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PRESS RELEASE

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City and County Close Open Space Deal

The City of Missoula and Missoula County joined forces yesterday to help conserve 1036 acres of working agricultural land and important wildlife habitat located northwest of the Wye. City and County Open Space Bond funds were used to assist the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in Thursday's purchase of a conservation easement on the Quebec Deschamps Creek Ranch. The easement guarantees that the Deschamps family, who own the property, will permanently preserve it as open space.

The property, which is visible from south and west Missoula and the Wye, features open grassland, forest, and a riparian corridor along Deschamps Creek. It's home to a wide variety of wildlife, including a significant number of elk and mule deer plus a wide variety of bird species. It meets five important criteria for expenditure of Open Space Bond funds, including protection of water quality, conservation of working agricultural land, conservation of open space and scenic landscapes and managing for growth.

The property also boasts panoramic views of the Missoula, Clark Fork and Bitterroot Valleys. "Words cannot express what a special property this is. After our site visit, I kept looking back at the beautiful view from the valley that will be preserved, in addition to the grazing land and wildlife habitat that will be protected. It is incredibly rewarding for the City and County to work jointly with the landowners to protect the valuable resources found on this land," said County Commissioner Michele Landquist.

The purchase price of the easement was \$350,000, or about \$338 per acre. The City and County each contributed \$175,000 from their respective 2006 Open Space Bond funds. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation contributed \$13,617 in legal and staff time. The Deschamps family donated approximately 50 percent of the easement's appraised value of \$673,400. The land was appraised to sell as real estate at about \$1.3 million, or about \$1255 per acre.

"This beautiful property contributes significantly to the scenic viewshed of the Missoula Valley and has important wildlife and bird habitat, and thus we are so grateful that the Deschamps family chose to preserve the land instead of developing it. Their generosity in donating 50 percent of the value made the project possible," said Jackie Corday, the City's Open Space Program Manager.

Although the land will remain in private ownership and will be maintained by the Deschamps family, The Rocky Montana Elk Foundation will hold the conservation easement which prevents future development if the property changes hands. "This easement is a gift from the Deschamps Family to all of us that live in the valleys. Now when we travel by this grassy knoll backed by forest-covered hills we will always be able to enjoy that beautiful uninterrupted view and know that the elk and other wildlife and native grasslands will have a home forever," said Mike Mueller, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Lands Program Manager.

The Deschamps family also signed an agreement with the City to allow for up to four natural history fieldtrips per year organized by Missoula Parks and Recreation. The Deschamps family will continue to own and maintain the land, and the City and County will have no future financial or maintenance obligations on the parcel.

For a [map of the conservation easement](#) and [more details about the project](#), please visit www.missoulaparks.org or phone Parks and Recreation Open Space Program Manager Jackie Corday at 552-6267.

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