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Conservation Corner

Contributing Organizations



Idaho Conservation League
www.wildidaho.org

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sustainable living2012@gmail.com

Publisher
David Keyes

Editor/Creative Coordinator
Amelia Hess



www.cfpoconservancy.org

By *Kyler Wolf, Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy*

As this is our first contribution to Sustainable Living, I thought I would start by giving you the big picture of who we are and what we do. This is because when I first tell people that I am on the board of directors for the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy, I often get that “deer in the headlights” look. Clearly most, if not all, of these people understand what a board of directors is, so the confusion must be, “What is the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy?” The Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy (CFPOC) was formed as a non-profit land trust in November of 2002. We work in the Clark Fork River and Lake Pend Oreille watersheds to protect, maintain, and enhance natural resources and recreational values that contribute to our quality of life. Almost always, this will lead to a question like, “What is a land trust?”

A land trust is a non-profit organization that works with willing landowners to protect land and water resources. The CFPOC is a tax-exempt charity comprising local citizens concerned about con-

serving natural resources. Land trusts and landowners work together as partners to permanently protect and preserve those natural resources with legal methods such as conservation easements and other voluntary methods.

This is usually where the next question asked can diverge from the set pattern, but at some point in the conversation people will ask, “What exactly is a conservation easement?”

Conservation easements are one of the most powerful, effective tools available for the permanent conservation of private lands. A conservation easement is a restriction placed on a piece of property by the landowner to protect its natural resources. The easement is a legally binding agreement that transfers some of the property rights to the land trust. Once transferred, those rights are effectively extinguished, forever. The conservation easement can

limit many uses of the land such as development, mining and other disruptive activities. We work with each landowner to establish the conservation values specific to the land that is being protected and the property rights that will be retained. The landowner and the land trust enter into this



agreement voluntarily. The CFPOC has no regulatory authority; we cannot force an unwilling landowner

to do a conservation easement. The CFPOC generally acquires conservation easements from landowners by donation. However, in certain circumstances, we are able to find resources to actually purchase the development rights. The ability to find the funding depends on many factors. If funding is unavailable and the conservation easement is donated, the landowner usually qualifies for significant income tax savings.

The tax benefits for landowners who donate an easement may actually work out better for the landowner’s specific situation than a purchased easement. But I would have to fill the better part of this publication to get into specific details, so we will move on from this issue for now.

By now most of you are likely thinking, “This sounds complicated.” It can be. However, we have learned to be very creative in our approach to these issues over the past ten years. We have professional staff and we rely on the advice of many other professionals such as biologists, surveyors, appraisers, attorneys and title agents to handle the intricacies of these transactions.

The CFPOC is the area’s only locally based land trust. We work exclusively in Bonner County, Idaho and Sanders County, Montana. That gives us a great opportunity to impact our community. While most people are aware of national organizations like The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land or are familiar with state wide organizations such as Idaho Conservation League, a lot of locals do not know about the CFPOC. We aim to change that and get more locals involved in our conservation efforts.

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The CFPOC has conserved a total of just under 1,800 acres of land in our area and are currently working on several projects that will put us over the 2,100 acre mark. We are dedicated to seeing more land and its resources conserved forever.



The results of land conservation (protecting natural habitats, wildlife, watersheds and pristine views) benefit everyone in our community. The work of the CFPOC has long reaching and long lasting effects, and we plan to continue growing and expanding that reach. Now that you know a bit more about the CFPOC and what we do, we would like to ask for something from our community (other than donations, but what non-profit doesn't always ask for that). Please spread the word about our work, friend us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/CFPOC), let your friends and neighbors know about what

we are doing and the benefits it can have for our community as a whole. The more people that know about The Clark-Fork Pend Oreille Conservancy, the more impact we can have in preserving this wonderful environment that we live in, for ourselves and future generations to enjoy!

For more information visit our website at: www.idahoconservation.org/wildlife

