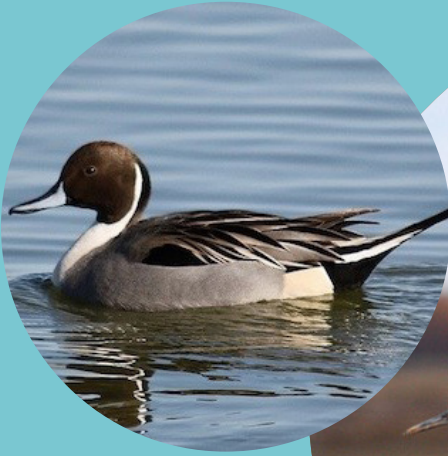


HELP US CONSERVE

A FLATHEAD VALLEY ECOLOGICAL AND COMMUNITY TREASURE



**FLATHEAD
LAND TRUST**
Conserving Our Legacy of Land and Water



400 ACRES
OF FARMLAND



45 ACRES
OF WETLAND



129 SPECIES
OF BIRDS

We have a rare opportunity to conserve almost 400 acres of rich farmland with an exceptional 45 acre pothole wetland that is part of an ecologically important area for birds and wildlife and to establish a bird viewing area for the public in the “West Valley” northwest of Kalispell. But, we need your help and financial support to make it happen! The “West Valley” includes a complex of wetlands in agricultural fields that support some of the highest numbers and diversity of wetland birds in the Flathead Valley. This unique area is a true ecological and community treasure that is at risk of being lost to fast growing commercial and residential development nearby. Time is of the essence to save this incredible place for future generations.



This valuable conservation project focuses on the conservation of wetland habitat that is high priority in all the national plans of the major bird conservation initiatives. The project is in an area identified by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), and Flathead Audubon as key resting and feeding habitat for migratory birds. The project wetland is crucial habitat especially during drought years as there is a delay from high precipitation until groundwater reaches the wetland; thus, it can be most full in dry years. One hundred twenty-nine species of birds have been documented using the pothole wetland area including priority species such as mallard, northern pintail, American widgeon, cinnamon teal, lesser scaup, redhead, trumpeter swan, tundra swan, and sandhill crane.

This project is especially critical for sandhill cranes. Over 400 sandhill cranes have been seen at one time using a four square mile staging area including the project area – the only known staging area in the Flathead. The Flathead is part of an important migration route for sandhill cranes between breeding grounds in Canada and wintering areas in the southern U.S. and Mexico. These magnificent birds standing 5 feet tall with a wingspan of 6 feet are quite vulnerable as large numbers of migrants concentrate in relatively small areas and use the same areas year after year for staging.

A bird viewing area overlooking the pothole wetland will be created for the public as part of this project. The bird viewing area will serve as an education site for several local schools and communities.



"THE POTHOLE WETLAND AND SURROUNDING AGRICULTURAL LAND OF THIS 400 ACRES PROJECT IS CRITICAL FOR TENS OF THOUSANDS OF MIGRATORY WATERFOWL, TWENTY SPECIES OF SHOREBIRDS, AND IS PART OF A VITAL STAGING AREA FOR HUNDREDS OF SANDHILL CRANES."

- Dan Casey, Bird Expert and Biologist
for Ducks Unlimited, ABC, and MFWP

Rich farmland that is part of the Grosswiler family legacy will be conserved as well. The Grosswiler family has been farming west of Kalispell for over 100 years. The family first homesteaded 160 acres in the West Valley in 1900 and expanded their agricultural operations to over 3,000 acres. Over time, the family has been selling portions of their land, but they still farm almost 1,400 acres in the West Valley. The Grosswiler family wants to ensure at least a portion of their land stays in agriculture.

This special land is near a growing residential and commercial area of Kalispell, so development is imminent if the conservation project does not move forward. What's more, this project's success has the potential to snowball as other neighbors are interested in similar protection of their land.

The estimated value of this conservation project is over \$1.4 million, but the landowners are willing to donate over a third of the estimated value in a bargain sale. We have obtained approximately \$800,000 for the project. We need to raise \$100,000 in non-federal matching funds in order to bring this project to fruition. Your help is critical to complete this vital conservation project and achieve meaningful conservation of rich farmland, an ecological significant area, and access by the public in perpetuity to view amazing birds.



Photo courtesy of Steve Muller



FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED AT WWW.FLATHEADLANDTRUST.ORG OR GIVE US A CALL AT 406.752.8293