

Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy

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Immediate Release:

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616 Acres of Key Wildlife Habitat Permanently Protected

Sandpoint --An historic forest, ranch and farm homestead abutting the Morton Slough Wildlife Refuge on the Pend Oreille River is now permanently protected from development thanks to the work of the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy. The Conservancy was supported in this work by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and with funding from the Equinox Foundation in partnership with the Inland Northwest Community Foundation.

The spectacularly scenic 616-acre preserved property includes a diverse landscape including expansive forested mountainsides with towering cliffs, rich wetland areas, productive agricultural lands and pristine shoreline.

“Conserving this land is a win-win for all, said Robb McCracken, the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy’s Executive Conservation Director. “The amazing landscape is preserved, thus benefiting the public, the wildlife habitat is protected, the model working farm, native forests and timber lands will remain intact forever and the water quality of the Pend Oreille River is protected.”

For 83 years the same family has managed this working ranch and timberlands. “It’s pretty well unspoiled land,” said Virginia Overland whose parents first bought the property in 1928. “We are kind of an island here. We are nearly surrounded by subdivisions now and it’s ruining wildlife habitat. We feel it is necessary to save this piece for the wildlife.”

The “Overland Tree Farm,” as the family refers to their property, provides vital habitat for a huge variety of animals including elk, black bear and mountain lion in the uplands, as well as moose, birds, waterfowl and fish in the wetland areas. In fact, over 2,000 birds have been counted on this slough in a single day according to studies conducted by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy (CFPOC), the local non-profit land trust, partners with private landowners such as Virginia and Orrin Overland to protect the conservation values of ecologically critical lands through the creation of conservation easements. “These easements are permanent legal agreements that restrict certain land uses such as development, while still allowing for a wide range of land owner activities such as farming, ranching, specified recreation, sustainable timber harvesting or some residential use,” added McCracken. “A conservation easement allows the landowner to own their land, live on it, and use it for a variety of activities while still protecting the natural area or ecosystem and traditional working agriculture forever for the good of the community, the wildlife and the environment. Conservation easements truly are win/win permanent agreements for the landowner and the public interest in land conservation.”

To date, the CFPOC has helped preserve over 1600 acres of working farms, ranches and important fish and wildlife habitat in Bonner County, Idaho and Sanders County, Montana. Several other CFPOC/landowner projects are nearing completion.

“As our region continues to experience rapid growth and increased development pressure, the need for protecting our last, special places is becoming more and more important,” said Kyler Wolf, CFPOC Board President. “A conservation easement is a viable option for landowners hoping to protect their lands and landowners may even qualify for financial incentives including federal income tax deductions, compensation for development rights and reduced estate taxes.”

To learn more about how you can protect your land or, how you can support the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy, visit their website at www.cfpoconservancy.org or give them a call at 208-263-9471.

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