

# factsheet

July 2009

## Flathead River conservation easement protects native fish habitat

The Bonneville Power Administration is working with the Flathead Land Trust to fund three conservation easements this fall totaling 543 acres along the Flathead River south of Kalispell, Mont.

Located in Flathead County in northwestern Montana, the proposed conservation easements would protect approximately 50 acres of riparian forest, a major river bend, and approximately 50 acres of ponds and wetlands located along the Flathead River main stem between 13 and 17 river miles above Flathead Lake.

The main stem provides passage for native bull trout moving from Flathead Lake to the upper forks for spawning and rearing, and for their return as adults to Flathead Lake. The project lies south of a large conservation easement held by The Nature Conservancy and in close proximity to other conservation easements held by the Flathead Land Trust and Montana Land Reliance.

An additional 563 acres is proposed for conservation easement from other funding sources, for a total of 1,106 acres. Because of its size and location, this is one of the highest-ranked conservation projects being proposed jointly by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

These conservation easements are expected to be acquired in the fall of 2009. Under the easements, the land would remain in private ownership, but the landowner would protect river banks, riparian forests and wetlands, allow for riparian restoration of riverbanks, and limit future development, while allowing for continued agricultural uses of the prime agricultural croplands. Montana Fish, Wildlife and

Parks and the Natural Resources and Conservation Service hope to restore natural riverbank vegetation, deciduous shrubs and riparian wetlands.

The conservation easement would provide BPA with credits for partial mitigation of resident fish habitat losses due to the construction of Hungry Horse Dam, a federal dam located on the South Fork of the Flathead River, and inundation of the land behind the dam.

### Land to get management plan

BPA would review and approve a management plan as part of the conservation easement process that addresses anticipated land uses such as riparian buffers, riparian vegetation restoration, fencing, weed management and grazing allowed by the conservation easement terms. This plan provides more detailed guidance for various private land management activities to insure important riparian/wetland habitats and riverbanks are conserved and restored, but allows some degree of flexibility in land management activities over time.

### For more information

If you have any questions about this proposal or would like additional information, please contact Cecilia Brown, BPA, at (503) 230-3462, toll-free at (800) 282-3713 or via e-mail at [ckbrown@bpa.gov](mailto:ckbrown@bpa.gov). You may also contact Kris Tempel at Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks at (406) 751-4573 or [ktempel@mt.gov](mailto:ktempel@mt.gov).



# Flathead River Mainstem Fisheries Conservation Area

## Flathead County, Montana

