

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT

September 15, 2010

9:20–10:00 am

140 West Pine Street

Members Present: Marilyn Marler (chair), Pam Walzer, Bob Jaffe, Renee Mitchell, Ed Childers, Jon Wilkins, Dave Strohmaier and Roy Houseman

Members Absent: Stacy Rye, Lyn Hellegaard, Dick Haines

Others Present: Jackie Corday, Mike Mueller

I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

A. Approve minutes.

No Minutes to approve.

II. FINAL CONSIDERATION AGENDA ITEMS

III. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS –

1. Resolution to expend \$175,000 of 2006 Open Space Bond proceeds towards the purchase of a conservation easement on the 1036 acre Quebec Deschamps Creek Ranch located approximately 2.5 miles NW of the Wye intersection of I-90 and Hwy 93 N. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Jackie Corday) (Referred to committee: 09/13/10)

MOTION: The Committee recommends Council set a joint public hearing with the Board of County Commissioners for adoption of a Resolution that authorizes the City to contribute \$175,000 towards the purchase of a conservation easement on the 1036 acres of Deschamps family property located NW of the WYE with 2006 Open Space Bond funds on October 4, 2010.

Mike Mueller from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) presented the Committee with a presentation on the proposed purchase of a conservation easement on the 1036 acre Quebec Deschamps Creek Ranch. ([Presentation](#))

The property is located entirely within the boundaries of the Missoula Urban Area Open Space Plan and is located approximately 1/2 within the Missoula Planning Region and 1/2 within the Frenchtown Planning Region.

This property has been owned by the Deschamps family since the late 1800's and has been used mostly for cattle grazing and timber harvesting. There are no structures on the property, just some gravel ranch roads. The property consists predominately of open grassy fields that range from pasture grasses to healthy native bunch grasses and forbs. The northern 1/3 of the property is forested predominately by Ponderosa Pine and Douglas Fir and is traversed by Quebec Deschamps Creek, a tributary to O'Keefe Creek. The ranchland is bordered to the south and east by residential properties averaging 10 acres in size, to the west by large acreage parcels, and to the north by USFS lands.

The property is visible from the South Hills and a large majority of neighborhoods west of Reserve and out to the O'Keefe Creek Estates area NW of the WYE in addition to I-90 and Highway 93 North. In addition to the tremendous scenic viewshed value, the conservation easement will protect elk winter range for a herd of about 75-100, wildlife habitat and bird nesting and feeding habitat for numerous species, and 151 acres of soils of Local Importance.

RMEF negotiated the purchase of a conservation easement for a total of \$400,000 using a combination of four funding sources: 1) \$175,000 proposed from the 2006 Missoula County Open Space Bond city portion, 2) \$175,000 proposed from the 2006 Missoula County Open Space Bond county portion, 3) \$50,000 from a NW Energy grant, and 4) the Deschamps family donating approximately 50% of the conservation easement appraised value (\$673,400) if the NW grant is not awarded (40% if it is awarded). Additionally, RMEF will have incurred \$13,617 in costs to complete the easement (legal & staff time & office expenses). This equals about \$169/acre for

the City's contribution or \$338/acre total of City and County shares from the 2006 Open Space bond.

If approved by Council and the Commissioners, the \$175,000 would be deducted from the City's \$5,000,000 share of the bond. The Deschamps family will continue to own and maintain the land. The City has no future financial or maintenance obligations for the land. The Deschamps would be able to build one more residence located at the extreme southwest corner to add further protection to wildlife habitat and open space values.

The Deschamps family has also agreed to provide public access for up to 4 natural history fieldtrips per year organized by Missoula Parks & Recreation.

Discussion:

Jackie – This is the first time we would have an agreement with a land owner for access rights for education uses. This will give others the opportunity to experience this great piece of property.

Pam – this is a wonderful and generous gift and I am excited about the potential opportunity for field trips.

Mike – I will ask the family to attend the public hearing.

Marilyn – even though this area may seem far away it is another important view shed to protect. It was moved to set a joint public hearing for October 4, 2010. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS –

V. NON-AGENDA ITEMS

VI. HELD AND ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS - PER COMMITTEE CHAIR – Marilyn Marler

A. Information on Trail Projects ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Marilyn Marler) (Referred to committee: 08/23/2010)

B. Update from the Greenhouse Gas Conservation Energy Team. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Marilyn Marler) (Referred to committee: 09/13/10)

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting adjourned at 9:50 am.