

# Potomac Acquisition Proposal – HB674

## Approximately \$21,000,000

**Background:** In 2008, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) negotiated a land purchase agreement with the Plum Creek Timber Company (PCTC) to purchase approximately 310,000 acres of forest land in Western Montana. TNC's objective is to manage the lands as working forests and to allow the continued use for public recreation. In December of 2008, TNC purchased approximately 129,000 acres and in February of 2009 purchased approximately 112,000 acres. TNC is currently working with the State of Montana and the United States Forest Service on future disposition of these lands.

**Potomac Acquisition Proposal:** During the 2009 Legislative Session, public and private organizations and individuals worked towards legislation that would authorize the State of Montana, through the State Board of Land Commissioners, to purchase former PCTC lands from TNC. House Bill 674 was drafted and eventually passed. This law authorizes the State of Montana to issue general obligation bonds in the amount of \$21,000,000 for the purchase of approximately 20,500 – 34,200 acres in the vicinity of Potomac, Montana. If purchased, these lands will be held in trust for the support of Common Schools and future revenues generated from these lands will be distributed to the school facility account. The objective of this legislation is to generate income for the beneficiary, continue sustainable forest management, multiple use, and recreational use. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) has been tasked with analyzing and making a recommendation for the purchase of these lands. DNRC is currently analyzing approximately 34,200 acres of the TNC lands in the Potomac Valley. The following information is provided as part of the public out-reach portion of this analysis:

**Location:** The analysis area is all in Missoula County and is located mainly in the Potomac valley, south of Highway 200, with a minor portion in the Clark Fork drainage and is 20 miles east of Missoula. (See Map)

**Acreage:** Approximately 20,500 – 34,200 acres

**Grazing:** The carrying capacity and grazing practices of the property is typical of forested lands in Western Montana. It is estimated that the property will support 1,250 AUMs between June and September annually. The property is currently leased for grazing by the Bonita-Clinton-Potomac Grazing Association, members who are all local ranchers. It is anticipated that a state grazing license would be issued to the Association.

**Crop Land:** N/A

**Stock Water:** Stock water is available from many small streams and ponds on the property.

**Irrigation:** N/A

**Timber:** The entire property is former timber industry lands and is primarily forested. Most of the property has been logged at various times since the early 1900's resulting in stands of various age classes composed of ponderosa pine, Western larch, Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, Engelmann spruce and other mixed conifers and hardwoods. Existing merchantable timber is found mainly in streamside management zones and as scattered over story in previously harvested stands. Some of the existing merchantable timber may be harvested to meet TNC's fiber supply agreement with PCTC, which expires in 2023. Most



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non-merchantable stands are fully stocked with pre-commercial thinning having been accomplished on many of the older age class stands. Many of the older age class stands will be approaching merchantable size within the next 20 - 30 years. The productivity of the lands is estimated at average to good for Western Montana and should grow at a rate of 100 – 125 board feet per acre per year. The slope of the terrain is variable with approximately 70 percent tractor ground and 30 percent line ground with minor portions that may require helicopter logging or be unavailable for forest management.



**Minerals:** N/A

**Fencing:** Fencing for management of the grazing use occurs adjacent to the private lands in the Potomac valley. Several riparian areas and springs have been fenced for protection of habitat and water quality.

**Improvements:** The property is fully roaded to accommodate all future forest and grazing management needs.

**County Taxes:** Approximately \$40,000

**Precipitation:** 15 - 25 inch range.

The Potomac property has a long history of public recreational use for hunting, fishing, hiking and snowmobiling that was allowed by former industrial forest land owners and currently by TNC. Access to the property is good from Highway 200 on the north and from Interstate 90 frontage roads on the south as well as from the nearly four miles of Blackfoot River frontage being considered for purchase.

The property provides habitat for deer, elk, black and grizzly bear, mountain lion, lynx, occasional wolves, turkey, grouse and many non-game species. The many streams, that flow into either the Blackfoot or Clark Fork rivers, provide habitat for native fish and fishing opportunities for the public.

## Legal Description:

### Township 12 North, Range 15 West, P.M.M. Missoula County

	<u>Acres</u>
Section 1: Lots 1-4 & S2N2	339.24
Section 2: Lots 1-4, SW4NE4, S2NW4, SW4, W2SE4 & NE4SE4	4.68
Section 3: Lots 1 & 2, S2NE4 & S2	486.58
Section 4: Lots 3 & 4, S2NW4 & S2	483.70
Section 5: Lots 1-4, S2N2 & S2	647.60
Section 6: Lots 1-7, S2NE4, SE4NW4, E2SW4 & SE4	717.64
Section 7: Lots 1-4, E2W2 & E2	695.00
Section 8: N2 & NE4SE4	360.00
Section 9: S2	320.00
Section 10: NW4NE4, N2NW4 & SW4NW4	160.00

	<u>Acres</u>
Section 17: N2, SW4 & N2SE4	560.00
Section 19: Lots 1-4, E2W2 & E2	695.96
Section 20: SE4NE4, NE4SE4, S2S2 & NE4SW4	280.00
Section 21: S2N2 & S2	480.00
Section 28: ALL	640.00
Section 29: ALL	640.00

### Township 12 North, Range 16 West, P.M.M. Missoula County

Section 1: Lots 1-12 & S2	744.72
Section 2: Lots 1-12 & S2	749.32
Section 3: Lots 1-14, SW4, NW4SE4 & NE4SE4, minus Patented Mining Claim	49.20
Section 4: Lots 1-10 & 12 & S2	721.20

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	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
Section 5: Lots 1-12 & S2	766.64	Section 32: ALL	640.00
Section 6: Lots 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10 & N2SE4	305.43	Section 33: ALL	640.00
Section 9: NE4, NE4SW4, N2SE4 & SE4SE4	320.40	Section 34: SW4, S2NE4 & SE4 less portion lying east of centerline of Morrison Lane.	392.00
Section 11: N2, SE4 & E2SW4	560.00	<b>Township 13 North, Range 17 West, P.M.M. Missoula County</b>	
Section 12: ALL	640.00	Section 1: Portion lying south of Highway 200	226.70
Section 13: ALL	640.00	Section 2: Portion lying south of Highway 200	175.40
Section 14: ALL	640.00	Section 9: SE4NW4, and most of S2NE4 and S2 lying S of Hwy Highway 200	367.30
Section 15: ALL	640.00	Section 10: S2	320.00
Section 22: ALL	640.00	Section 11: All Except tract in N2NW4	607.20
Section 23: ALL	640.00	Section 12: ALL	640.00
Section 24: SE4	160.00	Section 13: ALL	640.00
<b>Township 12 North, Range 17 West, P.M.M. Missoula County</b>		Section 14: ALL	640.00
Section 1: Lots 1-7, SW4NE4, W2SE4, S2NW4 & SW4	666.30	Section 15: Lots 1-7, SW4NE4, S2NW4, SW4 & W2SE4	627.88
<b>Township 13 North, Range 15 West, P.M.M. Missoula County</b>		Section 17: NE4	160.00
Section 33: W2 & SE4	480.00	Section 21: Lot 1, NE4NW4, S2NW4, NE4 & S2	640.20
<b>Township 13 North, Range 16 West, P.M.M. Missoula County</b>		Section 22: Lots 1-4, W2E2 & W2	629.82
Section 6: Lot 7 south of the Blackfoot River, SE4SW4 & SW4SE4	100.00	Section 23: ALL	640.00
Section 7: Lot 1-4 except Bear Creek Acres, E2W2 & SE4	469.62	Section 24: S2 & NW4	480.00
Section 19: Lots 1-4, E2W2 & E2	647.44	Section 25: ALL	640.00
Section 20: SW4, S2NW4 & NW4NW4	280.00	Section 26: Lots 1-7, S2NW4, SW4NE4, W2SE4 & SW4	620.28
Section 28: SW4SW4, S2NW4SW4, SE4, SE4NW4, S2NE4 & E2SW4	420.00	Section 27: Lots 1-4, S2N2 & S2	640.19
Section 29: W2, W2E2, W2E2NE4, SE4NE4SE4, W2NE4SE4 & SE4SE4	590.00	Section 28: ALL	640.00
Section 30: Lots 1-4, E2W2 & E2	647.28	Section 34: ALL	640.00
Section 31: Lots 1-4, E2W2 & E2	642.40	Section 35: Lots 1-7, S2NW4, SW4NE4, W2SE4 and SW4	639.55
		<b>Total</b>	<b>34,226.87 acres</b>



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