

Dear All,

The following is an update on a project that the Lake County Conservation District (LCCD) began about 5 years ago. The purpose of the project is to determine if it is feasible to establish a "Conservation Forest" on Forest Service lands in the Swan Valley in Lake County. If established, the 60,000 acre Conservation Forest would be proactively managed by Montana's DNRC for timber management yielding \$500,000 in net revenues annually. The money earned would then be used for a variety of conservation projects in the LCCD, many improving non-point sources of pollution, but foremost, the money would be used exclusively in the Swan Valley for two to three decades on forest fuels reduction projects.

After completing six encouraging steps in the Swan Study, we decided to move forward with the most difficult step, "politics". Many telephone calls and one-on-one meetings were held with staffers of Montana's congressional delegation. Senator Daines's Montana based staffers were most interested in understanding the concept and assisted me in getting two long calls with the Senator's natural resource staffer in Washington D.C.

Beginning December 2016 through August 2017, the public was asked their opinion about the establishment of a Conservation Forest in the Swan Valley. A majority of Lake County residents supported the concept, but because the environmental organizations that commented did not support the concept, the LCCD was advised to discontinue pursuing this method of funding conservation.

The LCCD would like to thank the residents of Lake County that commented, your input was important and helped in the decision making process. The LCCD will continue to look for ways to proactively address the dangerous build up of forest fuels in the Swan Valley and to seek ways to fund other important conservation work in our county.

Jim Simpson

Lake County Conservation District, Ronan