Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it.

Norman McLean
Crown of the Continent Ecosystem

Glacier Waterton National Park

Swan Watershed

Rocky Mountain Front

Bob Marshall Wilderness

Blackfoot Watershed

(10 million acres)
Blackfoot Watershed ~ 1.5 million acres

- Missoula
- Powell
- Lewis & Clark
- Roger’s Pass
- Bonner
- Clearwater River
- North Fork
- Continental Divide
- Nevada Creek

Legend:
- Forested
- Grasslands
- Crop
- Alpine
• 8,096 residents
• 2,800 households
• Largest density is 300 persons per square mile
• Growth of 21% between 1990-2000
1,900 Miles of Perennial Streams
Blackfoot ‘in danger’ as it flows through people

By GRANT SAUSEK
IR Staff Writer

The Blackfoot River still runs hard. But the river — Norman Maclean immortalized in “A River Runs Through It” — has changed from one of the West’s premier trout streams into one of the West’s most endangered streams.

The river’s decline has reached the point that American Rivers designated it Wednesday as one of the 10 most endangered rivers on the continent.

“It has been overdone,” said Lincoln native Becky Garland. “It has been over-mined, over-cut, over-flushed, over-recreated and over-looked.”

From beginning to end, the river runs down west for 130-some miles through large valleys and tight canyons. For the river — and its fish — it is a run through an environmental gauntlet.

Pollution from abandoned mines fouls its upper reaches. Logging and agriculture stress the river’s middle section. The lower, wider portion of the Blackfoot is crowded by growing numbers of recreationalists.

Through it all, the Big Blackfoot remains beautiful. Except for where it begins.

“There’s the Goddamn mess of minerals up here you’ve ever seen,” 78-year-old Dan Korneck said from the office of the White Hope Mine. "Mining them is this country’s tradition." Korneck and other family members have operated the White Hope Mine — which is in a drainage of the Blackfoot’s headwaters — since World War II.

The mine operates in the shadow of the Mike Horse Mine, an inactive mine infamous among conservation groups. Even though the Mike Horse closed for the last time more than 30 years ago, barren creeks of acidic, rust-colored water heavy with copper, iron, zinc, manganese and cadmium still flow from it and other nearby mines into the Blackfoot.

Miner Dan Korneck: “It ain’t going to get cleaned up overnight.”

(For RIVER, page 3A)
IS THIS TRAIN WRECK AVOIDABLE?

Blackfoot Watershed

Resource Threats

Blackfoot Challenge
What compelled people to create the Blackfoot Challenge?
Concerns over the health of the Blackfoot River.
Private-Public Partnerships
Formed in 1993, the Blackfoot Challenge exists to coordinate efforts that will conserve and enhance the natural resources and rural way of life in the Blackfoot Watershed for present and future generations.
Blackfoot Challenge Board and Partners

- Builds trust and credibility
- Communicates, cooperates, shares
- Private and public leadership
Blackfoot Challenge Board and Partners

- Private Landowners
- Business Owners
- Conservation Groups
- Plum Creek Timber Company
- Pyramid Mountain Lumber
- State Agencies
  - Department Natural Resources & Conservation
  - Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Federal Agencies
  - Bureau of Land Management
  - Forest Service
  - Fish & Wildlife Service
  - Natural Resources Conservation Service
What enables us to be successful?

Community-based Conservation

- Driven by community values
- Invites participation by all stakeholders, private & public
- Includes a coordinating framework
- Is supported by good science
Committees

Executive

Conservation Strategies

Wildlife

Water Resources

Weeds Steering

Outreach

Forestry

Education

Challenge

BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE
Keeping Landscapes Intact
Coordinating land conservation and stewardship
Conservation Easements


[Map showing conservation easements and public land areas]
Community shaping its future through plan for resale of 89,000 acres of corporate timber lands.
BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY PROJECT, MT
Potential Ownership

- Conservation Easements
- Public Land
- BLM
- USFS
- DNRC
- Private
- MT FWP
Blackfoot Community Conservation Area

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE CORE
MANAGEMENT GOAL:

To promote a diverse multi-age forest using sustainable forestry practices.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Maintain and recruit forested cover of large diameter trees.

2. Maintain and recruit large diameter snags and burned trees.

3. Maintain and expand aspen stands.


5. Pre-commercially thin timber on the most productive forest stands with the highest growth potential in a manner which will promote a diversity of species.
Forestry/Fuel Reduction/Fire Management
Total of $84,5120 from Montana DNRC Western Competitive Grant

- 113 acres fuels reduction
- 6.5 miles of road maintenance
- 1300 # native seed for restoration/road BMP
Ponderosa Pine/Rogue Fescue Restoration
Funded by JumpStart II through partnership with Pyramid Mountain Lumber Company
Stand prior to Treatment

- **Martin Park**, 111 Acres
  The South portion of the park is primarily a Ponderosa Pine over story with native rough fescue grass component now overgrown with encroachment Ponderosa Pine and Douglas Fir.

  The North portion of the park is primarily a Douglas Fir over story with native rough fescue grass component now overgrown with encroachment ponderosa pine and Douglas Fir.

- **Dick Creek Park**, 65 acres
  Primarily a Ponderosa Pine over story with native rough rescue grass component now overgrown with encroachment ponderosa pine and Douglas Fir.
Blackfoot Community Conservation Area

**Stand Treatment**

- **Martin Park South**, reduce excess forest fuels and restore open Ponderosa Pine savanna appearance by removing Douglas Fir and favoring larger diameter Ponderosa Pine for leave trees. Accomplished through mechanical treatment (hot saw and mastication) and hand slashing residual greater than one foot in height. BA after treatment will be 0-30

- **Martin Park North**, restore open park savanna appearance by removing encroaching Douglas Fir located in the existing park and leaving larger diameter Douglas Fir to maintain the savanna. As treatments progress away from the park itself, residual will be thinned to a variable spacing - wider to begin with and gradually more closely spaced yet maintaining at least a10-20 foot spacing between crowns. Combination of mechanical and hand treatments. BA after treatment will be 0-40

- **Dick Creek Park**, reduce excess forest fuels and restore open Ponderosa Pine savanna appearance by removing Douglas Fir and favoring larger diameter Ponderosa Pine for leave trees. Accomplished through mechanical treatment (hot saw and mastication) and hand slashing residual greater than one foot in height. BA after treatment will be 0-30
Blackfoot Community Conservation Area

The Blackfoot Community Conservation Area (BCCA) is an innovative project across public and private lands:

- community forest ownership
- cooperative ecosystem management
- a 15-member citizen group manages the area

Acres at a Glance in 2011

- 41,000 – cooperatively managed public and private land
- 5,609 – private land with open hunting access
- 3,000 – under new rest-rotation grazing system
- 700 – forest land restored
- 200 – controlled for weeds
Involving Communities in Conservation
Building watershed-wide partnerships through education and outreach
Professional Education for Teachers and Resources
Youth Education
Forestry Committee

Landscape Level Fire Management And Forest Restoration
Coordinating private and public partnerships
By working together, Fire management
Fuels Mitigation Task Forces

• Cooperation between federal, state and local fire management personnel to implement Community Wildfire Protection Plans

• Task Forces offer "one stop shopping" to assist private land owners with mitigating fuel loads

• Access to federal and state funds for fuels thinning work on private lands

• Working on identifying Primary Lines of Defense
Figure 11. Results of the risk assessment identifying four priority levels for risk in the wildland/urban interface of the project area.
Forest Restoration
The Montana Forest Restoration Committee (MFRC) is primarily a volunteer consensus-based collaborative group, which was formed in January 2007 to help guide restoration of Montana’s National Forests.
Multi-Agency Integrated Restoration Strategy – Blackfoot Project

Partners are planning coordinated and complementary cross boundary, landscape-level fire management and forest restoration in the Blackfoot Watershed.
The Southwestern Crown of the Continent
Collaborating to Restore Forest Health at the Landscape Level
Outreach Committee

• **Within the watershed**
  -- address local concerns
  -- promote public/private partnership
  -- bring resources to landowners/managers

• **Outside the watershed**
  -- small place in big country
  -- sharing lessons learned
  -- bring resources back home

Tours and presentations reaching 3,000 participants annually
Conserving Water
Balancing water needs and availability through shared sacrifice & water efficiency projects
Emergency Drought Response Plan

- All Water Users Involved
- Reduce Water Use During Low Flows
- Irrigator Water Conservation Plans
- Fish in AM only
- Domestic & Community Conservation
- Everyone pitches in Basin-Wide
Long-term Conservation

- Sprinkler Irrigation
- Soil Monitors
- Ditch Lining
- Stream Restoration
In partnership with North Powell Conservation District, Missoula Electric Cooperative, and the Montana DNRC, we are evaluating irrigation systems and promoting efficient use of energy.
Weeds Steering Committee

Managing Weeds
Coordinate weed management strategies across boundaries
12 Landowner-Led Weed Management Areas
Integrated Weed Management

Revegetation

BioControl

Hand-Pulling

Multi-Species Grazing

Herbicides
Reducing Human-Wildlife Conflicts
Proactive and preventative conflict abatement strategies and projects
Waste Management
Fencing
Ranger Rider
Our Partners

- 160 – Private landowners
- 20 – Federal, state and county agencies
- 30 – Businesses
- 30 – Non-profits
Accomplishments

140,000 – acres in conservation easements
89,000 – acres shaped by community by resale of timber lands
100,000 – acres under noxious weeds management
  2,300 – acres of native grasslands restored
    75 – irrigators & outfitters in drought plan
    50 – cfs of instream flow saved annually
116,000 – kWh identified of potential annual savings
  50,000 – kWh used more efficiently
Accomplishments

94 – % reduction in grizzly bear conflicts from 2003-2009
3,000 – carcasses removed from 50 ranches
50,000 – feet of electric fence protect calving areas & beehives
  Two – Full-time range riders
  120 – residents in neighborhood network
75,000 - acres forest restoration proposed
  22 - structures protected
  140 - acres private forested land thinned for fire safety
  300 - acres of public forest land restored
2,800 – residents reached
  7 – schools served
Accomplishments

Blackfoot Watershed
~ 1996 ~
Accomplishments

- 93% reduction in grizzly bear conflicts from 2003-2009
- 1,700 carcasses removed from 50 ranches
- 50,000-50,000 feet of electric fence protect calving areas & beehives
- One-time range rider
- 120 residents in neighborhood network
- 2,500 acres of forest restoration proposed
- 22 structures protected
- 140 acres of private forested land thinned for fire safety
- 300 acres of public forest land restored
- 2,800 residents reached
- 7 schools served

Blackfoot Watershed ~ 2011 ~

Conservation Lands

Ownership:
- Wilderness Area
- Other Public Land
- FWP Wildlife Management Areas
- Private & State Trust Land
- Salish & Kootenai Tribal Lands
- Lubrecht Experimental Forest
What constrains partnerships?

- Time
- Resources
- Proper pacing
What sustains them?

- Communication
- Participation
- Trust
Working Together

We believe that the primary challenge for conservation in the 21st Century is how to sustain working landscapes, working communities, and working people.

One of the most important building blocks in any region is strong, inclusive, and community-based partnerships.

“I do believe (the Blackfoot Watershed) is the birthplace of the conservation concept for the 21st century, so I’m very, very proud of you.”

—Ken Salazar, U.S. Secretary of Interior on July 16, 2011 in the Blackfoot Watershed
Better Rural Communities Through Cooperative Conservation

www.blackfootchallenge.org

outreach@blackfootchallenge.org