

## **Update from the Heart of the Rockies Initiative**

The Heart of the Rockies Initiative is a collaboration of land trusts and conservancies who work with willing private landowners to conserve priority properties that help retain our natural heritage and vibrant communities in the Crown of the Continent region, as well as the High Divide and Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. HOCR planning for the region covers the Crown of the Continent plus those ecologically connected areas to the west in Montana and Idaho and immediately north. Our member partners completed a great amount of work in the Crown in 2012, securing another 35,330 acres through voluntary agreements with 20 different landowners. The largest project was a conservation easement agreement between the Stimson Lumber Company and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks that was facilitated by the Trust for Public Land. This agreement conserved 28,000 acres of forest land in the Lower Kootenai River Valley to benefit wildlife, recreation, and to continue contributing to the local timber industry. Other projects included securing in-holdings in Glacier National Park, ranches in Missoula County and on the Rocky Mountain Front, wetlands in the Flathead Valley, and forests in northern Idaho and the Columbia River Valley.

Another celebrated project in 2012 involving HOCR partners, Nature Conservancy of Canada and The Nature Conservancy, was the landmark deal to retire subsurface mining rights on 400,000 acres of the Flathead River Valley in southeast British Columbia.

Together, Heart of the Rockies partners are realizing a large landscape-scale conservation vision by weaving the strong threads of individual land trusts and conservancies into a larger, stronger tapestry of protected landscape. Over the past 10 years, our partners have worked with willing landowners, agencies, communities, and supporters to permanently protect more than 690,000 acres in the Crown of the Continent. (This total does not include agreements regarding subsurface development.)

Heart of the Rockies partners working in the Crown include: Vital Ground Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Five Valleys Land Trust, Flathead Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, The Conservation Fund, Kaniksu Land Trust, Inland Northwest Land Trust, Palouse Land Trust, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.