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Bruce A. Measure
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Rhonda Whiting
Vice-Chair
Montana

Bill Bradbury
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Tom Karier
Washington

Phil Rockefeller
Washington

May 31, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Kerry Berg, Montana office

SUBJECT: Presentation by Gary Burnett, Executive Director, Blackfoot Challenge

The Executive Director of the Blackfoot Challenge, Gary Burnett, will provide the Council with an update on current activities of the organization. The Blackfoot Challenge was instrumental in the development of the Blackfoot Subbasin Plan adopted by the Council last year.

The Blackfoot Challenge is a landowner-based group that coordinates management of the Blackfoot River, its tributaries, and adjacent lands. It is organized locally and known nationally as a model for preserving the rural character and natural beauty of a watershed. Although its charter dates to 1993, Blackfoot landowners have played an instrumental stewardship role since the late 1970s—bringing conservation easement legislation, walk-in hunting areas and recreation corridor management to Montana. This and other information about the organization can be found at www.blackfootchallenge.org/.

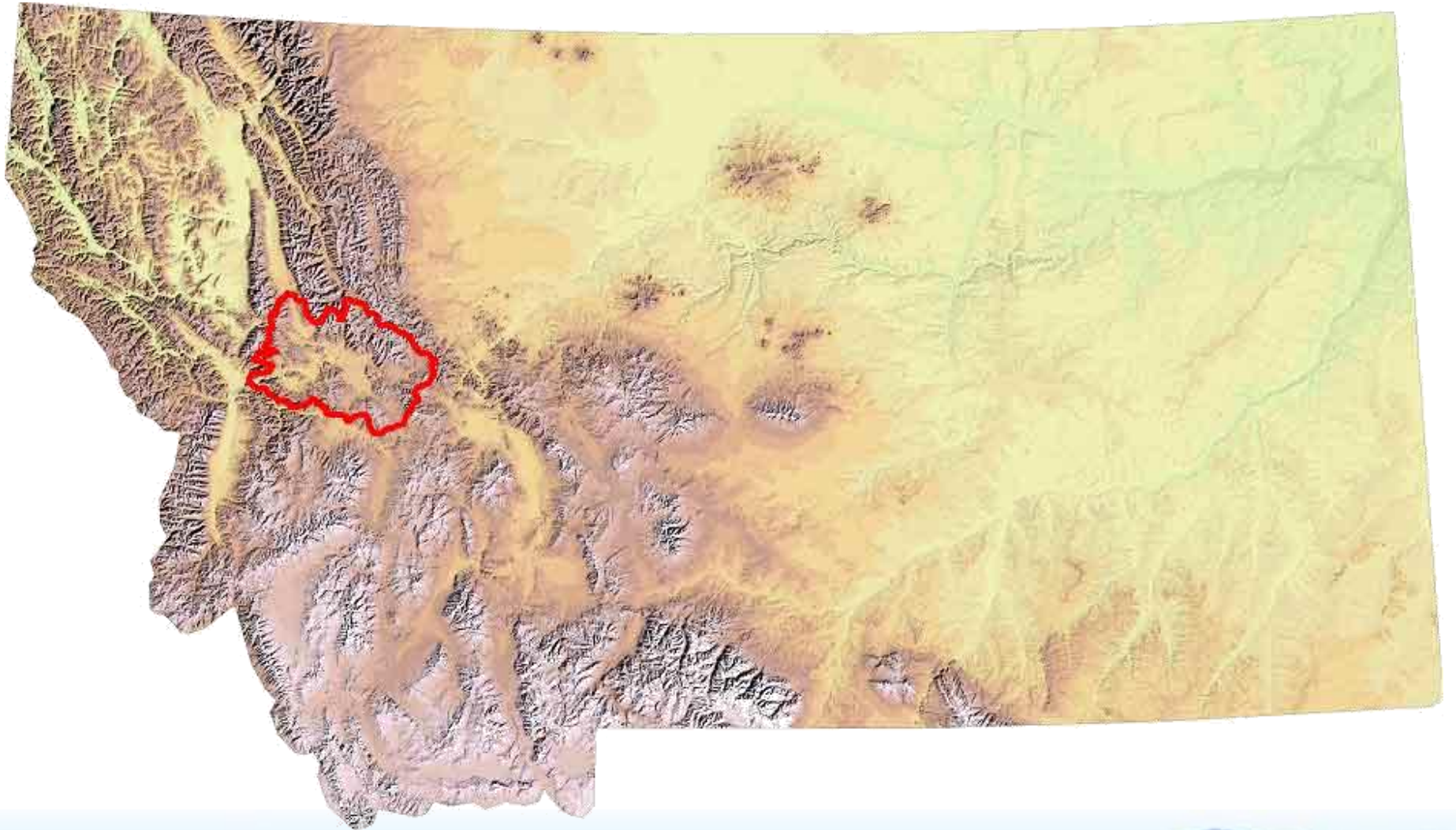


BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE



**Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Missoula, Montana
June 13, 2012**

Blackfoot Watershed





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

Norman McLean

Crown of the Continent Ecosystem

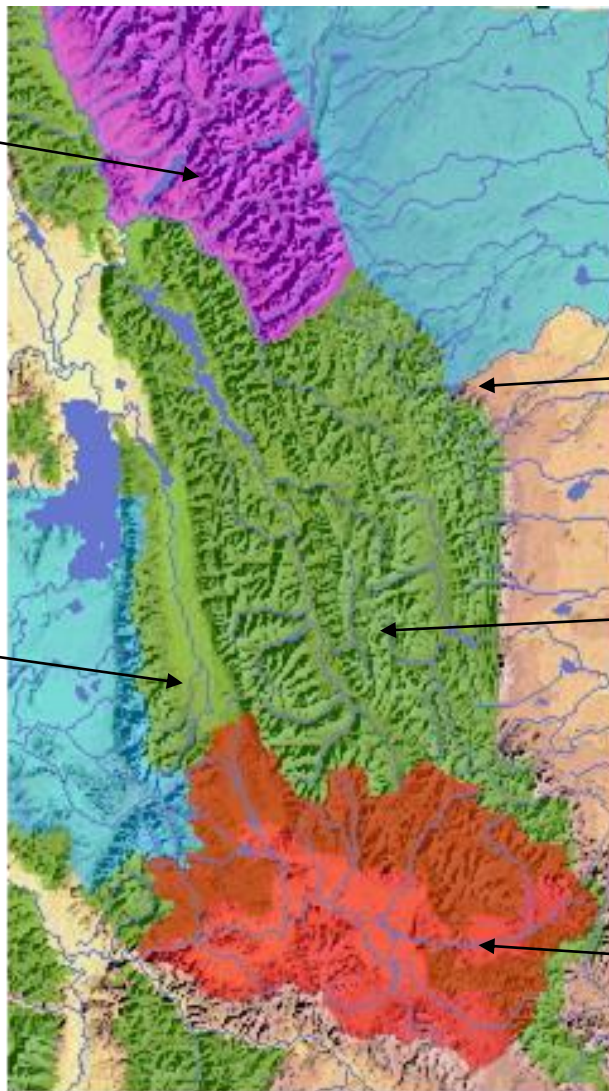
**Glacier
Waterton
National Park**

**Rocky Mountain
Front**

**Swan
Watershed**

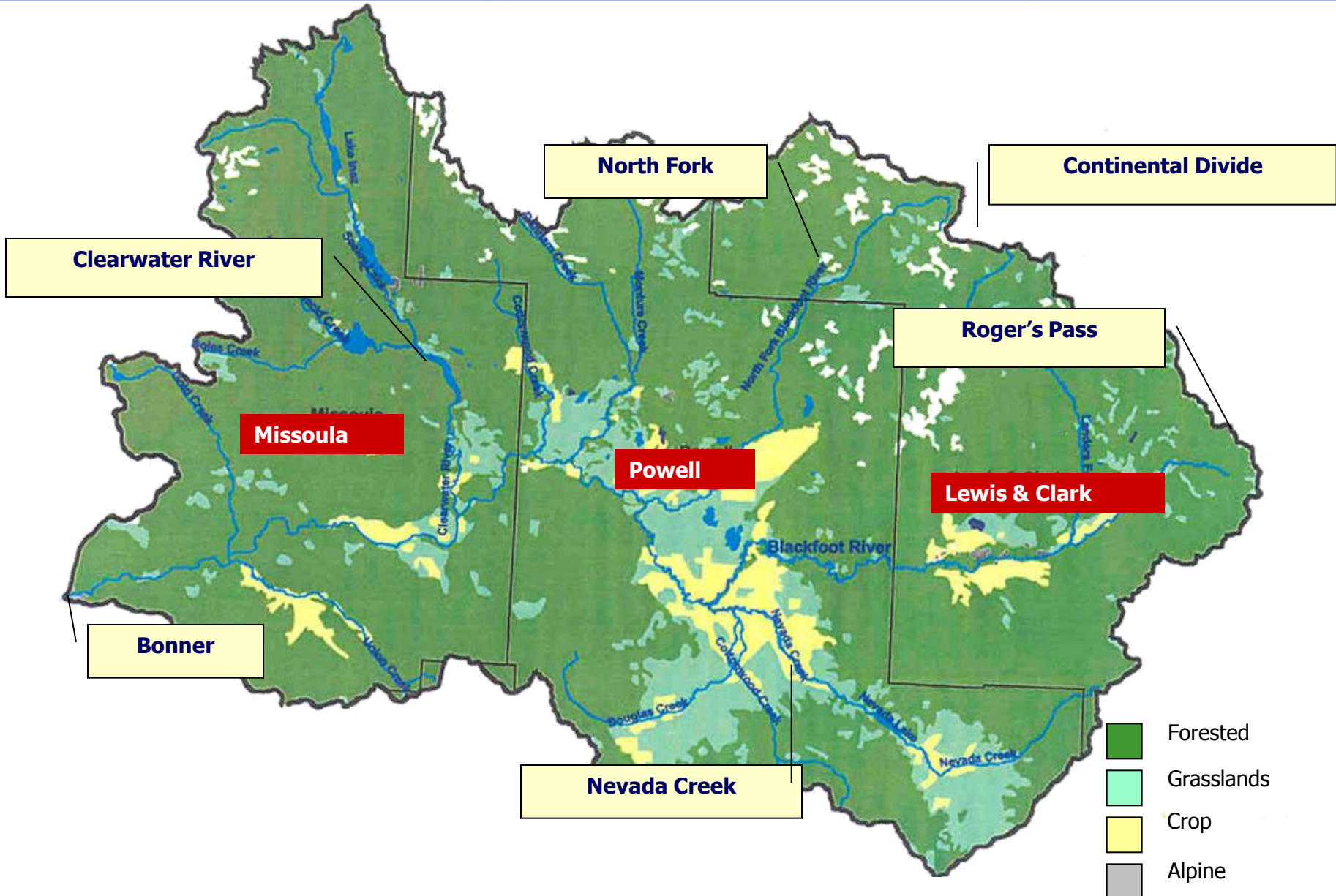
**Bob Marshall
Wilderness**

(10 million acres)



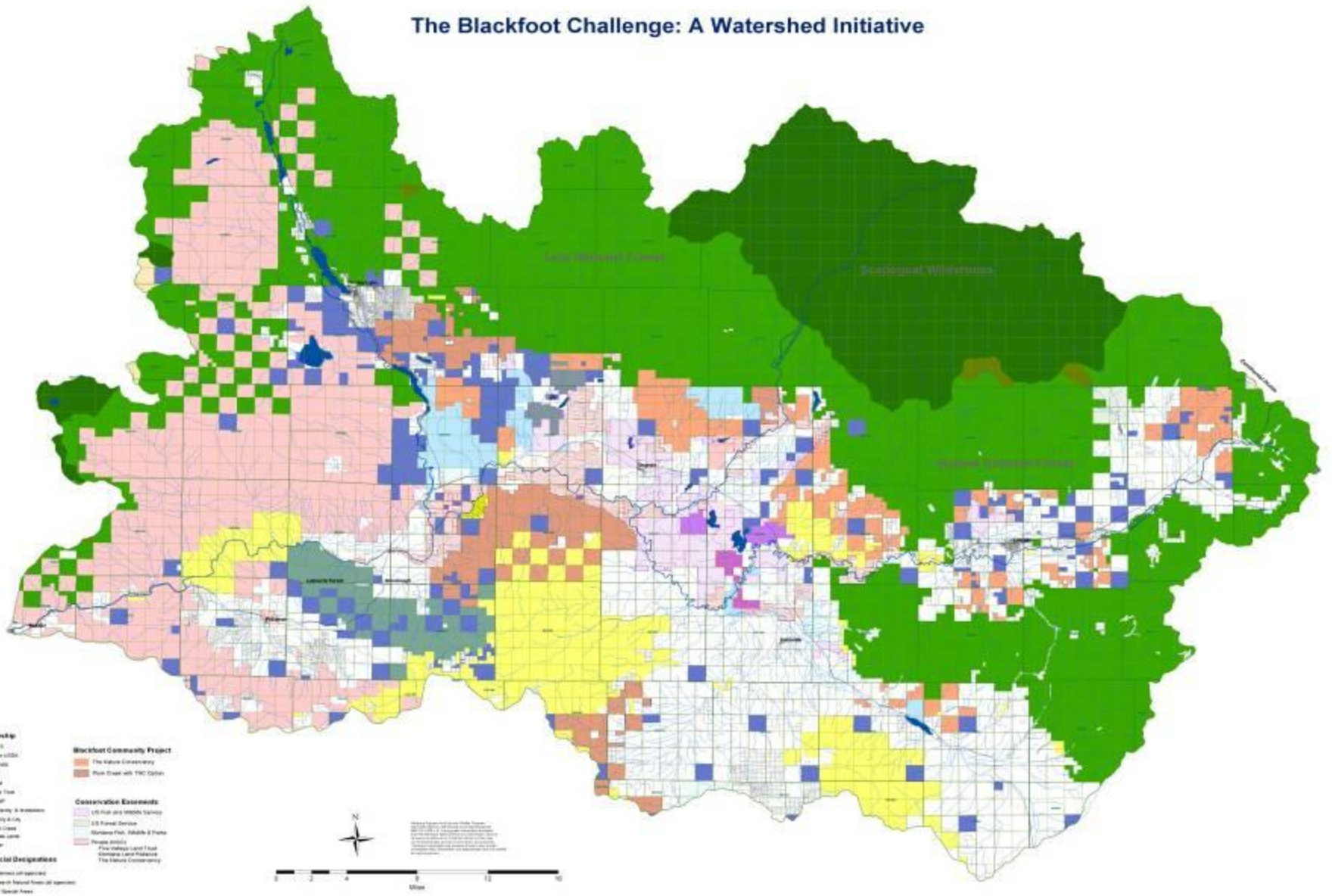
**Blackfoot
Watershed**

Blackfoot Watershed ~ 1.5 million acres



- 
- **8,096 residents**
 - **2,800 households**
 - **Largest density is 300 persons per square miles**
 - **Growth of 21% between 1990-2000**

The Blackfoot Challenge: A Watershed Initiative





**BLACKFOOT
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**BLACKFOOT
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1,900 Miles of Perennial Streams





JSalisbury



**BLACKFOOT
CHALLENGE**



**BLACKFOOT
CHALLENGE**

A RIVER OVERDONE

It runs straight and hard — on a map or from an airplane it is almost a straight line running due west from its headwaters at Rogers Pass on the Continental Divide to Bonner, Montana, where it empties into the South Fork of the Columbia. It runs hard all the way.

— Norman Maclean, "A River Runs Through It."

By GRANT SASEK
IR Staff Writer

The Big 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-fished, over-recreated and overlooked."

From beginning to end, the river runs due 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.

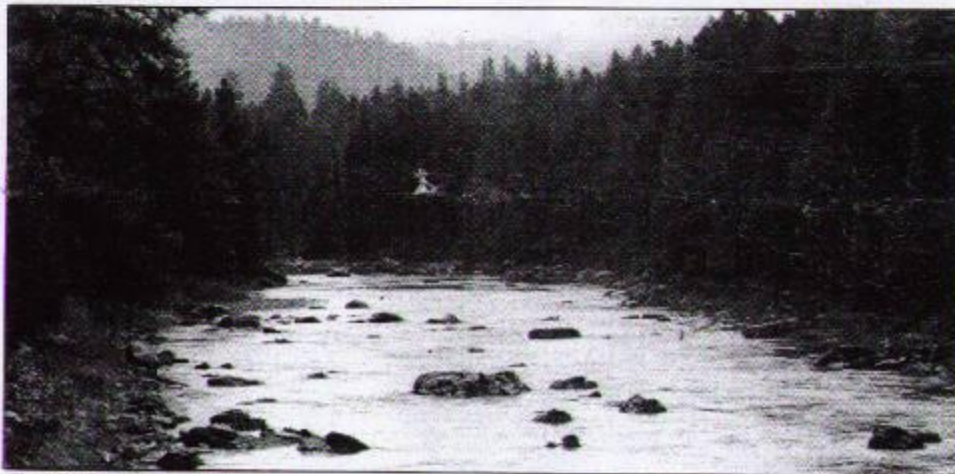
Pollution from abandoned mines foul its upper reaches. Logging and agriculture stress the river's middle section. The lower, wider portion of the Blackfoot is crowded by growing numbers of recreationalists.

Through it all, the Big Blackfoot remains beautiful.

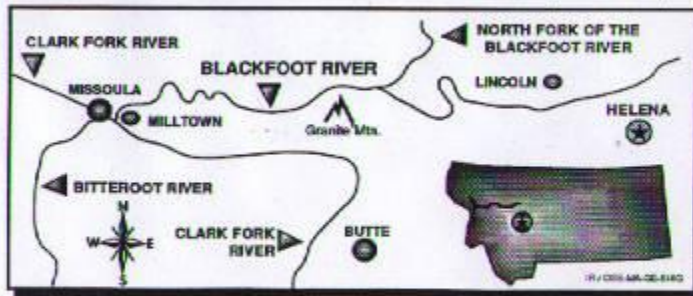
Except for where it begins.

"There's the Goddamnest mess of minerals up here you've ever seen," 68-year-old Dan Kornec said from the office of the White Hope Mine.

Blackfoot 'in danger' as it flows through people



The Blackfoot River just before it meets the Clark Fork. (Staff photos by Grant Sasek)



"Mining them is this country's tradition."

Kornec or other family members have operated the White Hope Mine — which is in a drainage of the Blackfoot's headwaters — since World War I.

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

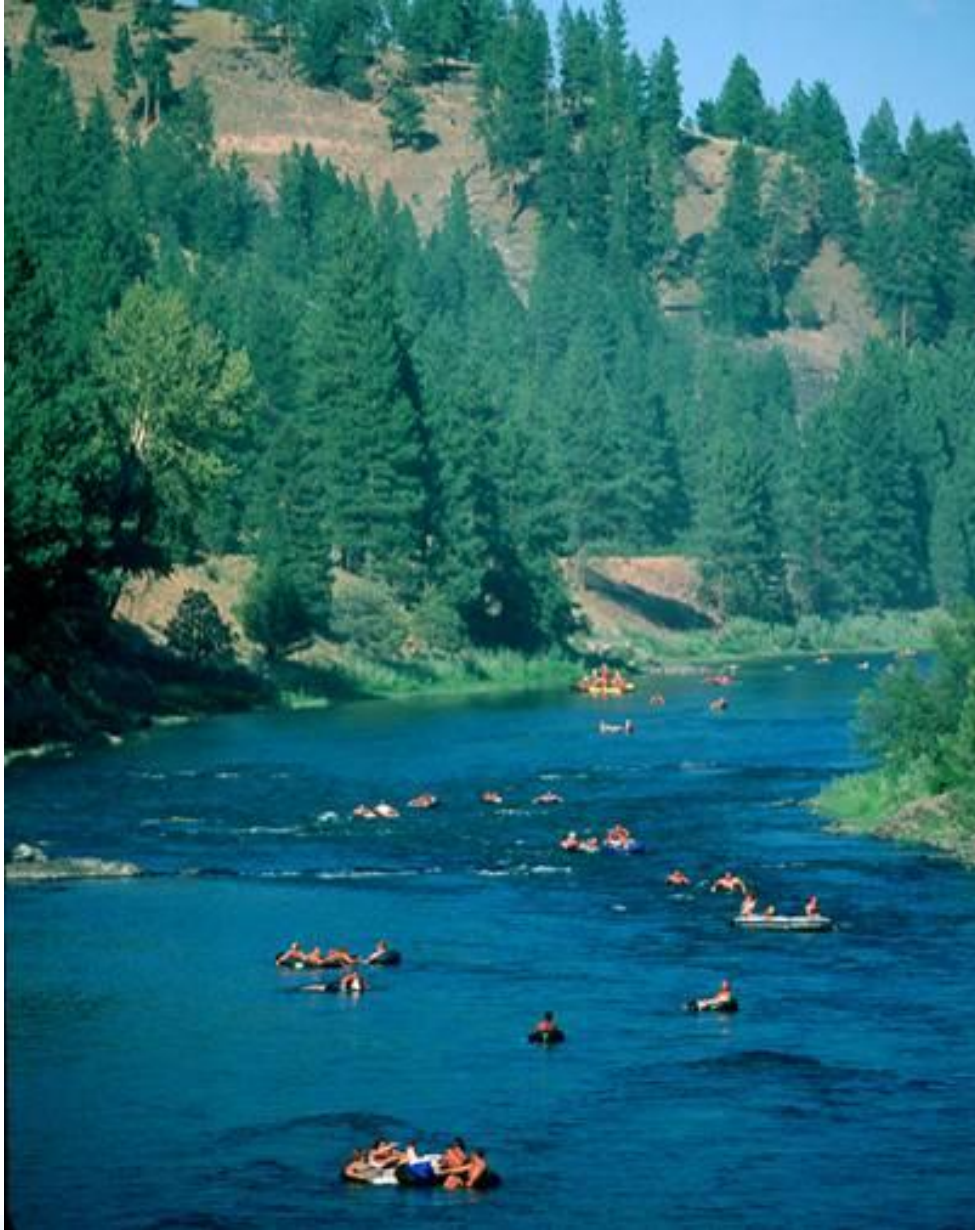
crecks of acidic, rust-colored water heavy with copper, iron, zinc, manganese and cadmium still flow from it and other nearby mines into the Black-

(More RIVER, page 8A)



Miner Dan Kornec: "It ain't going to get cleaned up overnight."

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IS THIS TRAIN WRECK AVOIDABLE?



Blackfoot Watershed

Resource Threats



**BLACKFOOT
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"Ridge to Ridge"





Private-Public Partnerships

MISSION

Formed in 1993, the Blackfoot Challenge coordinates 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

- 
- **Builds trust and credibility**
 - **Communicates, cooperates, shares**
 - **Private and public leadership**

Blackfoot Challenge Board

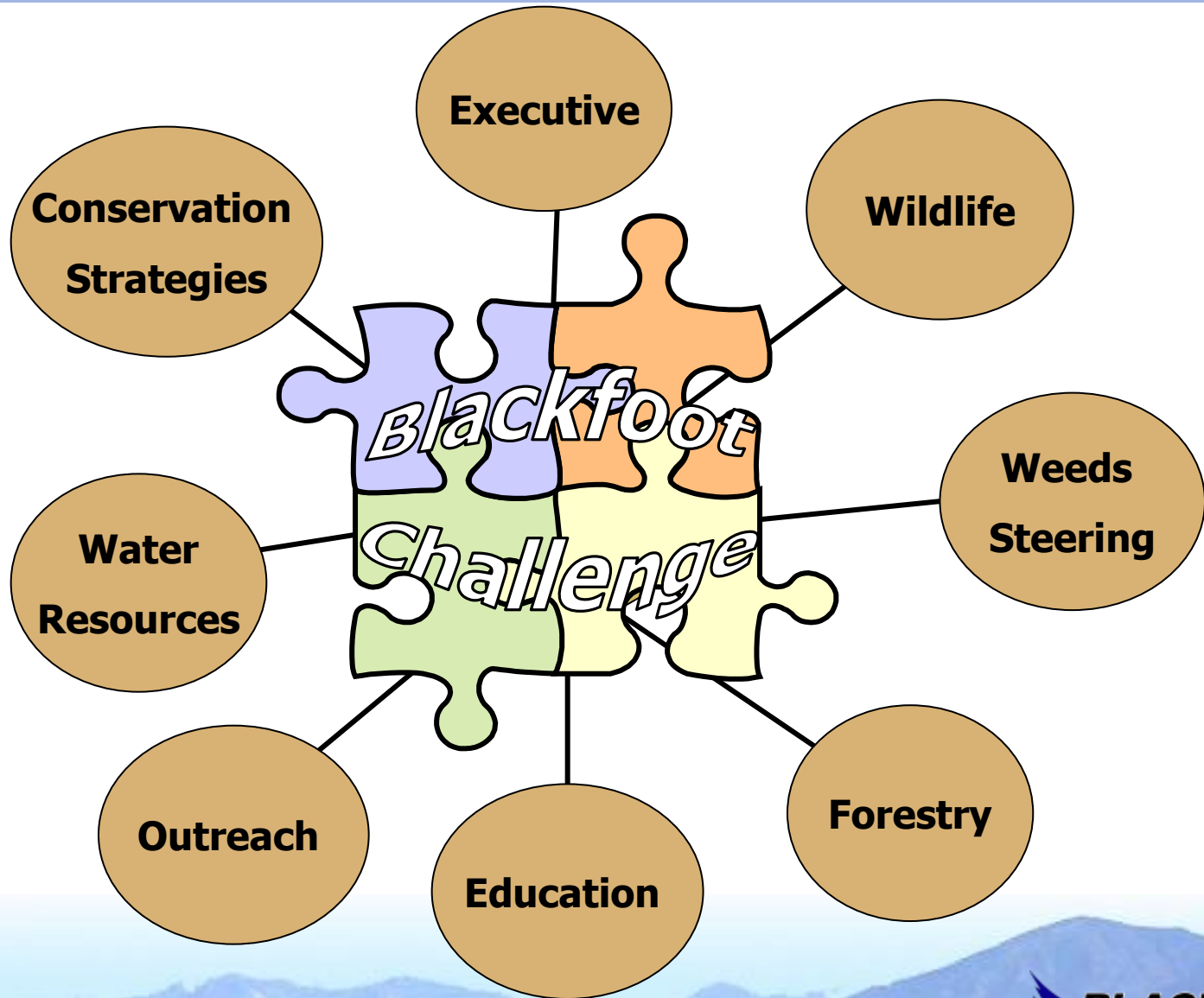
- **Private Landowners**
- **Business Owners**
- **Conservation Groups**
- **Plum Creek Timber Company**
- **Pyramid Mountain Lumber**
- **State Agencies**
 - **Department Natural Resources & Conservation**
 - **Fish, Wildlife & Parks**
- **Federal Agencies (Board Members or Partners)**
 - **Bureau of Land Management**
 - **Forest Service**
 - **Fish & Wildlife Service**
 - **Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Community-based Conservation

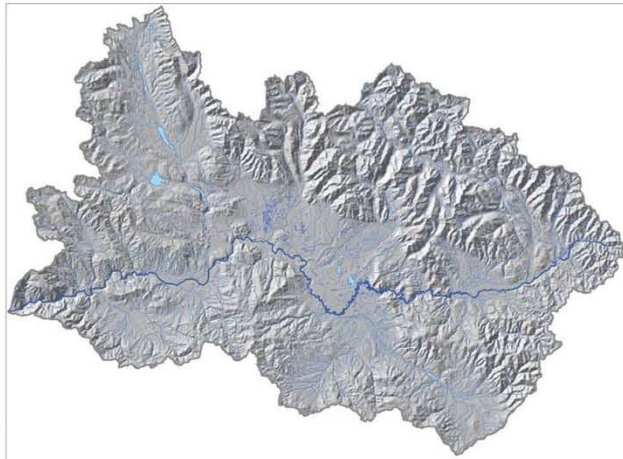
- Driven by community values
- Invites participation by all stakeholders, private & public
- Includes a coordinating framework
- Is supported by good science



Committees



Blackfoot Subbasin Plan



Prepared for the Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Prepared by the Blackfoot Challenge and Trout Unlimited

August 2009

In February, 2011, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council adopted the Blackfoot Sub-basin Plan as part of its Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.

The Sub-basin planning process, which was led by the Blackfoot Challenge and Trout Unlimited, was a collaborative process that involved dozens of individuals and assistance from state, local, and federal agencies and several non-governmental organizations. The effort took more than two years and hundreds of hours of volunteer effort.

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Blackfoot Subbasin Plan

To assist the NWPC in setting mitigation funding priorities, the Plan:

- 1) identifies the goals for fish, wildlife and habitat
- 2) defines the objectives that measure progress toward those goals
- 3) establishes the strategies to meet those objectives
- 4) incorporates much of the existing information related to fish and wildlife activities in a subbasin into a single document.

The value of this sub-basin plan is two-fold:

First it captures, in a single document, the scope of the conservation effort in the Blackfoot, and provides a useful benchmark against which to measure our progress toward those conservation goals.

Second, with the Sub-basin plan in place, conservation partners in the Blackfoot will be on strong footing when seeking BPA support of conservation efforts that embrace the mitigation goals of the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.

Water Resources Committee



Conserving Water

Balancing water needs and availability through shared sacrifice & water efficiency projects

Blackfoot Drought Response

- **Expected drought following winter of 2000**
- **Dissatisfaction with past enforcement of Murphy Right**
- **Support for local approach**
- **Shared sacrifice – drought affects everyone**

Goals

- **Aid in the equitable distribution of water resources during low flow periods**
- **Minimize adverse impacts of drought on fisheries and water resources**

Triggers & Actions

Flow Trigger – 700 cfs



Temperature Triggers



Long-Term Water Conservation

- **Habitat Restoration**
- **Water Leases**
- **Irrigation Efficiency**
 - **Energy Efficiency Evaluations**
 - **Irrigation Scheduling**
 - **Maintenance Education**
 - **Conveyance Efficiency**

Energy Efficiency

**46 irrigation systems
evaluated**

**422,342 kWh savings
identified**

**185,933 kWh conserved
or used more efficiently**



Irrigation Scheduling

**2,600 acres under
irrigation scheduling**

1,200 acres in 2012

One-on-one consultations

Weekly irrigation reports

Irrigation guide



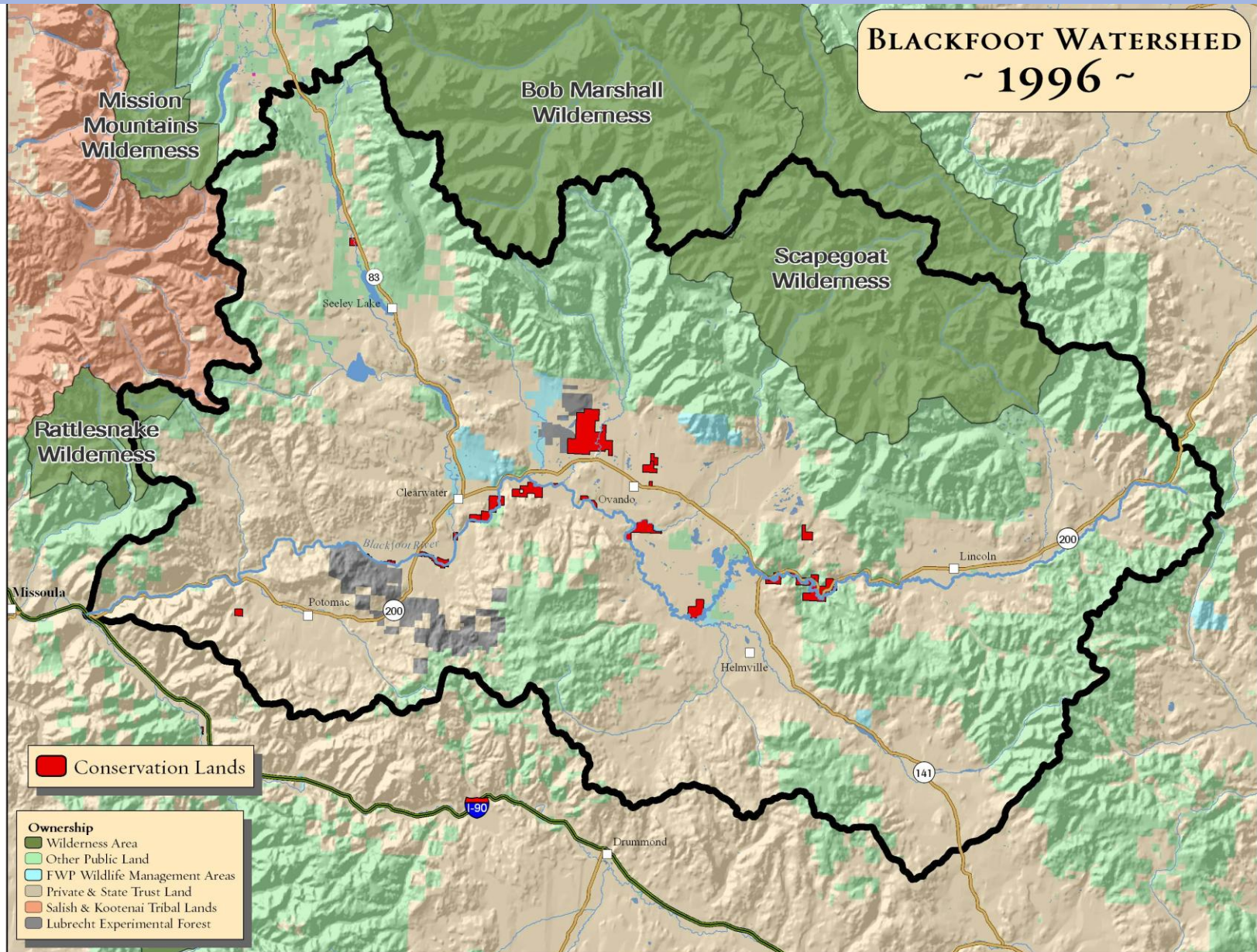
Our Partners

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

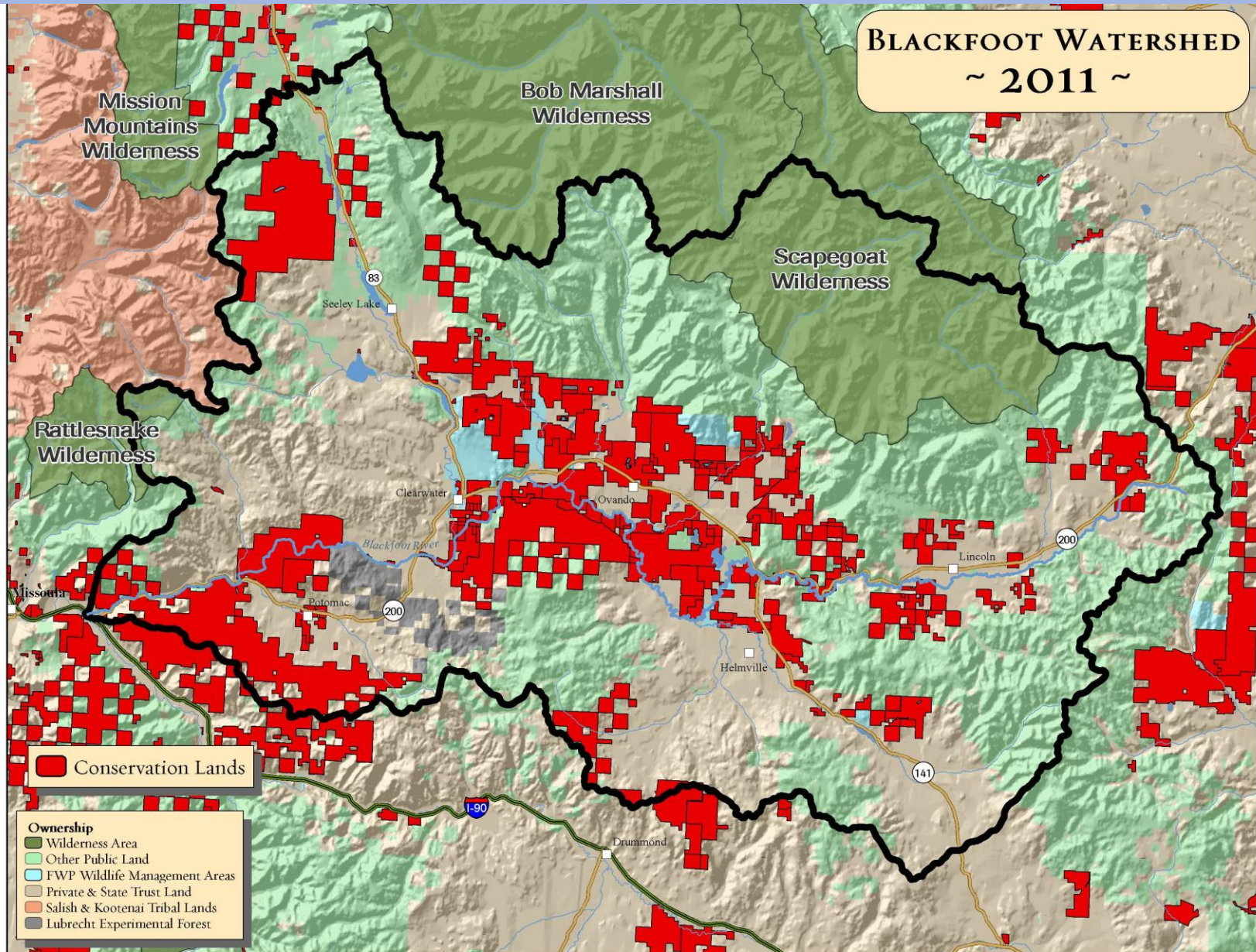
Accomplishments

- 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
- 422,000 – kWh identified of potential annual savings
- 185,000 – kWh used more efficiently
 - 94% - reduction in grizzly bear conflicts from 2003-2009
 - 3,000 – carcasses removed from 50 ranches
- 70,000 – feet of electric fence protect calving areas & beehives
 - One – Full-time range rider
 - 120 – residents in neighborhood network
- 75,000 - acres forest restoration proposed
- 1,200- acres private forested land thinned for fire safety
 - 42 - structures protected
 - 2,800 – residents reached
 - 7 – schools served

Accomplishments



Accomplishments



What constrains partnerships?

- Time
- Resources
- Proper pacing





What sustains them?

- **Communication**
- **Participation**
- **Trust**





*Better Rural Communities Through
Cooperative Conservation*

www.blackfootchallenge.org

outreach@blackfootchallenge.org



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