd uses year-round.

The second alternative, the no purchase option, does not guarantee the protection of this parcel from development that would negatively impact wildlife habitat and the bighorn sheep and the other wildlife that use the property.

FWP Fee Title Purchase

The intent of the Jamison land purchase is to protect and enhance the wildlife habitat currently found on the property especially for the Lost Creek bighorn sheep herd.

No Purchase Alternative

This alternative requires some assumptions because the use and management of the property would vary depending on what the current owners decide to do with the property if this transaction does not happen. Properties in this area are actively being developed, and the current landowner previously proposed a subdivision for this property. The economic impacts associated with this alternative have not been calculated.

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Section II identified the management alternatives this report addresses. The fee title purchase would provide long-term protection of important wildlife habitat, and provide for public access. Section III quantifies the social and economic consequences of the two management alternatives following two basic accounting stances: financial and local area impacts.

Financial impacts address the cost of the fee title transfer to FWP and discuss the impacts on tax revenues to local government.

Expenditure data associated with the use of the property provides information for analyzing the impacts these expenditures may have on local businesses (i.e.- income and employment).

A. Financial Impacts

The financial impacts to FWP are related to the purchase, maintenance, and management costs associated with managing this land. Habitat Montana and Sheep Auction funds would be used to cover the purchase price of $757,000. This property would be managed as part of the existing Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area.

The financial impacts to local governments are the potential changes in tax revenues resulting from the fee title purchase. Sale of the Jamison property to FWP would not change the tax revenues that Anaconda-Deer Lodge County currently collects on this piece of property. FWP is required by Montana Code 87-1-603 to pay "to the county a sum equal to the amount of taxes which would be payable on county assessment of the property were it taxable to a private citizen." The property is currently classified as agricultural land and this classification would not change under FWP ownership.

B. Economic Impacts:

The fee title purchase would not impact local businesses in any significant way. Currently there are no agricultural practices occurring on the property and wildlife associated activities would not change substantially under ownership by FWP.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

As noted at the beginning of this document, the Jamison property is located in Anaconda- Deer Lodge County near Anaconda, Montana.

The fee title purchase by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks would provide long-term protection for wildlife habitat used by bighorn sheep and other wildlife, maintain the open space integrity of the land, and ensure public recreation opportunities. The fee title purchase and title transfer to FWP would not reduce tax revenues collected on this property from their current levels to Anaconda-Deer Lodge County under Montana Code 97-1-603. This purchase would also not have any significant financial impacts on local businesses.

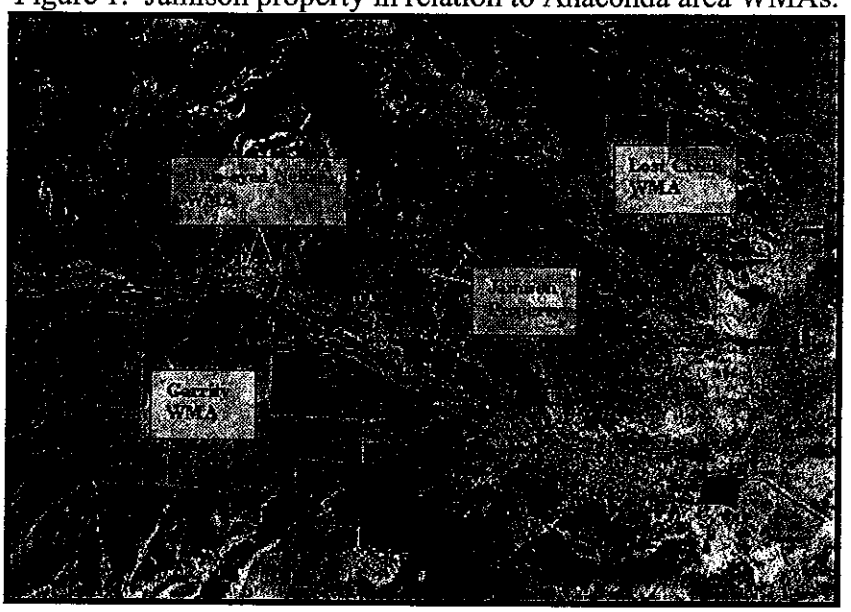
Appendix B.

Draft Management Plan

Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area
Jamison Addition

The Jamison property is within 2 miles of other parcels within FWP's Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and is equidistant to the Lost Creek and Garrity WMAs (Figure 1). If acquired by FWP the property will expand the Blue-eyed Nellie WMA to a total of approximately 458 acres and will be managed according to the same principles and regulations.

Figure 1. Jamison property in relation to Anaconda area WMAs.

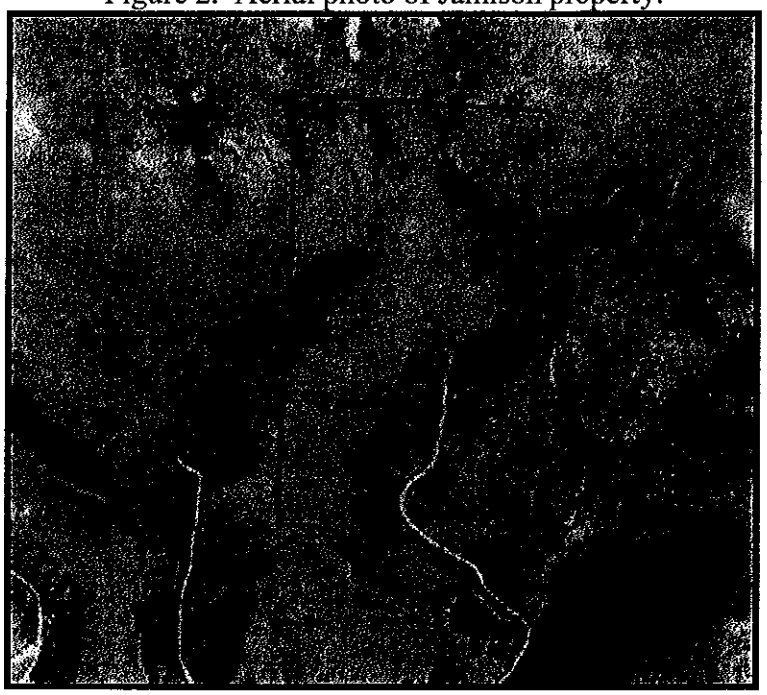


The Management Plan for the Blue-eyed Nellie WMA follows. The plan has three objectives: 1) Prevent soil erosion and conserve and improve vegetation communities, striving for maximum vegetation diversity dependent on soil types, 2) Manage for wintering bighorn sheep use during short periods of extreme winter conditions and early spring green up; maintain existing non-game species, and 3) Provide for public hunting and recreation.

Intermountain/foothills grassland (160 acres), aspen forest (80 acres), and dry open grown stands of lodge-pole pine (40 acres) characterize the 295-acre Jamison property (Figure 2). The dominant feature is a long grassy bench, lying between Stucky Gulch to the west and an unnamed arm of Levengood Gulch to the east that sweeps southeast towards Anaconda. Rough fescue and Idaho fescue predominate with wheat-grasses less common, forbs like prairie smoke, lupine, sticky geranium, and *Potentilla spp.* are interspersed throughout. This large tract of native intermountain grassland adjacent to aspen dominated riparian corridors provides excellent habitat for a variety native species. The Jamison parcel provides critical winter/spring range for

bighorn sheep and elk. The majority of the 300 head Lost Creek bighorn herd as well as over 200 head of elk winter on or within 3 miles of this site.

Figure 2. Aerial photo of Jamison property.



The condition of native grasslands on the Jamison property is good with fescues predominant. Knapweed is present, but it can be reduced and contained by the use of herbicides in concert with biological control. Half a mile of jeep trail was recently improved to a 24' right of way in the southeastern corner. Direct impacts to riparian habitat and aspen forest occurred as a result of this construction. Planting of native grasses along the road corridor and road ripping will be used to narrow this right of way which will be retained for access. Environmental impacts to the property from subdivision planning and layout on adjoining lands have been minimal.

Immediate management goals on the property would be to manage access, control weeds, and rehabilitate land disturbed by the developer. Installation of a gate and half a mile of fencing will be necessary to control access to the southern end of the parcel. Extensive habitat manipulations will not be necessary; control of weeds alone will allow existing grasslands to flourish.

Like other area WMAs, the Jamison parcel would be available for non-motorized recreation including hiking, hunting, wildlife watching, and photography. Livestock grazing would not be introduced. In order to minimize disturbance to wintering ungulates as well as calving elk, closure of this property to all use from December 1 to June 15 is appropriate.

Blue-eyed Nellie Wildlife Management Area
Management Plan

April 17, 2008 revision

INTRODUCTION

The original Blue-eyed Nellie acquisition involved 6.27 acres north of Cable Road at the base of Blue-eyed Nellie Gulch in 2000. This purchase was the first of four acquisitions in the area designed to protect and maintain bighorn sheep winter range in the west valley of Anaconda. The Long addition in January 2006 added 96.26 acres of key winter range on the valley bottom between Olsen Gulch and Blue-eyed Nellie Gulch. The North Lily addition, also in 2006, further expanded the WMA by the addition of 60 acres of mining claims. The proposed Jamison addition will add 295.81 acres below Stucky Ridge to the Blue-eyed Nellie complex and increase the WMA to over 458 acres of critical bighorn sheep winter range. All these lands adjoin 12,000 acres acquired by the U.S. Forest Service through the Lost Creek land exchange in 1994.

The purpose of these acquisitions is to provide critical winter range for bighorn sheep, conserve habitat for other species dependant on native intermountain grasslands, retain the connectivity of habitats north and south of Highway 1, and to ensure long-term public access to Stucky Ridge from multiple points of entry (Tin Can Gulch, Blue-eyed Nellie Gulch, and Levengood Gulch). The properties provide opportunities for joint FWP/USFS development of a public watchable wildlife areas and interpretive sites. They also improve public access management to the bighorn winter/spring range by allowing for seasonal vehicle closures.

Area Description

The original Blue-eyed Nellie WMA was composed of about 6-acres, located north of Highway 1, 5 miles west of Anaconda. The WMA was increased, in January of 2006, by the addition of the 96-acre Long Property and further expanded by the purchase of 60 acres from the North Lily Mining Company. The currently proposed Jamison addition would add 295-acres, primarily on a long grassy bench, 2 miles east of Blue-eyed Nellie Gulch, to the WMA complex.

The properties cover open grassland, scrublands, aspen groves, and cliffs in the Warm Springs Creek drainage at 5267 feet elevation. A small grove of cottonwoods occurs on the original WMA, which is divided into two parcels of approximately of 2 and 4 acres with the Anaconda Gun Club in the middle. The Long property lies along the valley bottom adjacent to Highway 1, while North Lily is at the base of Blue-eyed Nellie Gulch and adjoining cliffs, and the Jamison addition is centered on a grassy bench below Stucky Ridge. Landowners in the west valley include the United States Forest Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and a number of private parties.

GOAL

Manage for highly productive, diverse vegetative communities that will provide high quality forage and cover for native wildlife species, with an emphasis on bighorn sheep; manage for hunting and other recreational opportunities for the public and access to National Forest lands; and provide a site for wildlife viewing and interpretation.

Objective 1: Prevent soil erosion, conserve and improve the vegetation communities, striving for maximum vegetation diversity dependent on soil type.

Problem 1: Noxious weeds have become established on the property.

Strategy: Determine the extent and degree of noxious weed problem and implement a weed control program utilizing biological and chemical control.

Problem 2: Boundary fences are incomplete.

Strategy: Currently there are no conflicts with trespass livestock, but fences should be maintained to hinder motor vehicle trespass.

Problem 3: Effects of public access. Increased public access, particularly with respect to vehicles, can result in habitat damage.

Strategy: Prohibit off road vehicle use. Fencing, road ripping, and weed control completed in 2007 have greatly reduced illegal motor vehicle trespass and garbage dumping on lands between Blue-eyed Nellie Gulch and Tin Can Gulch. Vehicle access has been restricted to established roads. A parking area has been established and FWP is in coordination with USFS regarding travel management. Weed control and fencing will be completed on the Jamison property.

Objective 2: Manage for wintering bighorn sheep use during short periods of extreme winter conditions and early spring green up; maintain existing non-game species.

Problem 1: Noxious weeds have reduced forage availability on a portion of the property.

Strategy: Implement a weed management program using biological and chemical weed control to restore native grasslands.

Problem 2: The Blue-eyed Nellie WMA represents only a portion of critical habitat that is not in public ownership.

Strategy: Pursue additional acquisition options with the Atlantic Richfield Company and the Moore family. Manage FWP lands in cooperation with other local landowners.

Objective 3: Provide for public hunting and recreation.

Problem 1: Public access to adjacent USFS lands must be maintained.

Strategy: Acquisition of the Jamison property will allow access to federal lands on Stucky Ridge near Anaconda. Continue to work with USFS on area travel management.

Problem 2: Wildlife viewing and interpretation opportunities have been restricted due to lack of public property along Highway 1 and North Cable Road.

Strategy: Provide parking areas for access during seasonal closures and wildlife viewing. Pursue joint interpretative signing and displays with the USFS regarding the Lost Creek bighorn sheep population and habitat.

MONITORING

Management Actions: Management actions will be evaluated through the MEPA process.

Vegetation: Vegetation transects may be established; these transects will aim to determine species composition, plant succession, and forage production. Transects will be monitored on a regular basis to determine long-term trends.

Population: Ground and aircraft surveys will monitor numbers of bighorn sheep annually. Seasonal use will be monitored during periods of extreme weather conditions and spring green up.

Public use: Public use will be determined by public contact. This information will be used to determine travel and seasonal restrictions.