



# ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT

## ‘ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT HERITAGE PROPOSAL’

The Rocky Mountain Front, Montana’s iconic landscape that remains much today as it was when Lewis and Clark first explored, is one of Montana’s last, best places. The Front stretches 150 miles from Marias Pass to Rogers Pass. State, federal and private lands along the Front together make up some of the best wildlife habitat in the continental United States; it has been recognized as in the top 1 percent, supporting 290 species. Maintaining the landscape the way it is today is the best assurance that the Front will continue to be a wildlife, hunting, and outdoor recreation paradise as well as a huge economic asset not only for today, but into the future.

Ensuring that the natural resources are sustained as integral parts of this landscape, landowners, business owners, hikers, horseback riders, sportspersons, outfitters, ranchers, outdoor enthusiasts, and wildlife interests are working together. Asserting that the Front values and heritage must be protected as a vibrant part of Montana’s future, the Coalition to Protect the Rocky Mountain Front has crafted a long-term Conservation Package.

The Conservation Management Package titled the ‘*Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Proposal*’ is a customized, groundbreaking approach that considers wildlife and the concerns of the agricultural and recreational communities.

“I truly believe that the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage proposal is one of most thoroughly thought out plans I have ever seen,” according to Roy Jacobs, a businessman and hunter from Pendroy, and a member of the Coalition.

Approximately 86,000 acres would be given a wilderness designation and another 300,000 acres would be permanently conserved through a “Conservation Management package” which will require congressional approval.

Public land management agencies would be mandated to aggressively fight invasive weed species and to increase their level of engagement with local weed roundtables, counties, game managers, and ranchers. Ultimately, the Coalition’s aim is to increase the level of funding for the federal agencies and counties to ensure that adequate resources are in place to eradicate, control, and prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

“The Rocky Mountain Front Heritage proposal is a step towards recognizing a major threat, placing a high priority on the noxious weed problem, and finding a solution,” said Paul Wick a Teton County Weed District Coordinator.

Over two-thirds of the land within the proposal would be placed in a new designation called a Conservation Management Area that seeks to protect not only the landscape, but current uses such as livestock grazing, horse and foot travel, and even off road vehicle and snowmobile use from future whims of political appointees. Entering the vast majority of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District into a Management Area will ensure that all uses currently on the Forest will have a place in the future.

The Coalition has logged hundreds of hours talking with outfitters, recreationists, hunters, decision makers, and grazing allotment permittees to find conservative, appropriate, and meaningful areas truly worthy of the Conservation Management Area and Wilderness Designation. The Coalition is now sharing the proposal with the public at meetings around the state and soliciting comments.

MWF has worked on Front issues since it was first organized more than 74 years ago. The most recent efforts include its involvement with the Coalition for more than 6 years in bringing interests together to developing lasting protections and balanced conservation approaches.

The Front faces new challenges as new landowners are attracted to Montana, traditional agriculture faces exponentially higher costs, oil and gas demands drive development, and an anecdotal increase in the number of recreationists stands to change the face of the land and traditional uses. MWF believes the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage proposal will forever ensure the Front’s viability for all uses.

More information on the proposal is available on-line at the MWF Web-site, [www.montanawildlife.org](http://www.montanawildlife.org) and at the Coalition Web-site [www.savethefront.org](http://www.savethefront.org).