



## Weaver/McWenegar Slough Riparian Habitat Project Flathead County, Montana

### Introduction

Human expansion into wildlife habitat areas reduces breeding opportunities, feeding and rearing areas and increases competition and pressure on remaining habitat.

In the Flathead valley of Montana, farmland is fast disappearing as the population of Flathead County grows. Some experts estimate Flathead County will grow by 45 percent in the next two decades.

Landowners by agreeing to Conservation easements recognize the need to preserve wildlife habitat. Conservation easements are entirely voluntary agreements between a land trust and a landowner. Under these agreements, landowners sell or give away rights to subdivide the land, but retain other property rights, including the right to farm or sell the land, or say who can access their property.

Conservation easements are an important achievement in the collaborative effort to protect and restore priority wetlands and riparian areas that are important for keeping Flathead Lake and its tributaries clean and healthy.

### Project Description

Wetlands are important nesting, resting and rearing areas for fish, migratory birds, and game animals, and also serve as recharge areas for aquifers. There are no endangered species in the project area, but the benefits described protect or enhance resident fish and downstream habitats. The Flathead Land Trust is a local non-profit group dedicated to finding voluntary ways to conserve local farmland, wetlands, and open space that always respect property rights. Flathead County farmland provides a broad variety of public benefits. McWenegar and Weaver sloughs act as giant filters that keep Flathead River and Flathead Lake clean.

The easements include 412 acres near McWenegar Slough, east of Kalispell's Highway 35 Bridge. Three other easements, of 307, 276 and 60 acres, were signed for the Lower valley between Kalispell and Somers, near Weaver Slough to total 1,055 acres.

### Participants and Funding

BPA	\$1,019,196
U.S. Department of Agriculture-NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program	\$880,804
Landowners	-0-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,900,000</b>

### For More Information

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### Relevant Links

<http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/factsheets/fppa.html>

### Press releases

[http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/releases/frpp\\_projects03.html](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/releases/frpp_projects03.html)  
<http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/releases/03frppsum.html>

